

Freedom Matters

A Weekly Newsletter

Dane County, Wisconsin

Vol. 3, No. 11

Friday, March 14, 2003

We are a free people in a republic, under a constitution which limits the powers of government to those necessary to secure the unalienable rights of each person to their life, liberty and property. Yet, when a legislature is in session, no one's life, liberty or property is safe. It's the curse of a democracy. That's why we have a republic instead. *Freedom Matters* dedicates itself to the fight to restore our republic. Most of the press and courts fail to do so. They've forgotten that freedom matters.

Let's Get Real: Commuter Rail In Madison is Dead -- Dead Wrong

by Mike Byrne & Bob Bowman

The Transport 2020 Final Report August 2002 is the basis for a recommendation by the Transport 2020 study group to construct a commuter rail system in Madison. Only in Madison would such a fairyland exercise get so far and spend so much.

That Report purports to be a "Transportation Alternative Analysis for the Dane County/ Greater Madison Metropolitan Area." Regrettably, the Report begins badly, by **eliminating any consideration** for addressing 97.7% of the commuter traffic in the metropolitan area (p. 4-1).

In other words, the Report addresses only 2.3% of the commuter traffic (p. ES-2). Of that 2.3%, only 4% of the daily transit boardings for the **recommended** bus/rail start-up system (the MOS of the LPA) are projected to be by rail (p. 10-9). MOS = minimal operable segment. LPA = Local Preferred Alternative

Rail Will Carry One Commuter per 1000

In simple terms, for every 1000 commuters, 978 will go by car, 22 will go by bus, and 1 will go by rail. Thus, the Report is all about how to spend money to carry 23 out of 1000 commuters, while NOT spending money to carry the other 978.

Moreover, for that 1 rail rider per 1000 commuters, the Report proposes to spend 157 times as much in capital costs for rail (\$188.6M) versus carrying that 1 commuter by bus (\$1.2M). See the table on p. 10-22. [Note: the \$1.2M is calculated as the proportional increase in bus capital costs to carry 1150 more daily trips by expanded bus, re the data of the table on p. 10-22]

Rail Will Worsen Madison Street Traffic

The Report admits that to carry that 1 commuter by rail will make traffic conditions **notably worse** for the other 999 commuters out of 1000. That fails to meet the common good.

The Bottom Line

The 2020 "Baseline" system (expanded bus; column 3 of the table on page 10.22) will do essentially **everything** that rail will do, **at a tiny fraction of the cost.**

Caveat. The cost estimates above accept the numbers of the Report as accurate. Yet, the most likely case, based on studies, is that rail will cost 45% more than estimated, whereas bus will cost only 20% over estimate. That would make the rail (capital plus operating costs) sum up to \$278M, while expanded bus needed to carry that 1 rail commuter per 1000 commuters would cost \$1.4M. Also, most likely, the Report overestimates the rail ridership. Thus, most likely, rail will cost **>200 times as much as bus**, in order to carry that <1 rail commuter per 1000 commuters.

Rail in Madison Is An Environmental Waste

Thus, not only does the Report make no economic sense, it makes no environmental sense; i.e., it wastes resources.

The Report exhibits extreme prejudice against cars

Transport 2020 projects that commuter trips will increase by 35% from 1990 to 2020, and that 97.7% of it will be by car. However, Transport 2020 rules out any increase in road capacity as too costly and impractical (p. 4-1).

That conclusion by Transport 2020 is nonsense. The addition of **only one lane** of car roadway will carry the commuter load carried by a one track rail system, as the Portland, Oregon data show. Hence, the isthmus is not an intractable bottleneck.

Adding Such Isthmus Car Lanes is Cheap

Madison could add two or more lanes of car traffic through its isthmus by eliminating on-street parking and replacing it via a surface parking lot every couple of blocks. Cost: minimal.

Improved Mobility as a Goal

The Report lists 5 goals. Goal 2 is to **improve mobility** for people and goods. Given that goal, then no matter which mass transit system is chosen, the Madison metropolitan area **cannot avoid** upgrading roadways for car traffic.

The Report Violates Its Mobility Goal

The Report does not plan for roadway expansion for cars, and its own data show that its proposals will actually **worsen mobility** for people and goods. Why? Because 97.5% of the traffic will still be by car, and commuter rail would **significantly degrade** that traffic by delaying it when trains block car traffic at railroad crossings. The Report itself quantifies this (e.g., p. 8-11), showing that crossings would be blocked as much as 20% of the time at peak traffic hours. Result: waste and pollution.

The Report Is Glaringly Incomplete

Failure of the Report to include car roadway traffic data and **lane expansion plans** destroys its credibility as an objective proposal for meeting Madison's traffic needs. The public, needs to see these costs factored in, to be sure there is money to meet them. Plans to **increase** Madison traffic congestion **are not an option.** Finally, the consultant's alleged track record suggests caution.

The Report is Irrational

Car lane capacity upgrade was rejected by using the Portland trick of comparing rail to a car lane upgrade **in excess** of the commuter capacity of the proposed rail.

Costs of rational lane expansions were not reported. The impact on business and mail deliveries of densifying car traffic was not addressed. **Need EIS.** Cost per new rider of the proposed rail was hidden. Cost Overruns (e.g., cost of buying track right-of-ways) were not addressed. Overruns could **double** the costs. The Report fails to prove any benefit of rail over bus.

Readers' Bulletin Board. e-mail us your comments. Include your name, for publication by *Freedom Matters*

*** Published by Freedom Matters, Inc., Cross Plains, WI. 53528, Michael Byrne, Editor ***
To subscribe or unsubscribe, e-mail to rebshar@chorus.net, or call Bob at (608) 831-6653.
Our e-mail subscriber list is confidential. We will not sell it or reveal it.

Back Issues of Freedom Matters are available, as e-mail.