

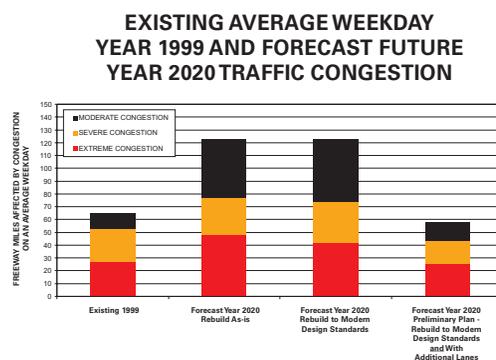
# ***SEWRPC Response to Reported Remarks on Freeway Reconstruction Study by Florida-based Traffic Engineer, Walter Kulash***

## Reported Kulash Statement

*The SEWRPC preliminary plan for regional freeway reconstruction with additional lanes on 127 miles of freeway and the SEWRPC travel simulation model analysis of that plan is deeply flawed. It does not account for the change in behavior of the drivers of trucks and automobiles and induced traffic which the freeway capacity expansion will create.*

## SEWRPC Response

The SEWRPC travel simulation models and analysis of the preliminary plan with additional lanes on the freeway system explicitly consider and include the changes in travel behavior which may be expected in response to the additional freeway lanes. The models explicitly account for changes in travel route, changes in travel distance and location, changes in travel mode, and changes in the timing of travel which may occur in response to the additional lanes. This is why, as shown in the figure below, it is not expected that traffic congestion will be eliminated with the additional lanes proposed under the preliminary plan. The forecast year 2020 traffic congestion under the preliminary plan is only modestly less than the current level of congestion, and permits avoiding a near doubling in traffic congestion expected under those alternatives for freeway reconstruction which does not include additional lanes.



With respect to the statement that adding freeway lanes will simply induce additional travel and thereby offset anticipated congestion reduction benefits, the information in the figure shows that expected levels of congestion in the year 2020 are only modestly less than current levels of congestion. Therefore, adding freeway lanes cannot reasonably be expected to induce more travel over the existing situation.

Moreover, review of historic traffic growth in southeastern Wisconsin, including the period during which the freeway system was first constructed and which significantly reduced both peak and off-peak period travel times, indicates that nearly 90 percent of historic traffic growth was a result of factors such as economic and household growth and changing population lifestyles, and not travel which was induced.

## Reported Kulash Statement

*To address traffic congestion, land use control and smart growth should be pursued along with expansion of public transit and improving surface arterials.*

## SEWRPC Response

The Regional Freeway Reconstruction Study has been explicitly structured to consider freeway widening as a measure of last resort, by identifying the freeway traffic volumes and congestion that may be expected even if urban sprawl is curtailed and smart growth occurs at both regional and neighborhood levels; even if public transit is significantly expanded by over 70 percent, including complete light rail and commuter rail systems; and even if surface arterial streets and highways are improved. Thus, it is not reasonable to suggest that the projected congestion without additional freeway lanes could be significantly reduced through further land use, transit, or surface arterial measures.

Mr. Kulash further suggests that freeways are not necessary, and that a grid pattern of arterial streets is the most efficient method of carrying all traffic. We need only look back to the extreme congestion that existed on the grid of surface arterial streets in the Milwaukee area prior to the construction of freeways. Indeed, it was the need to resolve that traffic congestion that prompted the construction of the freeway system which exists today. Upon the completion of the freeway system, not only was traffic congestion on the surface arterial streets alleviated, but also very limited congestion was present on the newly constructed freeway system. This continued for a period of 10 to 20 years until continued household and economic growth and changing lifestyles resulted in higher traffic volumes and increasing congestion on the freeway system.

# ***SEWRPC Response to Reported Remarks on Freeway Reconstruction Study by Florida-based Traffic Engineer, Walter Kulash--continued***

## Reported Kulash Statement

*Widening the freeway with additional lanes will degrade the central cities and older first ring suburbs, and eventually outlying suburbs such as Brookfield and Waukesha, by drawing people and businesses away from these communities.*

## SEWRPC Response

It is not at all clear whether additional lanes under the preliminary plan will have a significant impact on land use patterns. Transportation is one of many possible factors contributing to decentralization and is generally not considered a significant factor compared to such other factors as rising affluence, cost of living, schools, environmental amenities, preference for single-family homes and larger lots, and perceived and/or actual crime and safety. In addition, the levels of congestion forecast in the year 2020 under the preliminary plan with additional lanes are only modestly less than existing levels of congestion. Thus, the preliminary plan with additional lanes is not expected to result in any substantial change in travel times or accessibility which could be expected to affect land use and patterns.

Mr. Kulash cites no modeling, research, or data which suggests that accepting a higher level of congestion will result in less decentralization and a recentralization of land use. Indeed, it has been argued that policies which promote tolerance of significant increases in congestion may contribute to an acceleration of the decentralization of businesses and residences, and, as well, declines in regional economic growth.

## Reported Kulash Statement

*Mr. Kulash claims that he has compared a monetary estimate of the benefits of the preliminary plan to its construction costs and has determined that there are only 30 cents of benefits for each dollar of costs. In preparing his calculation, Mr. Kulash compared primarily the travel time savings benefits under the preliminary plan to the estimated \$6.2 billion construction cost of the preliminary plan. Based upon this benefit-to-cost ratio of 0.3, Mr. Kulash concluded that the preliminary plan, and particularly the additional lanes, represents a poor investment.*

## SEWRPC Response

Commission staff has been unable to obtain from Mr. Kulash his calculations of benefits and costs to permit a rigorous review of his analysis. But accepting the information that is available from media reports, the Commission staff would note that Mr. Kulash has compared the benefits of the additional lanes to the cost of the entire plan, which include rebuilding the freeway system as-is. Comparing the calculated travel time savings benefits of the additional lanes to the cost of the additional lanes, which is only 12 percent, or about \$730 million of the \$6.2 billion cost of rebuilding the freeway system under the preliminary plan, results in a benefit-to-cost ratio of over 2, indicating that for every \$1.00 of construction cost of the additional lanes, more than \$2.00 of travel time savings benefits are generated.