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April 26, 2010

Ald. Robert Bauman  
(414) 286-3774

## Northwestern Mutual Puts Up Big Money for Milwaukee-Damaging Drexel Interchange

*NML Pays Despite DOT Study Saying I-94 Project Will Harm Older Milwaukee Commercial Areas*

“The Quiet Company” isn’t keeping low its fondness for the Drexel Interchange. As a matter of fact, Northwestern Mutual (NML) – with its corporate headquarters in downtown Milwaukee – seems to have so much extra money lying around that it is planning to pay \$1.6 million toward the \$6.5 million local share of the interchange that, according to the state Department of Transportation, will adversely impact the City of Milwaukee.

“It seems only fair that NML should also help pay the local share of a transportation infrastructure project in downtown Milwaukee such as the Downtown Streetcar Circulator,” said Alderman Bauman.

“I will be eagerly awaiting NML’s announcement,” he said.

Alderman Bauman, chair of the Common Council’s Public Works Committee and a longtime mass transit proponent, spoke out last year when the state Department of Transportation – an agency that itself has said the proposed Drexel Interchange is unneeded and a threat to older commercial areas in the City of Milwaukee – included a grant of \$3.75 million in the state budget for Oak Creek’s share of the project, to help push it to fruition.

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## **Interchange Gets Corporate Sponsor/ADD ONE**

At the time, he said the move essentially nullified the will of Oak Creek officials and citizens, many of whom strongly oppose the interchange and wanted zero tax dollars – state or otherwise – going toward the project. In Franklin, officials also have not pledged any funding toward the project, but have offered to pay for lighting on the Franklin side of S. 27<sup>th</sup> St.

The alderman noted that the hard push to shove the interchange through is happening against the backdrop of the RTA (regional transit authority) legislation dying in the state Legislature last week in Madison. The RTA bill – among other things – would have allowed the county sales tax to be increased to provide funding for the Milwaukee County Transit System, which has been gutted by fare increases and route cutbacks in recent years.

The alderman has repeatedly called on Governor Doyle and state officials to have DOT fund the local share of KRM (Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee commuter rail project). “The Drexel Interchange would only serve a narrow slice of local commuters, but in my opinion the KRM is a true transportation improvement for our region that will actually benefit a much larger portion of our population,” said Alderman Bauman.

The Drexel Interchange had originally been a part of the \$1.9 billion reconstruction and expansion of North-South I-94 from Milwaukee to the Illinois border. However, Oak Creek and Franklin officials have wrestled with the steep price tag of the 50% local share for the \$13 million project.