

# City of Milwaukee Newsletter

## More Freeways?!!!

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

May 2002

Published to inform the community about the SEWRPC Plan to grow freeways in Milwaukee

### Major freeway expansion project on the table for Southeastern Wisconsin

It's a freeway building plan that could:

- Cost more than 6.2 billion dollars...
- Use more than 650 acres of additional land - including wetlands...
- Mean the loss of 216 homes...
- Eliminate 31 businesses...
- Create more urban sprawl...

What we need is a transportation system that will:

- Foster smart growth development instead of gridlock, road rage and sprawl.
- Foster our precious green spaces, rivers, lakes and family farms.
- Protect our precious green spaces, rivers, lakes and family farms.
- Include all modes of travel including efficient mass transit to enable all people to gain access to good jobs and services.
- Maximize the time we can spend with our families by reducing commute times and road rage.
- Protect us from 30-years of huge tax increases.

It doesn't study land use, economic development, job creation or preservation of neighborhoods. If we're spending \$6.2 billion, why wouldn't we want a comprehensive plan that makes smart choices for our future?

### Who is SEWRPC?

SEWRPC is the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission. It was established in 1960 by the State as the planning agency for the seven counties of Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha. SEWRPC's operations are funded through our Federal, State and local taxes.

SEE: [www.milwaukee.gov](http://www.milwaukee.gov) SEE ALSO: [www.isonline.com/traffic/news/may02/41141.aan](http://www.isonline.com/traffic/news/may02/41141.aan)



### How it began. Again

Wisconsin's Department of TRANSPORTATION (WDOT) commissioned the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) to undertake a "Special FREEWAY System Reconstruction Study." The study looks ONLY at the reconstruction of the existing freeway system. A local member to make all the need to upgrade other transportation systems. There is no discussion of new freeway construction in any outlying suburban areas. Nor are the economic impacts (positive or negative) of the various alternatives discussed.

This study is needed, according to WDOT, because much of the freeway system in southeastern Wisconsin was built in the 1960s and 1970s and is nearing the end of its design life. SEWRPC's study team came up with four options, including simply replacing the existing system. Rebuilding instead would cost a price tag of \$3.4 billion and require no additional right-of-way.

All of the other options include the condemnation and acquisition of hundreds of acres of land, hundreds of homes and dozens of businesses. Most of the property earmarked for removal from productive use (and the tax rolls) would be taken from Milwaukee County.

Also, Main Corridor and Main Arterial had to be ribboned a new section of freeway. During Milwaukee's first encounter freeway building, the County lost 2,500 acres.

### A preferred plan has already been selected, before public input

SEWRPC's Advisory Committee made a preliminary recommendation in December 2001 for an alternative plan that called for the reconstruction of 270 miles of freeway, including sections of Interstate Highways 43 and 94, and Wisconsin Highways 894 and 45. (See map)

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!

### Plan calls for more lanes

In Milwaukee County, the expansion would call for widening of existing roadways from the six lanes we currently use (such as on I-94 near the

stadium, with its three lanes in each direction) to a total of eight lanes. That would mean an additional lane on each side of I-94. It would also mean an elevated, overpass section of freeway just west of Miller Park.

### And double-decking

This design would mean a 25-foot concrete and steel overlap to the east-bound lanes and the groves to the north between Mitchell and Howley Roads. They'd have to do this with, or without, adding lanes.

Milwaukee's Story Hill Neighborhood Association, whose properties overlook this freeway section, is "strongly opposed" to double-decking, not only

for the proposed removal of homes, the threat to the environment, but also for the "disruption and removal of groves from nearby cemeteries, such as Wood National, Anshel Lebowitz, Spring Hill and Calvary."

### The cost will be huge

The preliminary plan calls for work to be done in segments over 30 years' time, with the estimated overall cost at 6.2 billion dollars, or \$208 million annually over 30 years.

But where will the money come from? The State of Wisconsin will have a \$500 million deficit for the Marquette Interchange Project set to begin in 2004. And the State can't tell us how that project is going to be paid for!

### But not everyone agreed

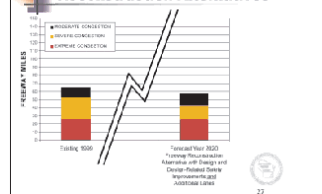
The decision to approve SEWRPC's preliminary freeway expansion plan was not unanimous. Milwaukee Mayor John O. Norquist voted no, noting a "breath-taking lack of vision." The Wisconsin DNR opposed widening the roadway system except for the most congested segments.

The vote on the preliminary plan was taken during interim Milwaukee County Executive Justice Guelke's time in office, and Guelke distanced. Concerns were expressed by Milwaukee County Board Chairwoman Karen Ondring, Wauwatosa Mayor Teresa Estassi, and Tim Sheehy, President of the

Milwaukee Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce.

State Rep. Peter Bock and Milwaukee Alderman Michael Murphy also attended to express their opposition to widening the freeway through their districts.

### Traffic Congestion - Comparison of Existing 1999 and Forecast Year 2020 Under Freeway Reconstruction Alternatives



LEFT: SEWRPC's own chart shows \$6.2 billion, eight lanes and 18 years later, "congestion" levels will be nearly identical to those of 1999.

According to SEWRPC, "congestion" is: Moderate if characterized by speeds of 1 to 5 miles below free-flow speed.

Severe if characterized by speeds of 5 to 15 mph below free-flow speed. Extreme if traffic is stop-and-go and moving at 20 to 25 miles per hour.



ABOVE: Photos taken in 2000 show the lack of available land from Miller Park to Howley road on which to build new freeway lanes. SEWRPC's "solution" is to double-deck the freeway in this area. The cost would be \$3.4 billion and require no additional right-of-way.

### Speak out before it's too late

SEWRPC is now beginning to solicit public input on its freeway expansion plan. A total of ten public meetings have been scheduled (See back page for dates and times). Despite the fundamentally flawed manner in which this planning process was developed, we encourage everyone to attend these meetings. 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.

### What can I do?

Go to a public hearing or write to SEWRPC with your ideas for a balanced transportation system that will maximize our region's economic potential. Tell SEWRPC that adding lanes to Milwaukee's freeways will:

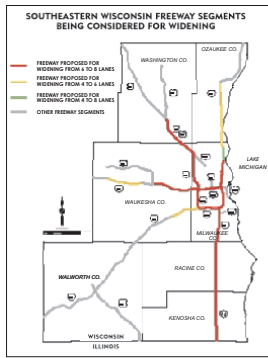
- Require tax increases without significantly reducing travel times and traffic congestion
- Hurt Milwaukee neighborhoods with noise and demolition
- Take dollars away from other important modes of transportation
- Increase heavy truck traffic on freeways that don't serve our region

### What's next?

SEWRPC will select its alternative based on public input and submit its recommendation to WADOT before the fall 2002 state elections.

### There's more information on the Web on smart growth, congestion and transportation.

1000 Friends of Wisconsin and the Land Use Institute: [www.1000friendsofwisconsin.com](http://www.1000friendsofwisconsin.com)  
Surface Transportation Policy Project: [www.transact.org](http://www.transact.org)



### "You don't have to build four lanes to make it safe."

- Brent Halley, State's Chief of Motorist representative, quoted in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, May 7, 2002.

LEFT: SEWRPC's map shows the bulk of lane additions (and land acquisition) would take place in heavily urbanized Milwaukee County. Other counties suffering lane additions are more rural in nature with more unbuild land available to pave over. Note also that counties suffering little or no impact from this freeway building plan have an equal vote in the plan's adoption.

### Freeway Expansion Public Meetings

#### Attend — and Speak Out!

All meetings below are organized by SEWRPC and begin at 4:00 p.m. Between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. open-house format, at which time you can talk in small groups or one-on-one with study staff. At 6:00 p.m. staff will give a presentation, followed by a public hearing at 6:30 p.m. in which there is a forum for public comment.

May 22, 2002	Downtown Transit Center, Harbor Lights Room 909 E. Michigan Street, Milwaukee
May 29, 2002	Martin Luther King Community Center 1531 N. Vliet Street, Milwaukee
May 30, 2002	Northwest Senior Center 7717 W. Good Hope Road, Milwaukee
June 5, 2002	Manitoba Elementary School Gymnasium 4040 W. Forest Home Avenue, Milwaukee

#### How do I contact SEWRPC?

Write to: SEWRPC  
PO Box 1607  
Waukesha, WI 53187-1607  
E-mail: [Freewaystudy@sewrpc.org](mailto:Freewaystudy@sewrpc.org)

Fax: (262) 547-1103

Write or call your City, County and State elected officials. Tell them you oppose SEWRPC's freeway expansion plan. Tell them you want transportation planning that respects and enhances neighborhoods and business districts, and respects the environment.

# SEWRPC Response

## Newsletter Statement

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.

## Newsletter Statements

"A preferred plan has already been selected, before public input."

"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 (continued)

## 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 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.

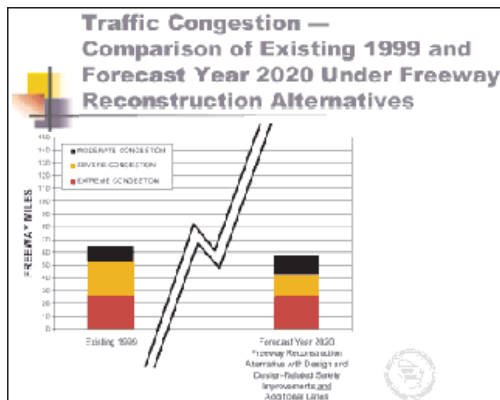
## Newsletter Statement

"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 Teresa 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



LEFT: SEWRPC's own chart shows that \$6.2 billion, eight lanes and 18 years later, "congestion" levels will be nearly identical to those of 1999.

According to SEWRPC, "congestion" is:

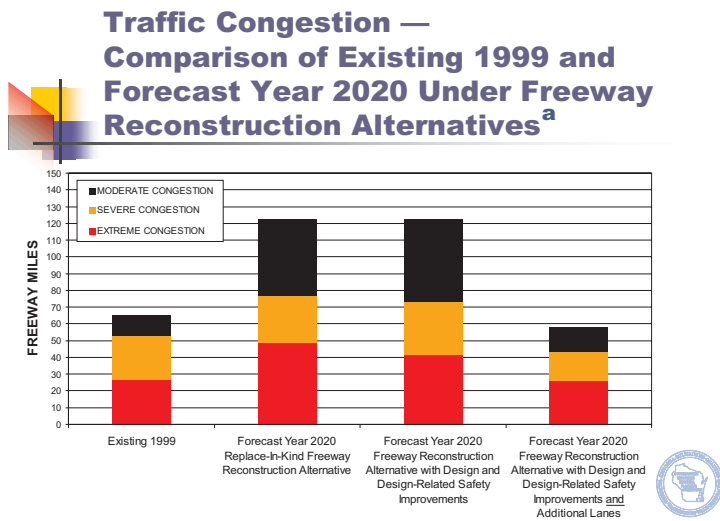
Moderate if characterized by speeds of 1 to 5 miles per hour below free-flow speed.

Severe if characterized by speeds of 5 to 15 mph below free-flow speed.

Extreme if traffic is stop-and-go and moving at 20 to 30 miles per hour.

## 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.



<sup>a</sup>All forecasts of future congestion assume full implementation of regional land use and transportation plans - including development with "smart growth" practices 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.

# ***SEWRPC Response (continued)***

## 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 IH 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 IH 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-43/94 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 (\$5.99 billion) and 35 additional acres, 14 additional residences, no 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 IH 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.