



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

March 25, 2009

The Honorable Mark Miller, Co-chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 317 East
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

The Honorable Mark Pocan, Co-chair
Joint Committee on Finance
Room 309 East
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senator Miller and Representative Pocan:

I am writing to ask the Joint Committee on Finance to amend the state transportation budget, and prioritize the maintenance of existing infrastructure before building new transportation projects.

The current federal transportation stimulus money heavily favors projects on state highways and interstate highways, due to engineering requirements and the specifications that stimulus funds be used for collector and arterial roads only. We need to re-align our transportation funding strategy to place an emphasis on maintaining our existing infrastructure and increasing our support for mass transit systems.

Local roads and bridges are vital connections in delivering goods and services for economic growth. Since I have become Mayor, I have increased the City's commitment to local road maintenance. In 2005, the City Local Streets Capital budget was \$4.2 million; in 2008 it was \$5.5 million – an increase of more than 31%.

The City of Milwaukee's replacement rate for local roads is more than 100 years, and by making greater investments in my budgets, the replacement rate will be reduced to 60 years by 2014. Unfortunately, more than 20 percent of the City's roads have been ranked in "poor condition."

Currently the Pabst Farms Interchange and lane expansion on I-94 N/S freeway are proposed to be constructed. I urge the committee to delay these construction projects and re-direct those resources into local road maintenance.

Due to the state of the economy, the Pabst Farms development is not occurring. According to a January 13th article in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, the proposed development does not have any tenants. Also, according to a February 25th article in *Living Lake Country*, the Vice-President for DDR Development, the company that is overseeing the Pabst Farms project, states that at least “50 to 70 percent of the storefronts would have to be leased before a bank would lend money for the mall’s construction.” The possible stores that have been listed as potential tenants, such as Target or Kohl’s are already located in Delafield, not far from the Pabst Farms location. The fact of the matter is that it is not looking as if this will be a one-of-a-kind high-end retail destination as it was originally billed.

WisDOT studies show that the capacity of the six-lane freeway along I-94 N/S corridor will not exceed capacity until 2035, and other independent studies have challenged this assertion in light of rising energy prices, the aging population and the decline in vehicle miles traveled across the country. Additionally, the WisDOT’s Final Environmental Impact Statement for the I-94 N/S reconstruction and expansion project acknowledges that travel times throughout most sections of the I-94 N/S corridor would not change if there was an expansion to eight lanes.

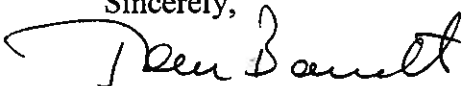
The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission has also found that 94% of all trips on I-94 N/S between Milwaukee and Kenosha start and end inside that region. This suggests that commuter rail service and high speed intercity rail service could accommodate much of the travel throughout the I-94 N/S corridor, and would preclude the need for an expansion to eight lanes.

WisDOT estimates expanding the freeway from the Mitchell Interchange to the State Line from six to eight lanes would cost \$200 million of the project’s estimated cost of \$1.9 billion.

I want to be clear that it is not my suggestion that the State halt its investment in the I-94 N/S corridor. I am not opposed to doing the necessary bridge and ramp work for future expansion, and reconstructing the existing six lane I-94 N/S corridor. Spending those dollars for additional lanes now, while local streets throughout the state are crumbling and potholes are expanding, defies common sense.

I urge the Joint Committee on Finance to reserve \$221 million from the Pabst Farms Interchange and lane expansion of the I-94 N/S corridor, and instead make these funds available for local road maintenance projects and mass transit alternatives.

Sincerely,



Mayor Tom Barrett

TB:sk:mo

Cc: Governor Jim Doyle

Cc: Secretary Frank Busalacchi, WI Department of Transportation

Cc: Members of the Joint Committee on Finance

Cc: Members of the Milwaukee Legislative Delegation