

WISPIRG: Coalition warns against new highway megaprojects in state budget

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Letter calls on legislature to focus on local road maintenance and public transit

MADISON – As the legislature takes up the state budget this week, a coalition of consumer, civil rights and environmental organizations urged decisionmakers to prioritize investments in public transportation and local road maintenance, and to reject any new highway expansion projects in Wisconsin’s transportation spending plan.

In a letter to the legislature signed by WISPIRG, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Sierra Club – Wisconsin Chapter, ACLU of Wisconsin and WISDOM, the organizations said “decisionmakers should develop a plan to meet Wisconsinites’ transportation needs statewide – especially providing effective and affordable mobility to all, in rural, suburban and urban districts, and repairing existing roads and bridges – rather than greenlight costly, harmful new highway projects.”

The groups also warned against resurrecting the billion-dollar expansion of 3.5 miles of I-94 East-West in Milwaukee, which was cancelled by Governor Walker. “The Walker administration explained its decision to cancel this project in 2017 by pointing to the absence of a clear funding plan and acknowledged that the expansion was likely to face protracted legal challenges,” the letter states. “Governor Walker later questioned the need to continue expanding the state’s

freeways given Wisconsinites' changing transportation preferences, particularly among young people.”

The letter notes that Wisconsin's decades-long focus on highway expansions has driven the state deep into debt while leaving fewer resources for other critical transportation investments. The full letter can be found at <https://wispirg.org/news/wip/letter-coalition-warns-against-new-highway-megaprojects-state-budget>.