

## RETHINKING TRANSPORTATION:

### A NEW INITIATIVE FOR 1000 FRIENDS

Cities make many decisions that affect how they grow: zoning codes, economic development initiatives, and utility-infrastructure provisions are key among them. But in terms of raw impact on urban form, these all pale in comparison to transportation planning. Growing smart – or not – is overwhelmingly driven by which modes of transportation infrastructure we build, where we choose to site it, how much (and who) we charge to fund it, and how much capacity it can carry.

Transportation investments of all kinds represent a public subsidy for development, somewhere. It's all a question of our priorities, which is really a way of asking: What's transportation for?

#### “What’s transportation for?”

In 1958, two years after the Interstate Highway Act was passed, the cantankerous urban critic Lewis Mumford wondered exactly that, challenging the nation's mounting monomania for high-speed, limited-access roads. “What's transportation for?” he asked. “The purpose of transportation is to bring people and goods to places where they are needed. ... A good transportation system minimizes unnecessary transportation; and in any event it offers change of speed and mode to fit a diversity of human purposes.” Bigger, faster, and wider freeways, Mumford noted, do none of this.

In this issue of *Wisconsin Landscapes*, 1000 Friends will re-open Mumford's troubling and essential question: “What's transportation for?” We will consider how transportation funds in Wisconsin are appropriated and misappropriated at the state level, we will examine Southeastern Wisconsin's debate over transportation priorities and highway spending for the next 30 years, and we will consider how Smart Growth is good for transportation and mobility. In short, we will explore the central role of transportation to smart growth in Wisconsin.

## WHY SMART GROWTH IS GOOD FOR MOBILITY

This winter, 1000 Friends received a generous grant from the Joyce Foundation to work on transportation issues. We have hired a transportation analyst and released a transportation briefing booklet – *Exceeding the Limit: WisDOT and Transportation Financing in Wisconsin*. We've got transportation on our minds, and accordingly, this edition of “Why Smart Growth is good for...” will focus on mobility.



Mobility is best defined as “the ability to move freely.” Ensuring mobility for Wisconsin's citizens is the combined responsibility of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), the counties and municipal governments. But

what, exactly, is the “ability to move freely?” Is it an uncongested freeway? A comprehensive bike path system? Light Rail? A walkable school? These are difficult things to balance, but balance is the key, and the Smart Growth law provides a good guide for how to achieve it.

According to the law, each Wisconsin community must develop a comprehensive plan that incorporates nine elements, including a transportation element focused on the development of a range of transportation choices, and the integration of state and local transportation planning. In addition, two of the law's fourteen goals deal specifically with transportation.

The first goal is “Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.” More than 20 percent of Wisconsin's population cannot or does not drive, including more than one million children, a growing elderly population, the disabled, the poor, and others. Without reliable access to transportation choices, these individuals



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**DIRECTORS' COLUMN: NEW CHALLENGES AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

Dear Friends,

2003 has already proven to be a busy year for 1000 Friends. We have a new governor, a new administration, as well as new challenges and new opportunities to promote smart growth throughout the state. And, as our readers will note, this newsletter focuses on the subject of transportation policy – a new initiative for 1000 Friends.



Under the new challenges heading: Our state is facing the biggest budget deficit of its history, and all state programs – those we support as well as those we oppose – are subject to funding cuts. You will find an analysis of how our programs are faring under Governor Doyle's state budget on page 6. In addition, due to significant misinformation and misunderstanding, the Smart Growth law is under heavy attack in some parts of the state and the legislature. (Happily, many communities recognize it as the first chance they've had in a long time to bring everyone's voice to the planning table and more communities than ever are applying for comprehensive planning grants.) We will be answering those attacks over the coming months and will work hard to get out our message that planning for future growth and preservation of resources vital to our urban and rural communities is now more important than ever in the face of budget cuts.

With regard to new opportunities: We have a new administration that has proven eager to listen to the concerns and ideas of our organization and our members on issues from transportation reform to comprehensive planning to shared revenues. In addition, we have a stellar and extremely hard-working staff to make sure your concerns are heard across the street and that our message of responsible growth that protects urban and rural communities, as well as taxpayer investment, is disseminated throughout the state. We are also taking on a new program initiative – transportation – and have hired a full-time transportation analyst, Ward Lyles, to tackle this complicated issue.

Finally, the last addition to be added under the "new" category is 1000 Friends' newest member. On March 2, Institute Director Andrea Dearlove gave birth to her and Paul's first child, Joshua Theodore. As luck would have it, 1000 Friends had until that point logged 2,499 members – so she was able to sign up her son as member number 2,500.



With your continued support, we look forward to tackling the challenges of this year and turning them into opportunities. You can help us with this in a number of ways:

1. Remember to renew your membership – and if possible, increase your renewal for whatever amount you can!
2. Check with your employer to see if they have a matching gift program – it's a great way to double your investment!
3. Sign up a friend as a new member.

A special thank you to all of you who responded to our winter appeal with an end-of-the-year contribution! We've said it before, and we'll keep saying it, because it's true: we could not accomplish any of our work without the generous and constant support of our members. Thank you.

Sincerely,

**Dave Cieslewicz**  
 Dave Cieslewicz  
 Director, 1000 Friends, Inc.

**Andrea Dearlove**  
 Andrea Dearlove  
 Director, Land Use Institute

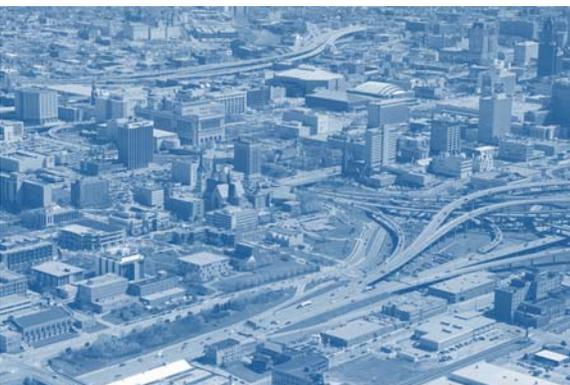
## REBUILDING THE MILWAUKEE FREEWAY: EXAMINING SEWRPC'S PLAN

Milwaukee's freeway system will, over the next 30 years, need to be replaced – piece-by-piece. Its obsolescence presents us with a once-in-a-generation chance to rethink how we plan for transportation and land use – and to get it right this time. Unfortunately, the “preferred option” of the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC, pronounced “sewer-pack”) ignores everything America has learned about urban freeways in the last 40 years. SEWRPC intends to spend huge sums of money in order to vastly increase the scale of the freeway system, while ignoring arterials, other modes of transit, quality-of-life issues, the competitiveness of downtown, the fiscal health of the suburbs, and eventually the economic health of the entire region.

SEWRPC wants to add 127 additional lane-miles to the 270-mile system. Almost all of the freeways in Milwaukee County would be widened, despite the opposition of the city, county, and several inner-ring suburbs. The plan also includes the greatly expanded Marquette Interchange, which is projected to cost nearly \$1 billion. The total bill will be more than \$6.2 billion.

SEWRPC's plan only addresses highways, and considering its vast expense, it will be a long time before any significant investment of transportation funds will be made in non-road projects in the region, or even non-Interstate arterial improvements, not to mention projects in the rest of the state.

The justification for SEWRPC's plan is congestion, and it has aggressively used scare tactics to make its case. SEWRPC defines “congestion” to mean that for at least one hour in each direction on a weekday, traffic speeds drop 5 MPH below free-flow – that is, to about 60 MPH. If the system does not add capacity, SEWRPC warns, the 65 miles that were “congested” in 1999 would rise to 120 by 2020. Regardless of what is done, SEWRPC predicts that in 2020 congestion levels near downtown will remain about the same; the fear is that “congestion” will creep further into the suburbs. In fact, Milwaukee's average commute in 2000 was only 20 minutes – among the



shortest of any large city in the nation. SEWRPC's dire congestion warnings amount to as little as three extra minutes from Waukesha to downtown Milwaukee.

Let us leave aside the question of whether those three minutes are worth \$6.2 billion. The real question is whether SEWRPC can build its way out of congestion. We doubt it.

One problem is that SEWRPC's analysis stubbornly assumes, “The proposed additional lanes may not be expected to induce additional travel.” On the contrary, “induced traffic” is a phenomenon that has been repeatedly demonstrated by economists and transportation planners (it is known, in several variants, as the Downs-Thompson paradox, the Pigou-Knight-Downs paradox, and the Braess paradox). Basically, if you give drivers the choice, they will switch to newer, faster roads. Developers will respond by siting projects to take advantage of the new roadway capacity, putting yet more new drivers on the new roads, often long before the roads are even built. The result is that congestion will immediately fill the added capacity.

Maryland's expansion of I-270 is a cautionary tale. The DC-area freeway added lanes in the 1990s in hopes of alleviating congestion. Instead, the added road capacity made more distant development appealing, and new housing starts jumped nearly 800 percent. Today, the new road is again over-capacity, and traffic volume is even higher than 2010 projections.

SEWRPC also believes, “Transportation ... is not generally considered a significant cause ... of decentralization.” Again on the contrary, transportation planning and economics literature leave little doubt that high-speed freeways aid in sprawl and the hollowing-out of American cities. A 2000 study by economists from UC-Irvine and the New York Federal Reserve Bank stated, “Changes in metropolitan location patterns are induced by highways, and these changes are not, on net, costless” to cities. Freeway construction and expansion provides a public subsidy for suburban development, and the suburbs can pass on the savings in the form of lower taxes, lower purchase or rental costs, and more. By under-pricing suburban locations, freeways give suburbs an unfair edge over urban locations and contribute to the decline of American central cities.



**SEWRPC'S PLAN ALSO INCLUDES THE GREATLY EXPANDED MARQUETTE INTERCHANGE, WHICH IS PROJECTED TO COST NEARLY \$1 BILLION.**

*(Continued on next page)*

## REBUILDING THE MILWAUKEE FREEWAY (CONT'D)



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**HIGH-SPEED  
FREEWAYS AID IN  
SPRAWL AND THE  
HOLLOWING-OUT  
OF AMERICAN  
CITIES.**

Meanwhile, the sort of low-density development that SEWRPC's plans will encourage along the metropolitan fringe is revenue-negative for municipalities. New "sprawl"-style housing, for example, typically generates about 25 percent less in revenue than it demands in local school and infrastructure costs. Therefore the suburbs, too, will be losers under SEWRPC's plan.

Yet another cause for concern is SEWRPC's un-audited cost estimates and lack of a funding plan. SEWRPC assures critics that no work can go forward without funding, but this is simply untrue. Moreover, a recent American Planning Association (APA) study of cost-underestimation in transportation projects found that the average under-estimate for road projects is 20 percent (and the survey includes many small projects; larger projects have larger overruns). It also found that innocent errors cannot explain the discrepancy. The authors conclude that "strategic misrepresentation, i.e., lying" is the only explanation.

In short, the SEWRPC plan pursues a strategy that will favor road-builders, suburban developers, and almost no one else: the city and inner ring suburbs will suffer; sprawl will decrease quality of life in the outlying counties, regional fiscal health will deteriorate, congestion will not abate, and there will be no money for other transportation projects for a generation.

### What is 1000 Friends' interest in the Milwaukee Freeway Project?

This spring, 1000 Friends will work with UW-Milwaukee and the consulting firm, Planning + Design Initiative, to challenge SEWRPC's analysis. We will consider the local effects of induced traffic and land-use impacts, as well as multi-modal solutions in the region. We expect that the benefits of SEWRPC's plan will be less than what it has stated, and that the costs – figured not only in capital dollars, but also in the acceleration of inefficient land-use at the metro level and the ongoing undermining of the regional competitiveness of Milwaukee and the inner-ring suburbs – will be much greater. Other alternatives, in short, will be shown to give more "bang for the buck."

From there, 1000 Friends will propose workable, affordable alternatives that are in accordance with Smart Growth principles. These will likely include a thorough rethinking of the extent of highway reconstruction necessary. It will also feature integrated thinking on rail and bus alternatives, as well as planning for accommodations for pedestrians and bicycles. Finally, we will consider the possibility of removing unneeded stretches of freeway, as Milwaukee did with the Park East Freeway.

— By Hal Cohen, Planning Director

*Images courtesy of the Environmental Law and Policy Center. 2002*

**"Under existing plans, shortfalls in state transportation funding are projected in coming decades. Tough choices on both the expenditure and revenue sides of the ledger lie ahead. Rebuilding the southeastern Wisconsin freeway system looms particularly large."**

— Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance  
*The Wisconsin Taxpayer, "Transportation Financing in Wisconsin"*

# WHY SMART GROWTH IS GOOD FOR MOBILITY (CONT'D)

(Continued from page 1)

cannot reach jobs, health care or schools. By building denser neighborhoods that accommodate multiple modes, we provide not only transportation choices – walking, biking, bus and train transit – but independence as well.

Even when there are places to go nearby, our current neighborhood designs too often require a car because crossing roads on foot or bike is too dangerous. Smart Growth will help address these issues of access, health and safety by encouraging the creation of neighborhoods with people-oriented, rather than auto-oriented, designs.



The second goal is “Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens,

including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.” Clearly, the needs of Wisconsin’s citizens are varied. The more choices there are – roads, highways, buses, sidewalks, bike paths, commuter and regional rail, airplanes – the better able Wisconsin will be to meet the needs of all citizens. And, more choices mean that more people can opt not to drive if the roads are congested, if the weather is bad, or if they simply find driving inconvenient – increasing efficiency and safety for themselves and those around them.

For most of the twentieth century, Americans have viewed the automobile as the paragon of independence. Yet, in day-to-day life, the automobile can be just as much of a burden as a liberator. Brake pads need to be fixed, insurance premiums must be paid, and parking must be found. For a two-car household, the cost averages more than \$12,000 in auto-related expenses each year. This amounts to 18 percent of the average household’s annual expenditures – more than the average percentage spent on food, clothes, education or leisure. Only housing costs more. Our exclusive dependence on cars erodes our ability to pay for necessities, as well as creature comforts, our children’s futures, and our own enjoyment of life.

The personal household costs of automobile-centered communities, however, are dwarfed by the more than \$1 billion a year that WisDOT spends on state highways. Roughly \$1.5 billion more per year was spent by local governments on local roads. Yet, spending on other modes is miniscule in comparison – less than \$400 million for aeronautics, rail, pedestrians, bicycles, and transit

combined. Such a striking imbalance in transportation investments makes it impossible for our transportation system to meet the needs of all its citizens. Just as road projects create jobs, increase mobility and stimulate economic growth, so, too, do investments in other modes – often with fewer negative environmental, social, and economic side-effects. The Smart Growth law provides a ‘green-print’ for better mobility, better communities, and continued prosperity for Wisconsin residents by setting as a goal the creation of an integrated and efficient transportation system for the movement of freight, business travel and personal travel.

We conclude by returning to the definition of mobility. The Smart Growth goals dealing with transportation illustrate that mobility is more than getting from point A to B. It is about access to opportunity, to work, to education, and to recreation. It is also about considering what all of those people going from A to B does to the places between A and B. A range of transportation choices to reach jobs, homes, civic and community places, in a safe and efficient manner, so that our communities and their economies are strengthened by our transportation infrastructure – that is real mobility. Smart Growth can help us to build Wisconsin’s transportation system to provide true mobility.



— by L. Ward Lyles, Transportation Analyst

**THE SMART GROWTH LAW PROVIDES A ‘GREEN-PRINT’ FOR BETTER MOBILITY, BETTER COMMUNITIES, AND CONTINUED PROSPERITY FOR WISCONSIN RESIDENTS BY SETTING AS A GOAL THE CREATION OF AN INTEGRATED AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM.**

**An Exercise in Street Smarts:** The same 40 people who constitute a crowd in traffic create a new city scene when they get out from behind the wheel.



1. In the demonstration, first they fill four lanes of a downtown street in their automobiles.



2. Then each trades the driver’s seat for a chair.



3. Next they assume the pose of transit riders, clustering their seats in one bus-sized space.



4. Finally, they take their places in the urban landscape as pedestrians and cyclists.

*The Tampa Tribune, 7/18/99*



### HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP:

- Call or write the Governor's office to thank him for his clear support of the programs that 1000 Friends of Wisconsin values.
- Contact your legislators to express your strong support for preserving these programs and their current funding in the final version of the biennial budget. Legislators will need to hear from you particularly on Comprehensive Planning Grants, Stewardship and Transportation, as each of these issues is already proving contentious.
- Watch your mail for a copy of our complete Wisconsin Conservation Agenda and support 1000 Friends' advocacy efforts with a contribution to our spring appeal.

We will keep you posted as the budget moves through the legislature and will update you as bills are in-

## LEGISLATION UPDATE: THE NAME OF THE GAME IS "DEFENSE"

Governor Doyle presented his 2003-2005 biennial budget proposal on February 18. Despite the serious budget deficit, we're pleased to report that a number of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin's key programs were spared by the Governor's budget. We will vigorously defend these programs as they move through the Legislature over the course of the next several months.

**The Stewardship Fund** The Governor has preserved the Stewardship Fund at its current funding level of \$60 million per year.

*1000 Friends' goal:* To keep the Stewardship Fund at its current funding level of \$60 million per year. We will be working with a number of other groups on this issue to highlight for the Legislature the value of the many excellent conservation projects funded by Stewardship dollars.

**Comprehensive Planning Grants** The Governor preserved the comprehensive planning grants program at its current funding level of \$3 million per year.

*1000 Friends' goal:* To preserve the comprehensive planning grants program at its current funding level by emphasizing the following:

- 1) The program is currently oversubscribed and will continue to be popular with communities that are starting their comprehensive planning processes.
- 2) Communities across the state are putting together comprehensive plans—with a focus on public participation and multi-jurisdictional cooperation – through the assistance of these grants.
- 3) Planning has the potential to create efficiencies and reduce local government spending over the long-term.

**The Land Council and Land Information Board** The Governor recommended preserving the Land Council and Land Information Board by extending their sunset dates to September 1, 2005, as well as funding and staffing them in each year of the biennium.

*1000 Friends' goal:* To encourage the Governor to appoint qualified and motivated Land Council members and to actively utilize the expertise of the Land Council and Land Information Board on state land use issues.

**Board of Commissioners of Public Lands** The Governor has recommended expanding this board's authority to purchase land at the Governor's request. Land purchases would be coordinated with other land acquisition programs, such as the Stewardship Fund.

*1000 Friends' goal:* To support this expansion of authority as a complement to the work of the Stewardship Fund.

### Transportation

**Transportation Fund Transfer to General Purpose Revenues** By far, the most unprecedented action taken by the Governor on transportation was his recommendation to shift \$500 million from the segregated transportation fund to GPR in order to fund shared revenues and education. This shift, however, is offset by an additional \$330 million in revenue bonding authority—which means the actual cuts to the transportation fund equal roughly \$180 million, with most of the cuts targeted at state highways.

**Marquette Interchange** The Governor allocated \$244 million in funding over the biennium for the Marquette Interchange rather than the \$700 million that WisDOT initially requested.

**Major Highway Projects and Maintenance** Although Maintenance funding is increased above inflation over the biennium, Rehabilitation funding is cut by 17% in FY 04 and 10% in FY 05 – meaning that repair work is cut dramatically. Major Highway Projects are cut by 8.5% in FY 04 and 7% in FY 05. While the cut to Majors is substantial, we would prefer to see the cuts there much greater and instead see Rehabilitation funding held steady or even increased.

**Local Roads** General Transportation Aids and the Local Road Improvement Program are increased, respectively, approximately at inflation and slightly above inflation. Considering the fiscal crisis and the cuts to state highway programs discussed above, these increases indicate a commitment to local roads.

**Transit** Transit Aids and Elderly and Disabled Transportation Aids increase approximately at the rate of inflation (2.5%). Also, \$400,000 is allocated for engineering for the KRM commuter rail line. Again, these increases indicate a commitment to these programs in the face of the state fiscal crisis.

*1000 Friends' goal:* To support the Governor's proposal in the face of mounting severe opposition to this part of the budget by various legislators, WisDOT and the road builders. We will defend the Local Transportation, Transit and Elderly/Disabled Aids against interests who will fight to cut these programs in lieu of cuts to state highways. Rehabilitation has been cut nearly twice as much as Major Highway Projects – and nearly five times the dollar amount. We will work to make rehabilitation and maintenance a funding priority rather than an afterthought. We will continue to work for a better design of the Marquette Interchange that meets safety and mobility needs but does not compromise the economic and cultural health of the city, the region and its residents.

— by Lisa MacKinnon, Policy Director

# 1000 FRIENDS' TRANSPORTATION BRIEFING BOOKLET

On Tuesday, March 4, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin delivered its transportation briefing booklet — *Exceeding the Limit: WisDOT and Transportation Financing in Wisconsin* — to all 132 legislators following a 10:00 a.m. press conference in the Capitol Rotunda. The briefing booklet, which was delivered in an envelope resembling a traffic ticket, analyzes Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) spending practices and funding priorities over the past fifteen years and proposes policy reforms to increase accountability and fiscal responsibility.

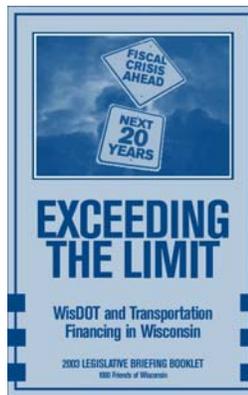
"Over and above our current budget crisis, WisDOT projects a minimum \$5.1 billion budget shortfall over the next 20 years. The Legislature, the Governor and WisDOT have a golden opportunity right now to rein in out of control transportation spending and to increase accountability to taxpayers," said Lisa MacKinnon, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin Policy Director. "Our current transportation spending practices and funding priorities are unsustainable. This report highlights some of the reasons why, and offers policy makers a list of reforms that could lead to a transportation system that is more fiscally responsible and that better serves the needs of Wisconsin's citizens."

Commenting on one of several issues addressed in the report, Senator Tim Carpenter (D-Third Senate District) said, "Portions of the Interstate Highway System in Southeastern Wisconsin must be rebuilt due to safety concerns. However, the SEWRPC Regional Freeway

System Reconstruction Study goes well beyond safety improvements and, in fact, includes exceedingly troubling plans for expanding the freeways with very expensive, additional lanes." He added, "With a looming state budget deficit and WisDOT funds' own growing budget shortfalls, unnecessary expansion does not appear responsible. 1000 Friends of Wisconsin is playing an important role in researching and illuminating these transportation issues for the public, and for our elected representatives."

Other issues addressed in the briefing booklet include funding of local roads versus state highways, lack of attention to past audits of WisDOT, the major highway project approval process, a "fix it first" policy, gas tax indexing and bonding.

THE BRIEFING BOOKLET ANALYZES WISDOT SPENDING PRACTICES AND FUNDING PRIORITIES OVER THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS AND PROPOSES POLICY REFORMS TO INCREASE ACCOUNTABILITY AND FISCAL



To request a copy of the briefing booklet, please contact 1000 Friends of Wisconsin at (608) 259-1000 or email [friends@1kfriends.org](mailto:friends@1kfriends.org).

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: 1000 FRIENDS OF WISCONSIN, INC. & THE LAND USE INSTITUTE

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**NOTE:** Institute members in regular text, 1000 Friends, Inc. member in italics. Member numbers follow each name.



THANK YOU!  
TO ALL OUR MEMBERS



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**Yes, I would like to become a member of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin and join in the fight to perfect the places where we live, to protect those places where we don't! I would like to support:**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Inc. (advocacy, not tax-deductible)

\_\_\_\_\_ The Land Use Institute (research & education, tax-deductible as allowed by law)

**Please sign me up for an annual membership at the following level:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Friends' Circle (\$1,000)

\_\_\_\_\_ Friends' Society (\$500)

\_\_\_\_\_ Friends' Fellowship (\$250)

\_\_\_\_\_ Friend (\$100)

\_\_\_\_\_ Regular Membership (\$35)

**Contact Information (mail to: 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, 16 N. Carroll St., Suite. 810, Madison, WI 53703).**

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Address/City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email (please add me to the 1000 Friends email network) \_\_\_\_\_