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Statement by the Coalition for More Responsible Transportation on Continuing Budget Negotiations

Leaders of the Coalition for More Responsible Transportation issued the following statement in response to Speaker Vos' call to interest groups for a transportation budget solution and to Governor Walker's letter to Senate and Assembly outlining a compromise to break the transportation budget stalemate:

"Governor Walker's initial budget, presented in February, got many things right by focusing on local priorities and cutting highway waste. However, the Governor's new compromise proposal would make it harder to meet Wisconsin's changing transportation needs. This new plan would take us one step forward and two steps back.

We appreciate that the Governor's proposal increases local transportation support, provides more funding for infrastructure maintenance, and avoids further delays of ongoing construction projects. We are concerned, however, that this plan would give the go-ahead to new unnecessary megaprojects, such as the billion-dollar expansion of I-94's East-West Corridor in Milwaukee. As we struggle to find resources to finish major highway expansions begun in previous years, like widening I-39/90 to the Illinois border, green-lighting yet another costly project that may not be needed in its current scope would perpetuate our current funding crisis for years to come. The Governor's proposal also fails to increase investment in public transportation that connects a growing number of Wisconsinites to jobs and opportunities.

Our coalition has long urged decision-makers to treat the state's infrastructure crisis not simply as one caused by declining transportation revenue, but also as a problem of misplaced spending priorities. We call on state leaders to strike new highway expansions from their final budget proposal, to increase funding for infrastructure maintenance, and to invest in public transportation.

We should use this year's budget as an opportunity to learn from past mistakes. A misplaced spending focus on 20th century infrastructure will continue to divert resources away from more forward-thinking investments that address 21st century transportation needs."

The Coalition for More Responsible Transportation is composed of public interest, environmental, public health, faith-based and transportation advocacy groups, including the Wisconsin Public Interest Research Group (WISPIRG), the WISDOM interfaith network, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin and the Sierra Club – John Muir Chapter.

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