



Take Action!

Tell the WI Dept. of Transportation to Stop Expanding Highways!

The WI Dept. of Transportation, or “WISDOT,” [has conducted a study and created a plan for the future of the Madison “beltline” highway](#). While the study does have a lot of good priorities around walking and biking infrastructure, their preferred plan also calls for expanding the highway itself.

We know that expanding highways is not a solution for traffic congestion, and it only leads to worse traffic in the long run, while also increasing car pollution and all the horrible impacts that come with it.

You can submit written comments to WISDOT about this plan right now. Use this document to find out how you can make your voice heard about this issue, and urge WISDOT to remove the highway expansion piece out of their plan.

How to Submit Your Comments

There are two ways to submit comments to WISDOT, you can use their comment submission form, or email them directly.

To submit comments on their form, [click this link](#) and you will be directed to a website that looks like this:



Madison Beltline PEL Study Online Comment Form

Your questions, comments, and feedback are very important to us. Please complete the questions below and click submit when complete.

When you submit this form, it will not automatically collect your details like name and email address unless you provide it yourself.

* Required

1. First name *

Fill out the form. For question #6 you can select a variety of topics that you are commenting on, you don't have to select just one. Add your written comments in the section for #7.

Alternatively, you can skip this form all together and just write an email with your comments and send it to either of these 2 WISDOT staff members or the general WISDOT email:

- Jeff Berens
 - WisDOT Major Studies Project Manager
 - (608) 245-2656
 - jeff.berens@dot.wi.gov
- Michael Bie
 - WisDOT Southwest Region Communications Manager
 - (608) 246-7928
 - michael.bie@dot.wi.gov

- Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)
 - Southwest Region, Madison Office
 - 2101 Wright St.
 - Madison, WI 53704
 - Phone: (608) 246-3800
 - TTY: 711
 - Email: swr.dtsd@dot.wi.gov

Talking Points

Here are a variety of reasons to oppose the highway expansion portion of their plan. Use these to write a sample comment to your liking that you will submit at the link provided at the end of the Public Presentation Session on YoutubeLive.

- Solutions that actually work – expanding highway lanes is an extremely costly and ineffective way to address traffic congestion. Transportation for America conducted a study of highway expansion projects, and in almost every case, traffic congestion got worse within 2 years of construction ending. Spending billions of dollars to make traffic worse? I think we have better options!
- Public health and air quality – air pollution to communities proximal to highways increases risks of asthma, cardiovascular disease and more. Students near large highways miss more days of school and experience more difficulties in focusing and studying. Additionally, there is a big environmental justice component to this; several of Madison's low income housing projects, lower income neighborhoods and communities of color are immediately adjacent to the Beltline, causing a disproportionate negative impact on already impacted neighborhoods.
- Transportation access – adding new highway lanes is one of the most costly transportation infrastructure choices, especially compared to transit, walking and biking improvements. Not only does this

prioritization impact funding available to multimodal transportation projects, but increasing the number of lanes makes crossing the highway more difficult, segregating the city on each side of the highway.

- Greenhouse gas emission reductions – Dane County and several cities along the Beltline have climate plans that include decreasing carbon emissions in the transportation sector. One of the ways in which this is done is by prioritizing walking, biking and transit projects over projects that increase the amount of miles that vehicles travel in the region. The Dane County Climate Action Plan specifically recommends changing how traffic impact assessments are conducted, “so that environmental impacts are measured in terms of added Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) instead of highway level of service, to promote infill development and multimodal transportation improvements.” The County and cities within it should request that WISDOT analyze the impact that added lanes would have on VMT and carbon emissions and prioritize projects accordingly.
- Water quality and flood mitigation - additional impervious surfaces add to regional flooding, and additional highway runoff adds pollution to nearby waterways. With several lakes and rivers in the Madison area already experiencing high levels of pollution, we should not be worsening the problem.
- Affordability, access and local economy - as mentioned above, adding highway lanes costs a lot of money, especially when compared to other alternatives like repairing existing infrastructure and improving transit, walking and biking. With current economic hardships, it is irresponsible to spend millions or billions of taxpayer dollars on infrastructure that will worsen the problem it is set out to improve. At the same time, connections to job opportunities, healthcare and childcare for all residents, including those who do not drive, are of critical importance. Further, expanding the highway may impact access to neighboring businesses.

- Protecting the region's gems like Yahara River and the arboretum – the University of Wisconsin - Madison Arboretum is one of the most loved outdoors spaces in the region. The Beltline already bisects the arboretum, which garnered opposition when the highway was originally built. Expanding the highway's footprint would have a negative impact on this wonderful feature of the Madison area.

Sample Comment

A good comment doesn't necessarily have to be long. Good comments, memorable comments, are ones that connect with personal values and share personal stories. But for the purposes of this issue, we need to show WISDOT that there are more people opposed to the highway expansion than there are those in favor of it.

Here is a short sample script that you can either copy verbatim, or use as a starting point for crafting your own:

"My name is _____ and I live in the city/town of _____. I'm urging WISDOT to remove the highway expansion of the beltline from the Beltline PEL Study. Highway expansion projects are incredibly expensive, time consuming, and numerous studies have shown that traffic returns to previous levels or even worse levels after 2 years.

Expanded highways encourage more people to drive, increasing pollution that is causing climate change and worsening public health outcomes in Dane County. Not to mention more cars on the highway means more chances for collisions.

Asthma rates are higher in neighborhoods near highways, and expanding them will only make things worse for the children and elderly who are at high risk of lung irritation due to pollution.

I am supportive of the pedestrian and bike infrastructure in the study, but I am urging you to remove the highway expansion for the sake of our health and the health of the planet.”