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I-94 East/West project critical to state transportation needs

MADISON, Wis. – State Rep. Joe Sanfelippo, R-New Berlin, is pleased with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation’s decision to include in its [budget plans](#) the enumeration of the Interstate 94 East/West corridor project.

But in order to ensure preliminary work on this critical proposal moves forward, Sanfelippo is calling on the governor and members of the state Legislature to support the reconstruction of the 3.5-mile stretch of freeway between the Zoo and Marquette interchanges.

“We are expecting to spend close to \$2.5 billion to enhance both the Marquette and the Zoo, and that taxpayer money essentially would be wasted if we don’t link these two highly-traveled interchanges together,” Sanfelippo said. “That would be like someone building a new home but neglecting to install a roof. The only way the entire project will work as intended is if the I-94 East/West corridor is as equally efficient and safe.”

According to DOT statistics, the Marquette and the Zoo are among the busiest interchanges in Wisconsin, with a combined average daily ridership of approximately 635,000 vehicles. The I-94 East/West corridor, originally built in the early 1960s, carries about 160,000 vehicles per day, which is 30,000 more than it was designed to accommodate.

Because of its operational and safety deficiencies, the average crash rate on the I-94 corridor is up to four times higher than the statewide urban freeway average. That section of interstate is also experiencing increased congestion as measured by the number of hours each day that traffic is traveling at far lower than safe operating speeds.

“If motorists continue to get frustrated with the deficiencies of the I-94 corridor, they will try to find alternative routes, and that, unfortunately, could have a negative impact on all the businesses in the area,” Sanfelippo said. “It also has the potential to disrupt the housing market in Milwaukee and nearby municipalities. Most people don’t want to live in communities where they do not have easy and safe access to jobs, commerce and recreational activities.”

Because of those issues, Sanfelippo is also concerned that failing to reconstruct the I-94 corridor could have a dramatic effect on the hundreds of millions of dollars being invested in projects in Milwaukee, including the new Bucks arena and surrounding development, the Couture and the Northwestern Mutual Tower.

“We should be doing everything within reason to promote our state’s largest city and encourage people to live, work and visit there,” Sanfelippo said. “By not rehabilitating the corridor, we will be driving people away, and that will create negative ramifications for all state taxpayers.”

Sanfelippo says rejecting the project could also hurt Wisconsin’s economy as a whole since the Zoo Interchange is responsible for carrying more than half of the state’s freight. That equals a value of \$55 billion every year.

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