

MILWAUKEE AREA LABOR COUNCIL

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations

February 8, 2021

SERVING MILWAUKEE, OZAUKEE AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

Milwaukee Common Council
City Hall
200 E. Wells Street
Room 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202

633 South Hawley Road
Suite 110
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53214
Phone (414) 771-7070
Fax (414) 771-0509
www.milwaukeeelabor.org

sent via email

Dear Members of the Milwaukee Common Council,

I am writing in reference to File 201313 which would direct City lobbyists to work against the planned I-94 East/West Corridor project. On behalf of the Labor Council I want to share some reasons why you might wish to support or remain neutral on this project, and to ask on behalf of our building trades affiliates that you do not proceed with this legislation.

Infrastructure improvement investment has been sorely lacking over the past several years, and we hope that this will change in the upcoming months and years to come. Seeking to turn away allocated funding for an important project in the heart of Milwaukee seems short-sighted. Data from The Fair Deal for Milwaukee information already shows an imbalance in what Milwaukeeans pay to the state vs what we get back. Lobbying against the project will mean the tax dollars get allocated to another community. Remember when WI sent away the rail funding? Other states got it. An expansion to reduce the rush hour bottle neck will have a positive effect on the economic health of Milwaukee within the region. This funding cannot be allocated to mass transit or local streets. We agree that there is a great necessity for investments for those transportation needs as well, as part of a comprehensive transportation strategy.

This brings us to the jobs question. Just like public investments in Milwaukee building projects have helped to create opportunity for unemployed residents of Milwaukee, so too do investments in highway projects. Hundreds of trades members live in the districts that directly abut the I-94 corridor. Hundreds are laid off right now, and each new construction season union trades welcome in scores of new apprentices, and look for projects on which to place the apprentices who already have some training under their belt. Without ongoing work to offer to 1st through 4th year apprentices, they won't have the chance to advance to Journeyman status. That is why we don't regard our work as "temporary," as it is sometimes characterized. Every new project represents an opportunity to continue a worker's livelihood in their chosen profession, whether they grade the surface, pave it, paint the lines on it, or put up the guardrails. These are thousands of good paying positions being considered, at a time when the country and the region are trying to recover from the economic havoc the pandemic has created.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation funds a training program known as TrANS (Transportation Alliance for New Solutions). The course is administered by our partner WRTP/Big Step. In the past 3 years, Big Step offered Entry Level Construction Skills Courses that combined the Building Trades Multi-Craft Core Curriculum and the TrANS Roadbuilding curriculum. ELCS training classes help build the pipeline for the construction workforce, preparing them to succeed on the job. The students in these training programs obtained a number of construction related certifications such as CDL permit preparation, OSHA 10/30, Scaffold Building, Aerial/Boom Lift, and First Aid/CPR. Of 232 people trained, 109 have been placed, 56 of those placed were African American residents from the Milwaukee area. Having additional projects specifically in the Milwaukee area to attach trained and ready Milwaukee workers to is a win-win-win for local contractors, local workers, and the community as a whole. For these reasons, we ask you to vote no on File 201313.

Sincerely,



Pam Fendt, President
Milwaukee Area Labor Council

OFFICERS

Pam Fendt
President
Laborers Local 113
pam@milwaukeeelabor.org

Mark Pelzek
Vice President
AFSCME Local 47
mark@milwaukeeelabor.org

Michael Daily
Secretary
USW Local 1114
mdaily@usw.org

Ross M. Winklbauer, Sr.
Treasurer
USW Local 1343
rwinklbauer@usw.org

PF:rl/opeiu 9 afl-cio