

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.

Commuter Rail in Dane County The Dizzy Land Express Empty Buses, Empty Trains, Empty Tills, Empty Pockets. Empty Heads.

by Bob Bowman

The problem with mass transit? Few ride it. Dane County Transport 2020 admits that if we build commuter rail, **over 95%** of commuter trips will still be by car. In truth, it's likely **over 98%** (see Cox, below).

For a wake-up analysis of mass transit rail, see the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute's 1998 report titled "Light Rail in Milwaukee" by Wendell Cox, a transportation expert. Its conclusions? Rail will not reduce car traffic, will not reduce pollution, will not attract ridership, will not spur economic development, and will not be as effective as bus service. So, it makes **no sense** as a **Local Preferred Alternative (LPA)**.

A Transportation Plan that gives disservice to 95% of commuter traffic, as T-2020 admits it does, is incompetent. How much will its bus/rail **Local Preferred Alternative (LPA)** reduce car traffic? T-2020 does not say. Why not? Don't they want people to know that commuter rail will not reduce it?

Milwaukee's Planning Biases

Cox cited analytical biases by which Milwaukee's planning process made light rail its LPA. One, their process was biased by **miscasting** mass transit bus as a baseline for comparison, not as an alternative. Two, it was biased by **incompleteness**. It failed to consider either bus line expansions or roadway expansions for automobiles. Biases corrupt planning, and give it a bad name. Note: Milwaukee is not building light rail.

Madison's Planning Biases

The same **biases** and **incomplete** analysis exist in T-2020's LPA. Plus, their LPA is **centrist**. It's meant to grow only Madison. Plus, as in Milwaukee, rail will **fail** to achieve its stated goals. So why does T-2020 recommend it? Three other **biases** move them.

One, they argue that **other people** will pay for it (over 88% will come from raiding tax bases outside Madison). Two, they argue from lies or **tricky statistics**. Three, they pursue the sirens of **Malthusian theory**, despite its historic failures.

The Rich Live off the Poor

Think of it. Dane County, the third richest county in the state, will ask the **poorer counties** in the state to pay for commuter rail for the City of Madison. Don't rail lovers find it **wrong**, to ask the poor to buy fancy stuff for the rich?

The Cost Per New Ride

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) **requires** new rail line planning to report the **cost per new ride**. Cox cites \$18 as the average new ride cost via rail (paid by taxes), versus \$2 via car (paid by commuters). Rail is **gold-plated** welfare!

So, instead, T-2020 cites the "cost per unlinked trip." They used **real data** for Madison's present bus system, and the cost per trip was \$2.74. But to sell their LPA of bus and train to voters, they **claim** its cost per trip will be **30% less**. Sure. You bet.

Cost per new ride. T-2020 estimated it as **over \$60** for their proposed rail. They've hidden that.

The bottom line? T-2020 is unbelievable.

The Cost of Their LPA? Try \$1 Billion

T 2020 omits some major costs. So it deceives. Cox cites an average cost overrun of 86% for rail. If true here, T 2020's MOS will exceed \$400 million.

But, **hold onto your pocketbook**. That's only for the MOS (minimal operable segment). The LPA is more. The LPA is **double** or **triple** the MOS.

Plus, add in the costs to get the right-of-way. The T-2020 estimates silently left that out.

Why Such Accounting Tricks?

Commuter rail is part of a sustainability/smart growth political agenda. That agenda owes more to Malthusian beliefs and earth worship, than to good sense. The scary thing? Like Enron, it scams people.

More, next issue.

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