

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Peter Skopec, WISPIRG

peter@wispirg.org

Office: (608) 268-1656

Cell: (847) 687-7229



Statement by WISPIRG Director Peter Skopec on Results of State Highway Program Audit

The Legislative Audit Bureau released the results of its State Highway Program audit on Thursday, finding that the Department of Transportation had underestimated the cost of several dozen completed and ongoing state highway projects by almost \$4 billion. WISPIRG Director Peter Skopec issued the following statement in response:

“WISDOT clearly wasn't providing taxpayers and decision-makers with accurate information about the real cost of state highway projects. The audit also finds that the department didn't appropriately take the public's input into account when deciding what projects to go ahead with and how.

Going forward, we hope WISDOT and state leaders will offer the public more clarity on exactly how much planned big-ticket highway projects cost. That includes providing more information about how much of a project's cost accounts for rehabilitation and how much accounts for lane additions. We also urge the DOT to do a better job at taking input from the public when determining the best option for a given community.

Finally, we urge decision-makers to use the upcoming budget debate as an opportunity to examine the state's transportation spending priorities more broadly. Over the past two decades, Wisconsin has chosen to prioritize spending on major highways over other investments, at the expense of urgent needs like local road repair and public transit investments. The audit shows that this choice has cost taxpayers even more money than expected. It has also left our transportation system in disrepair, particularly at the local level.”

WISPIRG, the Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group, is a non-profit, non-partisan public interest advocacy organization that takes on powerful interests on behalf of its members, working to win concrete results for good government, public health and Wisconsin consumers.