



Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

March 26, 2021

Secretary Craig Thompson
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
4822 Madison Yards Way
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Secretary Thompson:

This letter is to share input with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) on the reconstruction of I-94 between 16th Street and 70th Street. With the Governor's inclusion of this project in his budget proposal, I write to ask specifically that the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project be revisited and updated.

I have heard from and met with many community stakeholders and heard about both concerns and merits of this project. The 2016 EIS identified a preferred alternative that addressed many of the concerns I expressed at that time. Specifically, the EIS affirmed the project would have no double decking and would be built within a similar alignment and footprint as the existing Interstate to minimize property takings of homes and businesses.

I support reconstruction of this segment of I-94 to preserve its future use as a safe travel option and for access to commerce in the City of Milwaukee. Reconstruction will create many family-supporting union jobs. However, there have been significant changes in the past few years that I believe make it necessary to reevaluate the preferred alternative in greater detail. Just in this past year, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused incredible change in our lives and there is uncertainty of the long term effects on many things including our future work habits and travel patterns.

With heightened awareness of racial injustice in our country including the impact of Interstate construction on communities of color, this project needs to be considered through the lens of racial equity and inclusion. Reconstructing I-94 will be a significant investment and we need to make sure that the project is a part of broader infrastructure investment strategy that promotes equity and resilience.

I am requesting WisDOT complete a Supplemental EIS specifically to take additional time to work with City stakeholders and residents to evaluate and better understand the impacts of this project. A successful project should include comprehensive community benefits which serve all residents and businesses in our City and does not adversely impact those living near the corridor.

An infrastructure reconstruction project of this magnitude will also be an opportunity to create jobs for Milwaukee residents. As a part of this project, WisDOT should proactively seek authority and establish geographic based hiring requirements that would benefit city residents. The City of Milwaukee was allowed to apply the City's Residential Preference Program requirements to the Federally-funded Streetcar project, with positive results for local workers.

As a part of the Supplemental EIS process, I also ask WisDOT to consider the following list of recommended improvements, projects, and priorities. These recommended improvements, both within the I-94 corridor and throughout the City of Milwaukee, will help continue our work locally to improve mobility and mode choice in Milwaukee. They also support our goals of increasing the city's resilience to climate change and increasing our environmental sustainability.

The list of improvements, projects and priorities are categorized by "**Workforce Development & Jobs benefits**" and "**Neighborhood Connectivity**", "**Mobility**", and "**Climate**" Projects. The list is further prioritized within each category based on the potential to mitigate the adverse impacts noted above. These improvements should be considered for implementation even if Interstate expansion does not happen, and instead the I-94 corridor is rebuilt with its existing cross-section.

It should also be noted that improvements typically associated with reconstruction projects are *not* included in this list. Those improvements include proper intersection design that prioritizes pedestrian safety and slow speeds, as well as traffic signal upgrades. It is the City of Milwaukee's expectation that these across the board improvements will be included in the I-94 work.

I look forward to working with you to ensure a Supplemental EIS matches the expectations of our residents and minimizes negative impacts should the I-94 reconstruction project continue to move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Barrett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "T".

Tom Barrett
Mayor