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No expansion: Bauman Pushes for transit instead of wider North-South I-94

Nov. 26 – The Wisconsin Department of Transportation should skip freeway expansion on North-South I-94 and invest money instead on rail transit, according to Milwaukee Ald. Robert Bauman.

"I-94 needs to be rebuilt, but it does not need to be expanded given there are clear and ready proposals for commuter and high-speed rail to serve the same corridor," he said.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation, rejecting Mayor Tom Barrett's opposition to freeway expansion in the city, is proposing to spend \$1.9 billion to reconstruct and expand North-South I-94 from the Illinois-Wisconsin state line to about Holt Ave. in Milwaukee and I-894 to 35th St.

No funding source for the project has been identified. WisDOT says it wants the federal highway trust fund, which is expected to run short of money by 2009, to pay for half the project's cost.

Bauman last week introduced a Common Council resolution calling for the state to repair I-94, but to keep the freeway at six lanes so the savings can be used to fund potential future rail systems, including the proposed Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee commuter rail extension and high-speed rail from Milwaukee to Chicago and possibly to Madison.

Doing so would improve "mobility and travel options in Southeastern Wisconsin while at the same time providing an overall savings to taxpayers," according to the proposed resolution. In addition, it said, "a balanced, multi-modal approach to the provision of transportation infrastructure in Southeastern Wisconsin would also give the region a hedge against the economic impacts of gasoline price increases that are likely to occur in the future."

Bauman said the three issues of freeway expansion, the KRM commuter rail line and high-speed intercity passenger rail service have been considered separate projects.

"We must stop and consider the overlap they provide and distribute dollars and costs effectively among them," he said.

Bauman also noted the inequities between financing requirements for transit projects and highway projects – funding sources for transit projects must be identified if they are to win federal approval; highway funding requirements are not nearly as stringent.

The freeway expansion proposal, he said, "seems to ignore the impact of rising gasoline and crude oil prices, increasing concerns about global warming, and the well-documented cost of urban sprawl. It seems that price is no object when it comes to expanding highways; but when it comes to implementing rail projects, financing always seem to be an insurmountable obstacle."

Ald. Michael D'Amato has signed on as a co-sponsor of the resolution and said the measure seeks to present a more even playing field for all three projects.

"It's hard to find opposition to the highway project because communities served by the highway don't have to pay for it," D'Amato said.

The resolution will be discussed by the Common Council's Public Works Committee at 9 a.m. Wednesday.

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Bauman, Robert

From: Michael E. Bahr [mbahr@prarch.com]
Sent: Monday, November 26, 2007 5:18 PM
To: Mayor Tom Barrett
Cc: Hines Jr., Willie; Bauman, Robert; D'Amato, Michael
Subject: Support for Resolution 071114

Mayor,

I am writing to express my support for Alderman Bauman's and D'Amato's resolution to coordinate regional transportation planning. I believe that this wholistic approach to transportation planning is a fiscally appropriate response to recent DOT announcements.

-Mike Bahr

Michael E. Bahr AIA
Architect

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Bauman, Robert

From: Michael E. Bahr [mbahr@prarch.com]

Sent: Monday, November 26, 2007 4:13 PM

To: Bauman, Robert

Subject: Thank you...

Alderman Bauman,

I just caught word of your initiative to NOT expand I-94 but pick up the additional traffic via better use of rail.

Thank You!

I've often wondered why we are not doing more to invest in rail (passenger and freight both) in lieu of widening every road we see, and am so very tired of the many uncoordinated efforts and out of control DOT spending.

I don't live in your district. But please, count me as a supporter of your idea.

-Mike Bahr

Michael E. Bahr AIA
Architect

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11/26/2007

Bauman, Robert

From: Roedel, Nickolas [roedeln@msoe.edu]
Sent: Friday, November 23, 2007 10:30 AM
To: Bauman, Robert
Subject: Support for public transit and against freeway expansion.
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red

Alderman Bauman-

Thank you for supporting the creation of high-speed rail, commuter rail, and other public transit options instead of favoring the proposed \$1.9 billion I-94 expansion. I strongly believe that with better public transit infrastructure in place, costly expansions like this are not necessary. Besides, mass transit is definitely more efficient and will help our air quality in southeastern Wisconsin. I hope that you and Alderman D'Amato will be able to help influence the current direction on this issue.

-Nickolas Roedel

Bauman, Robert

From: Randy Crump [rcrump@prismtechnical.com]
Sent: Monday, November 26, 2007 4:54 PM
To: Bauman, Robert
Cc: D'Amato, Michael
Subject: Daily Reporter / Trade I-94 lanes for rail lines

Aldermen:

Bravo!

Excellent work.

Thank you!

- RC

PS I don't see anyway we can help you with this, but if there is, please let us know. Thanks for the continued well thought out approach.

Randy Crump
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