

CORRECTING WisDOT's MISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN

WisDOT CLAIM

FACT



WisDOT CANNOT USE THESE FUNDS TO FIX LOCAL ROADS

It is true that the Federal Highway Administration funds WisDOT pursued cannot be used for regular maintenance, but there is more flexibility with capital spending than WisDOT indicates. These funds can be used for building new transit, and WisDOT can pursue other federal funding sources for that purpose. It's time to look at modern solutions that will meet the transportation needs of our community.



WisDOT DOES NOT CONTROL TRANSIT FUNDING

WisDOT is correct that it does not control funding at the state level, which is dictated by the legislative budget process. WisDOT serves an important advisory role in which they can advocate for transit. However, in their budgetary requests this year, WisDOT did not seek to increase transit operating funds. According to WisDOT's "Budget Trends" report, when adjusting for inflation, transit funding is down 10% since 2006. Furthermore, WisDOT has diverted its discretionary funds away from transit, including funds from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program (CMAQ), of which more than 50% funds that could support transit are diverted to roads.



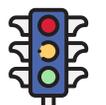
THIS STRETCH OF HIGHWAY IS USED BY COMMUTERS ACROSS THE MILWAUKEE REGION

According to WisDOT, 76% of all rush hour trips start or end in the corridor, indicating that this section of the freeway serves a small portion of suburban commuters. Transit expansion could easily serve the same purpose as highway expansion. WisDOT should listen to the public who live and travel along the corridor.



A PROPER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) HAS BEEN COMPLETED

What are the standards for a "proper Environmental Impact Statement?" Should age, changing conditions, and accuracy play a role in determining the need for a new one? In 2016 the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) approved WisDOT's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which was based on data from 2009. FHWA is now requiring WisDOT to complete a reevaluation of its EIS. One thing that does not appear to have changed since the public engagement conducted back in 2012, 2013, and 2014 is the public outcry against expansion, but WisDOT won't know for sure unless it conducts a new EIS. The importance of building a system that meets the needs and interests of the community outweigh the imperative of a speedy decision.



POST-PANDEMIC TRAFFIC HAS REBOUNDED SO THIS EXPANSION IS NECESSARY

WisDOT is claiming that afternoon peak hour traffic has rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. However this cannot be verified with any publicly available data. WisDOT's published data shows that daily traffic is down 15-20% across the corridor. WisDOT's claim that a 25% reduction is required to avoid expansion is unfounded. Traffic on parts of this corridor actually peaked between 2003-2005. We should wait and see how traffic patterns change from the pandemic before pursuing a highway expansion.



THE PUBLIC HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS

Community engagement is not served by holding one event in which WisDOT notifies a subset of stakeholders of its plans for expansion. Public agencies like WisDOT are accountable to the communities they are designed to serve. They do not plan to hold meaningful public engagement after restarting the project. WisDOT needs to seek more public input on its plans to spend \$1 billion of taxpayer money on a project that will impact residents throughout the greater Milwaukee area.