



January 12, 2009

Governor Jim Doyle
P.O. Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Doyle:

We are writing to urge you to support significant public transportation improvements with any economic stimulus money the state receives. We appreciate that you put many public transportation projects on the list of desired projects for federal stimulus money. However, on Jan. 8 you stated that that it would be difficult to decide which state and local projects would be paid for by the federal economic stimulus package.

For civil rights, environmental justice, economic, and environmental reasons, transit should be one of Wisconsin's highest priorities.

As you are aware, even before the current recession the plight of the low-income minority communities concentrated in Milwaukee's inner city was desperate. Approximately 50% of working age African-American males in Milwaukee are currently unemployed, and unemployment in the Hispanic community is also high. At the same time, extremely large portions of the minority and low-income populations in Milwaukee are transit-dependent. Fewer than half of African-American and Hispanic adults in Milwaukee County have valid drivers' licenses, while many others have licenses but do not own a vehicle. Significantly improved public transit is needed to connect these unemployed and underemployed Milwaukee workers to job opportunities, that are now predominantly located in the suburbs.¹

Yet public transit systems are on the verge of collapse. The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and the Public Policy Forum have both documented the declining share of state funding for transit in the Milwaukee region in recent years, the resulting cutbacks in service and increases in fares that have occurred year after year, and the drastic cutbacks that will result by 2010 if increased funding is not provided.²

¹Final EIS, I-94 N-S Corridor Project, March 2008, p. 4-48; John Pawasarat, *The Drivers License Status of the Voting Age Population in Wisconsin*, UWM-Employment and Training Institute (June 2005); *SEWRPC Planning Report 049, 2035 Regional Transportation System Plan* (2006), pp. 123, 138.

²*SEWRPC Planning Report 049, supra* at pp. 274-75, 372; Public Policy Forum, *Milwaukee County's Transit Crisis*, May 2008.

Expanding transit also makes good economic sense. Some have urged expanded road and bridge building programs to create jobs in response to the recession. However, building transit actually creates *more* jobs than highway construction.³ Transit jobs also provide both short and long term community employment benefits.

According to a recent study by Cambridge Systematics, 314 jobs and a \$30 million gain in sales for businesses are created for each \$10 million invested in transit capital funding, and over 570 jobs are created for each \$10 million in the short run. While new highway construction does lead to an increase in employment, these jobs are mostly for non-local workers: road engineers and other specialists who come in to an area for a specific job and then leave when it has been completed. On the other hand, transit investments create a wealth of employment opportunities in the short and the long run. Transit system construction leads to an impressive level of short-term job creation, and once the systems are finished, a long-term source of high-quality jobs. Of the 350,000 people directly employed by public transportation systems, more than 50 percent are operators or conductors. In addition, 10,000 to 20,000 professionals work under contract to public transportation systems or are employed by companies and government offices that support these systems. Thousands of others are employed in related services (i.e. engineering, manufacturing, construction, retail, etc.).⁴

Transit also has the potential to create good-paying manufacturing jobs for workers and businesses - including Wisconsin employers - who build the buses and trains our economy needs.

In addition, while some of Wisconsin's roads and bridges do need to be repaired or rebuilt - and stimulus money could support those projects - using stimulus money to add lanes to existing highways or increase highway miles is simply not one of our most pressing state needs. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation concedes that widening I-94 in the Milwaukee area would have only "minimal" effect in shortening travel times, even during peak congestion periods⁵, and at the time that analysis was conducted - before even the current recession began - highway traffic volumes had been declining in Wisconsin and nationally.⁶ While the existing highway may need to be rebuilt, it would be a far greater benefit to workers and the community to use the \$200 million it would cost to add these unneeded lanes to instead expand transit options.

At the same time, the Governor's Task Force on Global Warming that you created has recognized the threat posed by greenhouse gas emissions, and the need to begin now to reduce those emissions in order to sustain our environment, our well-being, and our economy for the long-term.⁷ It has been estimated that adding one new lane-mile of urban highway will increase

³For example, a 2004 study by the Surface Transportation Policy Partnership (STPP) found that every \$1.25 billion spent on public transit creates approximately 51,300 jobs, while the same expenditure on roads and bridges would create 43,200 jobs.

⁴STPP, "Transportation and Jobs": www.transact.org/library/factsheets/jobs.asp

⁵FEIS, *I-94 NS Project*, *supra*, at Exhibit 4-1 and 4-2.

⁶Federal Highway Administration, *Traffic Volume Trends, May 2008*, July 28, 2008.

⁷Governor's Task Force on Global Warming, *Wisconsin's Strategy for Reducing Global Warming*, July 2008.

carbon dioxide emissions by more than 100,000 tons over its 50-year expected lifetime⁸ - and current plans propose far more expansion than one mile. Using stimulus money to sustain and expand public transportation options offers a real opportunity to improve the environment for ourselves and our children.

Taking environmental justice seriously will benefit the entire state - including communities whose needs have too often been ignored. To ensure that underrepresented communities get a fair share of benefits from public investments, we urge you to prioritize public transportation projects in your budget and with any stimulus funds Wisconsin receives.

Sincerely,



Chris Ahmuty
Executive Director

cc: Sec. Frank Busalacchi, Wis. Dept. of Transportation

⁸ Clark Williams-Derry, *Increases in greenhouse-gas emissions from highway-widening projects*, Sightline Institute, October 2007.