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FOR INFORMATION CALL

December 11, 2008

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Governor Should Move Local Streets to Top of Infrastructure Projects List

Public Works Chair Says \$200 Million Expansion of I-94 Doesn't Belong at Top of the List Submitted to Obama Transition Team

Fixing local streets and roads would positively benefit many more Milwaukee and state residents than expanding I-94 during the rebuild between Milwaukee and the Illinois state line, so why does Governor Doyle have the I-94 project at the top of his list for federal infrastructure aid?

“He (Governor) obviously didn’t ask for input from anyone on the Common Council when he was drafting his list of projects,” said Ald. Robert J. Bauman, chair of the Common Council’s Public Works Committee.

“As a body we’re (Council) on record clearly stating that local street repair needs should come first, and that we should not be expanding highway capacity in southeast Wisconsin until we fix our existing roads, streets and bridges,” he said.

Today Governor Doyle released 22 pages of potential Wisconsin infrastructure projects to be considered for federal funding under the administration of President-elect Barack Obama. The president-elect has said he plans on making massive investments in improving the nation’s infrastructure, even dwarfing the 1950s projects that launched the federal highway system into the modern era.

The dire situation facing Milwaukee’s streets and bridges is outlined in a Comptroller’s Office audit report of the residential street paving program, which was released earlier this week. Ald. Bauman said one of the report’s key findings is that in order for the city to replace the roads identified as in need of “immediate replacement,” it would take 36 years to do so at the current rate of budgetary allocation for roadway replacement. The report states that 214 miles (approx. 20% of the city’s streets) are in “poor” condition and require “immediate replacement.”

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Ald. Bauman said the audit report indicates “options” to eliminate the city’s street maintenance backlog involving recommended spending at levels of up to \$40 million per year – dwarfing the approximate \$6 million-plus the city has typically spent during the past several years. Also, he said the audit shows the replacement cycle has now *narrowed* to 106 years – down from 162 years as recently as 2005.

“We face huge challenges, and to put the expansion of I-94 at the top of the ‘needs’ list is, to me, a nod to the road builders and a slap to the average taxpayer in southeastern Wisconsin,” he said

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