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***** Press Release *****

Coalition Celebrates Final Rejection of Expensive I-94 E/W Expansion

Rescinding approval for the I-94 expansion should be a turning point for Wisconsin: Away from an outdated focus on mega-highways, towards meeting changing 21st century needs.

MILWAUKEE - The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) stated that it would formally rescind its approval for the proposed I-94 East-West expansion between the Zoo and Marquette Interchanges in Milwaukee. Governor Walker and the state legislature had refused to fund the expansion in the recently signed biennial budget, and Wisconsin Transportation Secretary Ross had asked USDOT to withdraw its record of decision approving the project.

“We are going to continue to fight against any decision that ignores the conditions and wellbeing of the people in the city of Milwaukee and surrounding areas,” said **Reverend Marilyn Miller with Milwaukee Inncity Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH)**. “We will not stand by and allow the government to continue to roll over us like the cars on these proposed massive freeways. We need a comprehensive transportation strategy that will unite us and serve the greater good.”

Environmental, civil rights, public interest and social justice groups have fought this proposed billion-dollar expansion for years. Advocates and grassroots organizations delivered thousands of public comments opposing the expansion and calling for more effective, forward-thinking transportation investments. The NAACP, ACLU and Sierra Club John Muir Chapter also filed a lawsuit earlier this year alleging that USDOT had failed to consider the project’s racial and environmental justice implications and questioning the accuracy of data used to justify the project.

“Rescinding approval for the I-94 expansion should be a turning point for Wisconsin: away from an outdated focus on mega-highway expansions, towards forward-looking infrastructure that meets 21st century needs,” said **Emma Fisher, WISPIRG Organizer**. “Young people today are less car-focused than previous generations -- they want to live in places where they can get around without a car, and where they can bike, bus or walk to work. At the same time, the Milwaukee region’s aging population will need non-driving alternatives to get around in the near future.”

The I-94 E/W expansion is a project the community doesn’t want and the state can’t afford. Instead of expanding I-94, advocates urged WISDOT to develop a new plan that fixes I-94 without expansion and includes a modern public transit network along the East-West Corridor. In 2014, WISPIRG worked with a retired transportation planner from the New Jersey Department of Transportation [to lay out a concept plan along those](#)

[lines](#). The study found that WISDOT could fix I-94, make safety improvements, and fund a rapid transit network at a fraction of the billion-dollar cost of expanding the highway.

“We’ve long opposed this project because it would do nothing to reduce congestion or improve safety while wasting taxpayer money,” **said Deb Nemeth, Executive Director of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin**. “The project would have increased sprawl, worsened particulate matter emission and increased carbon emissions. We now urge the DOT to repair the highway in its existing footprint, and to invest in efficient public transit that reduces congestion, improves safety and connects people to destinations in the region.”

“Wisconsin should use this as an opportunity to prioritize more cost-effective and forward-looking solutions,” **said Elizabeth Ward with the Sierra Club John Muir Chapter**. “Instead of just expanding our highways, we should focus on maintaining existing infrastructure and invest in high-quality rapid transit. This would enhance economic development and support local communities by connecting people to jobs, and would position Wisconsin to meet changing transportation needs.”

“Yes, I-94 needs repair, but coupling those repairs with maintaining our local roads that have been neglected for decades, and with creating public transit systems that can get people from within the city out to our surrounding communities where so many of the jobs have moved - that’s what we need,” **said Dennis Grzezinski, an attorney who represented organizations in the lawsuit challenging the expansion of I-94**. “We have faith groups, we have health groups, we have transportation-oriented organizations, we have environmental organizations, we have civil rights organizations, legal organizations here – we all see that a transportation system can only do its job if it serves all of us.”

“We will stand together with our allies against these decisions that do not include the full humanity of this community,” **concluded Reverend Miller with MICAH**. “We ask that the needs of all the citizens in Milwaukee be addressed so that we can all have accessible transportation.”

You can read WISPIRG’s concept plan for the I-94 E/W Corridor, titled “The Rehab/Transit Option: A Better Solution for Milwaukee’s East-West Corridor,” [here](#).

The Coalition for More Responsible Transportation (CMRT) is a coalition of faith-based, public interest, social justice, public health, environmental and transportation advocacy groups. With spending on big-ticket highway expansions skyrocketing statewide at the expense of local infrastructure investments -- and increasingly financed by heavy borrowing -- CMRT is calling for more responsible, cost-effective transportation spending that better meets local needs.

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