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FOR INFORMATION CALL

November 21, 2007

Ald. Robert J. Bauman
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Council Member Proposes New Approach To Transportation Investments

Reducing Transportation Costs & Increasing Options

A resolution introduced today by Ald. Robert Bauman supports a reassessment of the transportation infrastructure in the state and makes investments in road and rail viable and cooperative rather than competitive. Currently, the state plans to spend \$1.9 billion in the construction and expansion of I-94 between Milwaukee and the Illinois state line, yet the alderman says the less expensive commuter rail project known as the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) service should also receive funding and priority status.

Ald. Bauman said, "The principle reason the KRM rail service is stalled is that local communities must find a local funding source for the project though there's no such requirement for the I-94 road project."

Ald. Bauman also said the heavy investment in the I-94 project seems to ignore the impact of rising gasoline and crude oil prices and increasing concerns about global warming. He said the fact that both projects are designed to serve the same transportation corridor is problematic. "Yes, I-94 needs to be rebuilt, but it does not need to be expanded given there are clear and ready proposals for commuter and high speed rail to serve the same corridor," he said.

-More-

Rebuilding Transportation Infrastructure/ADD ONE

The resolution expresses the city's support for a more strategic approach to transportation improvements in southeastern Wisconsin. It advocates repairing I-94 but keeping its 6-lane configuration so the savings can be used to fund potential future rail systems, including KRM. The resolution also describes more careful consideration of the road and rail projects as means to prevent urban sprawl, save area wetlands and farmlands from the highway lane extension and provide alternative routes to prevent freeway congestion.

Ald. Bauman said, "These three transportation initiatives—the interstate reconstruction and expansion, the KRM commuter rail line and the development of high-speed intercity passenger rail service—have been independent initiatives. We must stop and consider the overlap they provide and distribute dollars and costs effectively among them."

Ald. Michael D'Amato has signed on as a co-sponsor of the resolution and said the measure seeks to present a more even playing field for all three projects.

"It's hard to find opposition to the highway project because communities served by the highway don't have to pay for it," said Ald. D'Amato. "The same 33-mile stretch of highway could be enhanced and expanded for far less and could do far more for southeast Wisconsin residents if only we attended more carefully to the discrepancies in the ways the state allocates its funding."

The resolution will be taken up by the Common Council's Public Works Committee at 9 a.m. on November 28 at City Hall.

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