City of Milwaukee Newsletter

More Freeways?!!!

The Regional Freeway Reconstruction Study does not “study land use” or address “the need to upgrade other transportation options.”

SEWRPC Response

The Regional Freeway Reconstruction Study has been conducted within the context of broad regional land use and transportation plans, which recommend “smart growth” while curtailing further urban sprawl, as well as the substantial expansion of public transit. The forecasts of freeway traffic volume and congestion presented in the study represent the residual freeway traffic volume and congestion that may be expected even if smart land use growth is achieved, urban sprawl curtailed, and public transit significantly expanded, including potential systems of light rail and commuter rail transit. Land use and public transit options to address freeway traffic congestion were not ignored in the study. Rather, they were assumed to be implemented first, and any widening of the freeway system was considered an option of last resort.

SEWRPC Response

“ Ideally, the public should have been involved in a more meaningful way at the beginning of the planning process. Doing so would have allowed the public to help design the alternatives.”

SEWRPC Response

The 4th issue of the study newsletter distributed in June 2001 and a series of eight public informational meetings held in July and August 2001 clearly identified the alternatives being considered, and obtained public input. In addition, while a preliminary recommended plan has been proposed, the 5th issue of the study newsletter and the public informational meetings and hearings in May and June 2002 present information equally on the preliminary plan and alternatives. Lastly, it has been clearly stated that final plan recommendations will be based upon public comment on the preliminary plan and other alternatives.
**SEWRPC Response**

The estimated cost of the preliminary plan is $6.25 billion, but the estimated cost of the 127 miles of additional freeway lanes is $730 million, or less than 12 percent of the total cost. The total cost is made up of the following components:

- $3.37 billion, or 54 percent, simply to rebuild the freeway system in its present configuration.
- $2.15 billion, or 34 percent, for the improvements to that configuration to meet modern design standards, including moving left-hand on- and off-ramps to the right-hand side, and unbraiding freeway on- and off-ramps from frontage roads in Kenosha and Racine Counties. The cost of meeting modern design standards in the Marquette Interchange alone is over $600 million (nearly 30 percent of the cost of meeting design standards systemwide) and has already been approved.
- $0.73 billion, or 12 percent, for widening 127 miles of freeway with additional lanes as the freeway system is reconstructed.

**Newsletter Statement**

"Not everyone (on the Advisory Committee) agreed (with the preliminary plan). Concerns were expressed by Milwaukee County Board Chair Karen Ordinans, City of Wauwatosa Mayor Theresa Estness, and Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce (MMAC) President Tim Sheehy."

**SEWRPC Response**

Milwaukee County Board Chair Karen Ordinans, City of Wauwatosa Mayor Theresa Estness, and Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce (MMAC) President Tim Sheehy expressed support for all elements of the preliminary plan, including reconstructing the freeway system to modern design standards and providing additional lanes on the freeway system upon reconstruction, with the exception of the widening of six miles of IH 94 between the Marquette and the Zoo Interchanges. In fact, Mr. Sheehy noted that the MMAC recently conducted a survey of its members regarding the regional freeway reconstruction study alternatives. Over two-thirds of the respondents preferred the preliminary plan and 22 percent preferred reconstruction meeting modern design standards with additional lanes on 108 miles of freeway (no widening of IH 94 between the Marquette and Zoo Interchanges and of IH 43 between the Mitchell Interchange and Silver Spring Drive).

**Newsletter Statement**

"With this plan, the state would be building enough new roadway to create an entirely new 127-mile, two-lane freeway - for 6.2 billion dollars!"

**SEWRPC Response**

The above figure is a portion of a study chart. The full chart from which the one above is extracted is shown below. What the selective information from the City Newsletter as shown above fails to tell the public is that without additional lanes, freeway traffic congestion and delay may be expected to double in less than 20 years even if land use growth is smart and controlled and public transit is significantly expanded including systems of light rail and commuter rail.

---

1All forecasts of future congestion assume full implementation of regional land use and transportation plans - including development with "smart growth" principles at both regional and neighborhood levels, substantial expansion of public transit, planned improvements to the surface arterial street system, and transportation systems management measures, including freeway system intelligent transportation systems management measures.
Newsletter Statement
"Milwaukee Common Council says NO to freeway expansion. . . In a resolution passed almost unanimously in April 2002, Milwaukee Aldermen agreed that none of the alternatives presented by SEWRPC addresses the needs of the City of Milwaukee."

SEWRPC Response
A portion of the City of Milwaukee Common Council resolution is reprinted below.

- With respect to rebuilding the freeway system with improvements to meet modern design standards, the Common Council agreed, with the exception of areas such as between Mitchell Boulevard and Hawley Road where providing shoulders and longer and safer freeway on-ramps would require elevating the westbound I-94 freeway lanes.
- With respect to expanding the freeway system with additional lanes, the Common Council agreed with 108 of the proposed 127 miles of freeway widening, excepting only I-94 between the Zoo Interchange and Marquette Interchange and IH 43 between the Mitchell Interchange and Silver Spring Drive.

Excerpt from the City of Milwaukee Common Council Resolution:
Resolved, By the Common Council of the City of Milwaukee, that the City of Milwaukee supports the following modified alternative for further consideration in the analysis of the reconstruction of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Freeway System:

The reconstruction of the freeway system with design and design related safety improvements at a base cost of $5.5 billion with taking of 577 acres of land, 166 residences, 23 commercial/industrial buildings, and 2 governmental/institutional buildings, as well as adding additional freeway lanes to 108 miles of the Freeway System (No widening on I-94 between the Zoo Interchange and the Marquette Interchange; no widening of I-43/I-94 between the Mitchell Interchange and the Marquette Interchange; no widening on I-43 between the Marquette Interchange and Silver Spring Drive) at an additional $490 million over the base safety related alternative ($5.09 billion) and 35 additional acres, 14 additional residences, 4 additional commercial/industrial buildings and no additional governmental buildings; and, be it
Further Resolved, That the City of Milwaukee does not support adding lanes above design related safety improvements at a cost of $170 to $250 million when a minimal reduction in travel time is estimated for the affected areas; and, be it
Further Resolved, Furthermore that while the City of Milwaukee generally sees the benefit from upgrading freeway facilities to current standards where it makes sense, is in good judgment and adds value to the City, it does not condone actions simply for the sake of upgrading. As such the City of Milwaukee does not support the double decking of the I-94 Freeway from Miller Park to Hawley Road simply for the purpose of meeting modern shoulder design standards, due to the negative impacts such a double-decking would impose on the Story Hill Neighborhood including but not limited to noise, air quality, and aesthetics.

Newsletter Statement
"Counties suffering little or no impact from this freeway building plan have an equal vote in the plan’s adoption."

SEWRPC Response
Ultimately, the decision on how the freeway system will be reconstructed will be made by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation acting under the direction of the Wisconsin State Legislature and Governor. In preparing the final plan to be provided to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and State Legislature and Governor for their consideration, SEWRPC and the Study Advisory Committee are taking the preliminary plan to each of the seven County Boards to determine what each County Board and County Executive agree with and disagree with in the preliminary plan. The purpose of this review, and indeed of all public input, is to shape a final plan intended to represent a substantial local consensus. The Study Advisory Committee includes 15 representatives from local governments within Southeastern Wisconsin. Seven, or 47 percent, of those 15 representatives are Milwaukee County elected County or municipal officials. According to the year 2000 census, Milwaukee County’s population accounts for about 49 percent of the population of Southeastern Wisconsin.

Newsletter Statement
"You don’t have to build four lanes to make it safe." – Brett Hulsey, Sierra Club’s senior Midwest representative, quoted in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, May 1, 2002

SEWRPC Response
The assessment and resolution of traffic accident problems on the freeway system is complex. A number of accident problems are a result of the obsolete design of the freeway system and can be addressed by rebuilding to modern design standards. However, some of the accident problems on the freeway system are directly related to freeway traffic congestion. Rear-end accident rates on congested freeway segments are five to fifteen times higher than accident rates on uncongested freeway segments. The rear-end accident rate on the most extremely congested freeway segments are the highest on the freeway system. On the segment of I-94 between the Zoo Interchange and the Marquette Interchange, rear-end accidents represent about 70 percent of all daily accidents. Relieving congestion and avoiding further increases in congestion on that freeway segment, and on other congested freeway segments where rear-end accidents comprise nearly 50 percent or more of daily accidents, is necessary to provide improved traffic safety, including consideration of additional lanes.