

Keeping the I-94 East-West Corridor on the State's Agenda *An Important Step for a Strong Wisconsin Economy*

Built in the early 1960s, the I-94 East-West Corridor runs for 3.5 miles between 16th and 70th Streets. Nearly 21,000 businesses, 310,000 jobs and 540,000 residents are located within a 5-mile radius of its center. The stretch connects people, jobs and products in Milwaukee and Waukesha counties to points beyond and is a main artery for Wisconsin commerce.

But this critical roadway is at a tipping point as its age and ongoing deterioration create significant congestion, safety and economic development challenges. The East-West carries 140,000-160,000 vehicles per day – 30,000 more than intended. Outdated features like left-side ramps, narrow shoulders and short weaving distances are failing to provide safe operating conditions for today vehicles, and the crash rate is 2-3 times, sometimes even 4 times, higher than the statewide average.

Full reconstruction and modernization of the East-West Corridor has been on the state's agenda for some time, and millions of dollars have already been spent on engineering, planning and environmental study for the effort. The project had been progressing toward an already delayed 2020-21 start until February 2017, when all funding to keep it moving forward was unexpectedly cut from the State's proposed 2017-19 budget.

Recognizing the negative economic, social and safety implications of further delay, **I-94 East-West Econ Connect**, a coalition of regional business and community leaders, urges the State to restore its commitment to rebuilding this key economic corridor.

Moving Forward, Saving Money

Keeping the I-94 East-West Corridor project moving forward will **save taxpayer dollars; ensure that significant funds already invested in the Zoo and Marquette interchange projects don't go to waste; and keep the I-94 East-West Corridor project in line for needed federal funding.**

Doing Nothing Carries Hefty Price Tag

- Even with just a 2-year delay, tax dollars required for I-94 East-West Corridor reconstruction will grow by millions.
- With more delay, the crumbling roadway will require a fourth pavement overlay as a Band-Aid measure. Such a stop-gap would constitute a **"throwaway" cost of \$50 - \$60 million and 1-2 years of lane closures both ways.**
- At a time when vehicle miles traveled are on the rise following the 2008 recession, there will be **increased congestion on the freeway and surrounding neighborhoods** as motorists attempt to navigate, and in many cases, avoid, an inadequate and overcrowded I-94.
- Delay poses a **serious threat** for the I-94 East-West Corridor project. WisDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) have finalized an Environmental Impact Statement, including a reconstruction plan that was highly responsive to stakeholder feedback. FHWA officials have issued a final Record of Decision, but the State must demonstrate a commitment to moving the project forward.
- Delay would **essentially squander the State's investments in the Marquette and Zoo interchange projects**, whose full safety, operational and economic benefits cannot be realized until the road connecting the two is fixed and operating at maximum efficiency.
- **Crashes in the Marquette Interchange decreased by 40 percent** in the three years after it was reconstructed. That's hundreds of crashes avoided. The same benefits will occur when the Zoo Interchange is completed and when I-94 East-West Corridor is completed.