



WISPIRG

**Midwest Environmental
ADVOCATES**
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Environmental and Public Advocacy Groups Chime in on State Department of Transportation's Long Range Plan

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For Immediate Release

Madison, WI -- On Friday, February 27th, several environmental and public advocate groups from around Wisconsin submitted comments on the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) Connections 2030, a long-range transportation plan based on an integrated multimodal transportation model. Clean Wisconsin, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, League of Wisconsin Municipalities, Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA) and WISPIRG collaborated to express support for the WisDOT's goals to provide more transportation choices to Wisconsin citizens and businesses and to lessen the transportation system's environmental impacts.

The above groups encourage WisDOT and policy makers to focus on specific policies and investments that support more complete and truly multimodal transportation systems, including:

- Providing more transportation mode choices, with priority placed on local and regional transit, passenger rail, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- Using federal and state transportation funds to finance more low-carbon transportation infrastructure such as transit, rail, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities;
- Providing more seamless connections between and among transportation modes (such as park and ride lots, bicycle racks, and local transit connector routes, as well as "complete streets" planning and development);
- Developing policies to reduce overall vehicle miles driven (VMD) and vehicle miles traveled (VMT), through capital investment and proper land use planning;
- Pursuing policies to reduce green house gas emissions, like low carbon fuel standards and vehicle emissions standards; and
- Following a "fix-it-first" policy for construction and maintenance of highways and streets.

These points highlight two central concerns that effective transportation policy can directly affect – the economy and the environment.

“Recognizing the important economic contributions of transit in both terms of return on investment and in stimulating local economies through new development is important to Wisconsin’s current and future economy,” says Steve Hiniker, executive director of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin. “The added benefit of addressing the issue of climate change and the need to reduce carbon sources is also important.”

Karen Schapiro, executive director of MEA, agrees. “The growing national and international attention on the issue of climate change allows Wisconsin to pursue policies that seek to reduce carbon emissions through transportation alternatives, carbon fuel standards and reduced emissions standards,” says “Though transportation is only one piece of the climate change puzzle, it is an important one – one that we can directly influence through state transportation decisions.”

“Now, more than ever, Wisconsin faces incredible opportunities for implementing policies that will build a flexible, safe, and sustainable transportation system that connects multiple modes in seamless and efficient ways,” sums Bruce Speight, policy advocate for WISPIRG. “But legislators and state agencies must be willing to act immediately.”

The WisDOT accepted comments on Connections 2030 through February 27, 2009. The Department has not yet set a date for delivery of the final plan.

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Fast Facts

- By the year 2030, the population of Wisconsin residents 65 and older will increase by 90%. That is a significant number of residents who will begin to rely less and less on personal automobiles as they age.
- Wisconsin’s population, in total, will increase by 20% by 2030, with an increase in population density. If current trends continue, traffic congestion will continue to increase.
- Twenty-five percent of the total energy used in Wisconsin is for transportation and that more than 83 percent of all petroleum used in Wisconsin is consumed by the transportation sector. The upward trend in the cost of fuel affects the economics of personal and freight transportation, making alternative transportation modes more attractive.
- Wisconsin will receive federal stimulus that are specifically designated for passenger rail and transit.
- For more on each of the above groups, please visit their websites: Clean Wisconsin: www.cleanwisconsin.org; 1000 Friends of Wisconsin: www.1kfriends.org; League of Wisconsin Municipalities: www.lwm-info.org; WISPIRG: www.wispirg.org; Midwest Environmental Advocates: www.midwestadvocates.org.