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Honorable Michael D'Amato  
Alderman  
City of Milwaukee  
200 E. Wells St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Alderman D'Amato

I appreciate very much the time and courtesy you extended to me at the Finance Committee meeting on June 9<sup>th</sup> regarding changing the Charter. At that meeting I mentioned infrastructure condition reporting had been discontinued in 1989 when I left the City. Several alderman asked that I send a copy of what the Capital Improvements Committee developed on that subject and I promised I would do that.

I was only partly correct. The Norquist administration did report briefly on the condition of infrastructure (1991-1996 Capital Improvements Program), but in my opinion it does not contain any information that documents long term trends. For example it shows \$ spent rather than miles or area of paved streets.

A copy of excerpts from the 1988 Capital Improvements Committee Report and Six Year Program is included. It gives a very good description of the progress made, and includes information on the estimated useful life of elements of infrastructure, the 10 yr., 3 yr. and 1 year implied replacement cycle of each element. For example, the report shows that we were close to approximately a 40 year cycle of reconstruction and/or resurfacing of streets that year. That means we were paving about 1/40th of the 1400+ miles of street each year. Our long term average was about 50 years over a 10 year period.

I reviewed the annual report of the Department of Public Works for 2002, and close as I can tell, they paved about 14 miles of street that year. That means the short term average replacement cycle has more than doubled to almost 100 years. If you look at the report from 1988, you will note we estimated the average useful life of a street was 25 to 50 years depending on class of highway and type of pavement. You could say the average useful life of around 35 to 40 years for the system would be correct.

This kind of report was essential to let policy makers and our bond rating companies know the status of the city's physical assets. Yet as policy makers, you don't really know what condition the city is in on a city-wide basis without these kind of reports. Unfortunately, the Mayoral powers bill left

the Common Council with little recourse to find out. Public Works officials now serve at the pleasure of the Mayor and have to speak the administration line. It wasn't always that way.

The other thing that has occurred, is that the Norquist administration, with Common Council concurrence, raised the assessment rate for re-paving of streets to almost double the prior levels. This makes getting a project passed through public hearing very difficult. Until a street has deteriorated beyond the point it needs work, it is difficult to get assessments accepted. I believe the City would save money in the long term if it abolished reassessments for paving and curbs, changed state statutes to allow the city to inspect and replace driveways and sidewalks as sidewalks are now handled, without plans, and spent its limited funds where the need is greatest and payback highest. I believe the last two Commissioners of Public Works would agree with that, now that they have retired. The City would have to borrow more for a few years to play catchup, but I believe that is a legitimate reason for borrowing. Long term, it would save money.

By eliminating the reassessment for re-paving, plans and public hearings would be avoided and costs substantially reduced for each project. Also, by spending when a pavement needs work avoids a higher priced job, sometimes 2 to 4 times the cost, when it finally gets an approval to go ahead from affected owners. It also allows use of the proper pavement treatment, using a maintenance treatment in some cases rather than reconstruction or resurfacing to qualify for a reassessment.

I'm sorry this letter is so long, but I appreciate the opportunity to communicate my beliefs on infrastructure reporting to you. Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

David A. Kuemmel, P.E.  
Former Commissioner of Public Works.