

(Item 5) Action to Request the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to Avoid Negative Impacts on Milwaukee Public Schools' Students, Staff, and Facilities in the Design and Reconstruction of Area Freeways

#### Background

1 The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) in 2003 recommended expanding 127 miles of freeway in the seven-county region. In Milwaukee, freeways that would be expanded under the SEWRPC plan include I-94, I-894, I-43, I-794, and US 45. In addition, "design and safety" improvements would expand and change the configuration of Interchanges throughout the region.

2. The plan calls for razing an estimated 201 homes and 28 businesses in the region. Of these, some 140 homes and 13 businesses are in the City of Milwaukee, according to SEWRPC figures.

3. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation now is beginning environmental and engineering studies for reconstruction of the I-94 North-South corridor from south of the Illinois state line to the Holt Ave. interchange. The study area also includes I-894 from I-94 to 35<sup>th</sup> St.

4. The SEWRPC plan estimates reconstruction and expansion of I-94 North-South will require the removal of 72 homes to accommodate design and safety improvements. Jeff Mantes, Director of Milwaukee Public Works, estimates that this would remove at least \$15 million from the city's tax base. The loss in tax base that will occur if Milwaukee freeways or interchanges are expanded will have a negative impact on MPS's already difficult financial status.

5. SEWRPC estimated the cost of the regional freeway reconstruction plan at \$6.2 billion (year 2000 dollars), but failed to propose a funding source. The cost of the I-94 North-South reconstruction now is estimated at \$1.6 billion.

#### Administration's Analysis

6. The SEWRPC regional freeway study did not analyze the impact of the agency's recommendations on neighborhoods or schools.

7. Milwaukee Public Schools has numerous schools and facilities adjacent to or very near freeways, including Garland and Lowell Elementary along the I-94 North-South corridor. MPS Facilities and Maintenance (FSM) offices are immediately adjacent to I-43. During reconstruction of the Marquette Interchange, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation even used part of the FSM site as a staging area without first seeking MPS's permission or consent. Other sites in close proximity to freeways include Riley Elementary, Elm Elementary, Roosevelt Middle School, Green Bay Ave. Elementary, Lincoln Ave. Elementary, 8th Street School, and Sarah Scott Middle School.

8. The SEWRPC study did not consider specific effects of air pollution in areas immediately adjacent to the expanded freeways, or upon students and staff who attend and work at schools immediately adjacent to freeways. While the SEWRPC study did claim that expanding freeways would reduce certain air pollutants overall, other studies suggest any reductions in air pollution may be offset by increased traffic and changes in travel habits.



**Garland Elementary School Playground: The freeway runs behind the “Garland” sign in the background**

9. Numerous studies show that proximity to heavy traffic has a negative impact on children’s health. The journal *Pediatrics* reports that increased respiratory problems in children are associated with proximity to high-traffic areas:

Increased respiratory tract complications in children (e.g., wheezing, chronic productive cough, and asthma hospitalizations) have been associated with residence near areas of high traffic density (particularly truck traffic). Other investigators have linked various childhood cancers to proximity to traffic.

10. The Asthma and Allergy Foundation named Milwaukee the fifth-worst city for asthma for 2006, citing — among other things — the city’s worse-than-average poverty rate and worse-than-average air quality.



**Lowell Elementary: bleachers with freeway sign in the background**

11. Expanding freeways adjacent to schools may increase traffic near those schools, making the journey to and from school more hazardous for children, while the increased noise attributable to larger freeways may disrupt learning at schools adjacent to or near freeways.

12. SEWRPC staff, at the request of the City of Milwaukee, have proposed that SEWRPC's Regional Transportation Planning Advisory Committee re-examine the inclusion of 19 miles of Milwaukee freeway in the freeway expansion plans. These miles include I-94 from the Mitchell Interchange in Milwaukee to Silver Spring Dr. and from the Zoo Interchange to the Mitchell Interchange. Removing the 19 miles from the expansion proposal would not preclude freeway expansion in those areas, but would eliminate the presumption of expansion. Expansion could be considered again as part of preliminary engineering as reconstruction is planned for specific stretches of freeway.

#### Strategic Plan Compatibility Statement

13. This item supports the MPS Strategic Plan Goal 1, student achievement; Goal 2, student success in further education and employment; and Goal 3, family satisfaction, as measured by their choices in the education marketplace.

#### Statute, Administrative Policy, or Board Rules Statement

14. This item complies with state statutes and administrative rules.

#### Fiscal Impact Statement

15. This item does not authorize expenditures.

#### Implementation and Assessment Plan

16. Upon the Board's approval of this item, the Administration will write letters to the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, and other local and agency officials informing them of the Board's action. The Administration will also monitor freeway reconstruction planning and advocate for the position adopted by the Board of School Directors.

#### Committee's Recommendation

Your Committee recommends that the Board:

1. request the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to avoid negative impacts on neighborhoods, schools, and children in its redesign and reconstruction of freeways in the City of Milwaukee;
2. request the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to consult closely and cooperatively with the Milwaukee Public Schools during environmental and design studies for freeway reconstruction in Milwaukee regarding potential impacts on school students, staff, and facilities; and
3. oppose any reconstruction or expansion plans for any portion of freeway in Milwaukee which do not specifically and fully remediate the impact of the project(s) on Milwaukee Public Schools students, staff, and facilities in a manner agreeable to the Milwaukee Board of School Directors.

Director Morales moved that the Milwaukee Board of School Directors oppose the proposed freeway expansion in the City of Milwaukee; and that it demand that the Milwaukee Board of School Directors and the Superintendent of the Milwaukee Public Schools be included in decision-making regarding freeway expansion, reconstruction, or redesign in the City of Milwaukee.

The motion prevailed, the vote being as follows:

Ayes—Directors Balistreri, Blewett, Dannecker, Goldberg, Hardin, Horton, Morales and Spence—8.

Noes—President Johnson—1.

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## NEW BUSINESS

(Item A) (Considered earlier in the meeting)

(Item B) Reports of the Board's Delegates

(Item 1) Report of the Board's Delegate to the Head Start Program

Delegate: President Johnson

A. Previous Month's Summary

1. On Thursday, January 9, 2006, a meeting was held with division leaders or their representatives to discuss their roles and responsibilities in the upcoming federal review, which takes place the week of February 26. Records and materials are due in the Head Start Office on Wednesday, February 22.
2. The Head Start Program has been notified that there will be a 1% deduction in the federal Head Start grant effective immediately. This decrease was discussed with the Policy Council, and a vote was taken to approve the decrease in the salary line item for an unfilled position. The proposal will be submitted to the Board.
3. Head Start staff has been very busy taking classroom inventories and documenting their monitoring of each Head Start classroom. This information will be made available to the federal review team as part of the monitoring review process.
4. Mable Jones, consultant, will continue her work with Head Start staff on Tuesday, February 21 through Wednesday, February 23, 2006. Policy Council members and Board members are encouraged to participate in the training. Specific times will be communicated to all parties.
5. Lead from peeling paint was discovered in numerous Head Start classrooms. Facilities and Maintenance was notified, and corrective action was taken immediately. The peeling paint was removed, and the areas given a fresh coat of paint.
6. Dorothy St. Charles and Ann Terrell attended the Wisconsin Head Start Association's Fourth Annual Training Conference. They attended workshops on the "The Culture of Poverty," building communication systems, and PRISM Monitoring. They had the opportunity to hear from and connect with Roberta Gassman, Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, and with the head of Region V, Kay Willmoth, Director of the Family and Child Development, Administration for Children and Families, U. S. Department of Health & Human Services. They also participated in a brainstorming session with other state Head Start directors on the impact of funding cuts and Head Start reauthorization legislation.

- B. The Federal Review Team is requesting, as part of its on-site activities, to observe a Policy Council meeting and to meet with members of the Milwaukee Board of School Directors.