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## The Craziest of Commuter Rail in Madison

by Bob Bowman  
with help by Mike Roach

It's not nice to fool voters, the Mother Nature of politics. Yet, politicians who want commuter rail in Madison are trying to. The One Ring of Political Correctness on rail was forged in Portland, Oregon, the Mount Doom of PC mistakes, where anti-automobilism and rail worship were first enshrined. Our local environmentalist priesthood cannot resist it. A kind of religion drives them, not reality, for they are under the spell of the Portland PC Ring.

The front in the political drive to build commuter rail in Madison is Transport 2020, a group set up by the political executive leadership of Dane County and Madison. T2020 consists of an Oversight Advisory Committee (OAC), a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and a hired consultant (Parsons-Brinckerhoff and associates). A consultant

does as told; this one, it seems, has been embroiled in misrepresented transportation projects before.

August 2003, the consultant delivered its Final Report: "**Transportation Alternatives Analysis for ... [Dane County/Madison]**" Two months later, OAC released its **Summary Report**. Both reports assert that T2020 investigated "regional transportation needs" and that: "... decision makers guiding the process weighed the information in selecting a locally preferred alternative" (*Final Report*, page 1-1; *Summary Report*, page 1). That sets T2020's broad charge and fingers who to blame for failing it.

Key data in the T2020 Reports are copied in the table below. Opinions given here are based on it. From the *Summary Report*, which has only the first three columns below, a voter would say, "Wow! Commuter rail will increase mass transit ridership by 52%. Let's build rail!"  
(continued on page 2)

Comparison of Madison Traffic Alternatives from Transport 2020 Reports. The first three columns are from the OAC Summary Report, page 21. The first Four Columns are from the Consultant's Final Report page ES-9. The last column is calculated from spot data in those Reports, except for annual operating cost

	2000 Madison Metro Bus (Baseline)	2020 Madison Metro Bus (No Build)	2020 Start-Up System (New Bus/ Rail)	2020 New Bus (w/New Express Bus Services)	2020 Public Roadways for Cars
Average Daily Ridership .....	31,500	37,250	56,600	55,500	1,638,000
Annual Transit Trips .....	10.3 million	12.4 million	18.8 million	18.5 million	545 million
Total Capital Cost .....	\$12.4 million	20.0 million	\$242 million	\$60.3 million	\$80 million
Annual Operating Cost .....	\$28.2 million	\$31.7 million	\$39.5 million	\$36.2 million	< \$1 million?

Property rights web sites: < <http://www.fairnessinlaw.org/> >  
< <http://www.takebackwisconsin.com/> >  
<<http://www.PropertyRightsResearch.org>>

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However, what voter would read the bulky *Final Report*, to find the existence of that fourth column? If he did get the *Final Report* and read it, he would say, "Wow! Express Bus will increase mass transit ridership by 49%. That's the same increase as with rail, but only costs one-fourth as much. Forget rail. Let's go for express bus."

Thus, omitting the Express Bus column misleads voters, and that's what the "decision makers" did. Thereby, OAC destroys its credibility, by "weighing" only two alternatives — No Build and Rail (page 21) — while hiding the alternative which destroys their choice.

The "decision makers guiding the process" are in OAC. Its *Summary Report* is razzle-dazzle; i.e., it mimics the scam satirized by the tap dancing shyster in the musical *Chicago*. OAC tap-dances its way through their incomplete *Summary Report* as if that's all there is.

T2020 made another scam-like omission. Its "Alternatives Analysis" has no column addressing Roadways for private vehicles (cars and trucks). To rectify that, this article added a Roadways column to the above table, using data from T2020's reports.

The overwhelming public transit choice is private cars, accounting for 97.6% of local daily transit (a # buried on page 31, *Summary Report*). That calculates as 1,312,500 daily private vehicle trips in 2000, the baseline year. Taxes paid by the people should surely be used on their overwhelming transit choice. Yet, T2020 dismissed roadways as "too costly for the mobility benefits ... provided" (page 4-1, *Final Report*). What nonsense! Omitted from T2020's reports is that one lane of vehicle traffic carries more commuters than projected for T2020's one-track rail. T2020 itself cited the cost of roadways for the isthmus area at \$10 million per one-lane mile (*Summary Report*, page 36), far less than for one-track rail (~\$40 million per mile of track).

T2020 is in pathological denial over roadways. It admits they will be built (*Final Report*, pages 4-1 to 4-2), so when it dismisses analysis of them, it fails its goals. It dismisses roadways capriciously, by saying, without data, that roadways "do not meet our goals" (*Summary Report*, page 36). By that dismissal alone, T2020 makes itself into a *fake* as a "regional transportation study." No surprise. It was stacked with known rail advocates.

Other omissions also show T2020 to be, *de facto*, a con game, with no other effect but to promote rail. T2020 did not even investigate the costs of getting rail right-of-ways for commuter trains. It also fails to cite known biases to overestimate riders and underestimate costs.

Then, in still another omission, T2020 fails to address the bad traffic effects of commuter rail, burying them in the razzle-dazzle of its Reports; e.g., via T2020's data, one can see that Commuter Rail will block vehicle traffic at grade crossings for 3 hours out of the 17 main traffic hours, reducing roadway capacity by 17%. That seriously worsens congestion, pollution and fuel usage for the many, all for the sake of trains for the few.

That flaw increases the terrible waste of environmental resources present in the capital costs of the proposed rail system. One sees how potent the religion of Political Correctness is, when it seduces avowed environmentalists into wasting environmental resources.

T2020 (*Final Report*, page ES2) says it is following the 1997 *Vision 2020 Dane County Land Use and Transportation Plan*. That plan was rejected by vote by most Dane County elected governments. One reason for rejection: *Vision 2020* proposed the deliberate congesting of roadways, thus to force people into mass transit against their choice. Sadly, that purpose also appears, unspoken, to be T2020's goal, and deliberately so.

In a word, the Roadway Alternative is but one-third the cost of Rail, and it will be built, whether rail is or not. Car ridership swamps rail ridership a thousandfold, by the people's choice as shown when they vote by using their car wheels in place of their feet.

Rail's 0.0011 million daily trips disappear into Roadways' 1.6 million daily trips literally like a pail of water into a 1000 gallon swimming pool. T2020 tries to tell us that if we dip that one pail of water out, we significantly lower the water level (i.e., that rail will relieve traffic congestion). Thus is T2020 deluded. It is all wet.

If present political leaders will not minimize road congestion by integrating car traffic with compatible mass transit bus, and reject commuter rail as a costly mistake for Madison and Dane County, then it is time to throw the rascals out and vote in leaders who will.