

Freedom Matters

A Weekly Newsletter

Dane County, Wisconsin

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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.

Further Questions about Madison's Proposed Commuter Rail — An Environmental Sinkhole

by Michael Byrne

As in issue 5, we ask questions that challenge public officials so obsessed to build commuter rail in Madison that they propose to charge 90% of its cost to non-Madison taxpayers (i.e., to county, state and national taxpayers). These officials include "environmentalists" who harm the environment by misrepresenting the costs of commuter rail.

4. What is the total energy consumption per passenger mile, counting **construction, operation and maintenance**, when one compares rail, autos, car pools, and buses?

The Transport 2020 study fails to address that big clunky trains do not save environmental resources. Example: Portland's Metro estimated its north light-rail line would cost 32 million gallons of gas to build, would save 7,875 gallons of gas per day over auto or bus, but auto traffic would still increase almost as much as without rail. Hence, the Thoreau Institute estimated, it would take 170 years for the daily savings to equal the cost of construction of rail.

5. Why does Transport 2020 not offer route plans and cost figures for an expanded bus system, including the possible use of small buses or jitneys, thus to compare the bus alternative to rail?

Clearly, minds were made up before doing the Transport 2020 "study." That "study" looks very like a subterfuge to try to sell us on commuter rail. There is no other reason for it not to offer more buses in place of rail.

6. Why does Transport 2020 not offer route plans and cost figures for an expanded auto roadway system *sized to handle the expected passengers that would ride rail*? That is the only proper basis for comparing the cost of commuter rail versus roadway expansion.

Transport 2020 does not consider, study, or report the amount of roadway expansion needed to carry only the number of passengers expected to switch from cars to the train. What a glaring lack! The proposed transit rail is single track, and in its place, its projected passenger load could be carried by a single added roadway lane. That cost comparison, if made public, would sink forever the case for commuter rail here.

7. Why does Transport 2020 base its case on the "Dane County Land Use and Transportation 2020 Plan" (i.e., the Vision 2020 plan)?

The "Vision 2020" plan is dead. It was rejected by most municipalities in Dane County, and approved by hardly any. Dane County itself voted to implement only Vision 2020's transportation element. True, Vision 2020 was adopted by the Dane County RPC. However, Transport 2020 fails to report that the Dane County RPC was terminated by vote of a majority of Dane County Municipalities, which likewise exercised their statutory right to withdraw from it, and that most of its functions were stripped from it by the local governments. It is hanging onto existence only via lawsuits, which it seems likely to lose.

8. Why does Transport 2020 fail to acknowledge Dane County's patent failure at regional planning? Madison insists on dominating any RPC in which it is a member, for which the surrounding five counties have refused to enter into an RPC that includes Madison.

9. Why does Transport 2020 fail to include expanded roadways in its Local Preferred Alternative of a bus-rail transport system?

Transport 2020 planners KNOW that the proposed rail will cause increased auto congestion by blocking traffic, and that it will take too few autos off the roads to save energy, and that roadway congestion will be as severe with commuter rail as without it. Thus, roadway expansion is NEEDED, even if commuter rail is built. Thus, roadway costs **MUST BE INCLUDED** in the LPA, to have a multi-modal proposal.

10. Why does Transport 2020 fail to address cost overruns?

A recent study (*Journal of the American Planning Association*, Summer 2002) concludes that major transportation projects habitually go over budget. Out of 258 transportation projects in the U. S. and Europe, 86% underestimated costs. Rail projects averaged 45% over estimated costs; road projects averaged 20% over. Hence, the authors concluded that the rail promoters deliberately underestimated costs in order to get the projects approved.

In our next issue: Who's Behind Rail Fever?

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

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