

Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission: VISION 2050 recommends multimodal transportation investments for a more competitive region

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With Southeastern Wisconsin at a Crossroads, VISION 2050 Recommends Multimodal Transportation Investments for a More Competitive Region

Long-range land use and transportation plan developed with extensive community input

Waukesha, Wis. – The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) announced VISION 2050, a new long-range plan for land use and transportation in Southeastern Wisconsin. Developed over three years, VISION 2050 establishes an advisory long-range vision for how the seven-county Region can build on its existing strengths, while addressing key challenges such as demographic changes in the labor force and negative net migration.

“VISION 2050 provides a compelling vision for how our Region can develop, and maintain and enhance its transportation system to increase the quality of life for residents and attract new growth to Southeastern Wisconsin,” said SEWRPC Executive Director Ken Yunker. “Developed with broad public input, the plan

recommends significant investments to improve and expand access to a wide-range of transportation options, especially public transit.”

In creating the plan, SEWRPC considered existing and historic land use and transportation system development and performance, prepared forecasts of future regional growth, and analyzed and evaluated the consequences of a wide range of potential land use patterns and transportation investments. SEWRPC also engaged the community at each stage of the planning process through regional advisory committees, task forces, workshops, travel and telephone surveys, and interactive web tools – securing feedback from tens of thousands of residents.

“Public input played a critical role in developing this plan,” said Beth Weirick, CEO at Milwaukee Downtown. “The public and key stakeholders were engaged in a variety of ways to ensure a diversity of opinions on the best ways the Region can improve the quality of life for current residents and capture attention as a desirable place to live for those looking to relocate. The Region has a lot to offer.”

Key Challenges for the Region

For the past several decades, Southeastern Wisconsin has been able to grow its labor force from within the existing population. But with coming demographic changes, the Region will face a shortage of working age residents. To remain economically competitive, the Region will need to attract tens of thousands of new residents for the first time since the 1950s. At the same time, the Region is challenged by slow population and income growth, significant declines in transit service, and high racial disparities in education, income, and poverty.

“The Region is at a crossroads,” says Yunker. “If we are to successfully compete for new residents and new businesses, we need to make positive and proactive changes that make our Region more attractive. VISION 2050 provides a framework for local and State government to create the type of land use development and transportation infrastructure that will help attract new talent and encourage economic growth in the Region.”

Plan Recommendations

VISION 2050 provides a comprehensive plan that:

- Increases the Region’s competitiveness by providing high-quality roads, transit and bicycle facilities;

- Encourages more sustainable and cost-effective growth;
- Preserves the Region's most productive farmland and primary environmental corridors;
- Significantly improves and expands public transit, including adding rapid transit and commuter rail, and improving and expanding local and express transit services;
- Enhances the Region's bicycle and pedestrian network to improve access to activity centers, neighborhoods, and other destinations;
- Keeps existing major streets in a state of good repair and efficiently uses the capacity of existing streets and highways; and
- Strategically adds capacity on highly congested roadways, incorporating "complete streets" roadway design concepts to provide safe and convenient travel for all.

Funding Challenge

These recommendations require more to be spent on the transportation system in the future, particularly on building and operating a competitive and advanced transit system. The transit system included in VISION 2050 would attract new Federal funding, but require approximately \$160 million annually in additional local or State funding. In addition, there is a need to rebuild much of the regional street and highway network, in particular the Region's freeway system. To do so will require the State to maintain the level of expenditure it has provided in recent State budgets for streets and highways and the Southeastern Wisconsin freeway system.

"Ultimately, these infrastructure investments will bring significant benefits to the Region by improving competitiveness with other metro areas, reducing congestion, linking workforce to jobs, making public transit an attractive travel option, and reducing resident and local government costs for other infrastructure and services," said Yunker.

More information about VISION 2050 is available online at www.vision2050sewis.org. A condensed summary of the plan is available at <http://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPCFiles/Vision2050/PlanSummaryDec2016.pdf> with the full three-volume plan report to be published in early 2017.

About Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) was established in 1960 as the official areawide planning agency for the southeastern region of the State. SEWRPC serves the seven counties of Kenosha, Milwaukee,

Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha. It was created to provide objective information and professional planning initiatives to help solve problems and to focus regional attention on key issues of regional consequence.