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5 **A RESOLUTION**
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7 Calling upon the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) to hold public
8 listening sessions in addition to its information sessions for the Interstate 94 (I-94) East-
9 West Project from 70th Street to 16th Street, and calling for as much removal of the
10 Stadium Freeway, designated as Wisconsin State Trunk Highway 175 (STH 175), as
11 possible to return that land to the community
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14 WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has
15 identified the segment of Interstate 94 between 70th Street and 16th Street (I-94 East-
16 West Corridor) in Milwaukee County for reconstruction as that freeway segment was
17 constructed in 1961 and has exceeded its intended lifespan; and
18

19 WHEREAS, in 2014 WisDOT intended to further widen I-94 to increase road lane
20 mile capacity for drivers and reconfigure an obsolete design which may pose safety
21 issues, at an approximate cost of \$850 million (File No. 14-941) and may be at least
22 \$1.2 billion in 2022, while in 2015 Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee
23 opposed widening, instead favoring in-kind replacement and funding for transit (File No.
24 15-426), leading to the Wisconsin Governor rescinding the project in 2017; and
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26 WHEREAS, on July 8, 2020 the Wisconsin Governor revived the I-94 East-West
27 Corridor project and in his proposed budget for the 2021-2023 Biennium grants WisDOT
28 a debt authority of \$40 million for the Corridor; and
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30 WHEREAS, the County Board of Supervisors adopted the resolution in File No.
31 21-378 which attempted to reaffirm Milwaukee County's position against further
32 expansion of Interstate 94, which was in turn vetoed by the County Executive due to a
33 "lack of process, public notice and comment, and committee involvement," but was later
34 reviewed by the Committee on Transportation, Public Works and Transit where the
35 public had greater opportunity to opine to their representatives; and
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37 WHEREAS, on April 15, 2021, WisDOT announced it would expand review of the
38 I-94 East-West Project with a supplemental environmental impact statement to update
39 the information WisDOT uses for the project and allow greater public participation; and
40 subsequently a majority of the County Board of Supervisors chose to not override the
41 County Executive's veto of the resolution in File No. 21-378, where many members of

42 the County Board expressed a desire to see the result of WisDOT’s supplemental
43 environmental impact statement; and

44

45 WHEREAS, to date, WisDOT has only held public information sessions, except a
46 March 2021 and two December 2021 “public involvement” meetings which encouraged
47 public comment, but which generally attempt to persuade public acquiescence rather
48 than organizing events which have WisDOT officials listen to the concerns of Milwaukee
49 County residents and the neighbors directly adjacent to the I-94 East-West Project area,
50 to voice how their tax dollars are spent, discuss how the Project may affect them, and
51 allow for alternatives and potential redesigns based on public comment to the
52 Alternatives in the Environmental Impact Statement and the pending release of the
53 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; and

54

55 WHEREAS, as WisDOT reports approximately 24 percent of project area users
56 begin or end their trips within the project area, in File No. 21-460, Milwaukee County
57 supported WisDOT’s supplemental environmental impact statement and “balanced
58 transportation funding between expressways and public transit which will benefit all
59 residents of Milwaukee County and opposes disparate impacts on any of its residents”
60 while also calling upon the State of Wisconsin “to appropriate substantially more transit
61 operating assistance. . .” and

62

63 WHEREAS, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors has not rescinded the
64 stated policy preference in File No. 15-426 of Milwaukee County favoring in-kind
65 replacement of I-94 in the project area and enhanced transit funding; and

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67 WHEREAS, the 2021-2023 biennial budget included paying for the I-94
68 expansion but halved transit operating assistance, hastening the fiscal cliff Milwaukee
69 County faces in its ability to continue connecting workers with jobs in the County (File
70 No. 21- 515) and making a racial disparate impact inevitable (File Nos. 21-396 & 21-
71 397); and

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73 WHEREAS, in August 2021, Governor Evers allocated \$19.7 million in federal
74 COVID-19 funds to the Milwaukee County Transit System to restore the transit cuts
75 enacted by the Wisconsin State Legislature; and

76

77 WHEREAS, according to the Wisconsin Legislative Fiscal Bureau 2021
78 Informational Report 14, “The state’s levy limit program prohibits any county, city,
79 village, or town from increasing its ‘base’ levy in any year by more than the percentage
80 change in the local government’s. . .equalized value due to new construction, less
81 improvements removed. . .”; that requirement has resulted in little revenue growth for
82 communities whose tax bases are not rising at the rate of inflation; and

83 WHEREAS, the State of Wisconsin has imposed a structural deficit on local
84 governments in Wisconsin, whereby the costs to continue the services citizens expect
85 and deserve rise higher based on inflation than do the percentage of State shared
86 revenue increases which are typically less than one percent per year (File Nos. 18-944,
87 19-161, & 22-457); and
88

89 WHEREAS, Wisconsin State Trunk Highway 175 (STH 175), also known as the
90 Stadium Freeway, which runs north from the Stadium Interchange and terminates at
91 West Lisbon Avenue in the City of Milwaukee, is impacted by the I-94 East-West Project
92 area; and
93

94 WHEREAS, the construction of the Stadium Freeway, completed in 1962, was
95 meant to eventually link with Ozaukee County and the Park East Spur via a never built
96 highway segment called the Park West Freeway, resulting in the displacement of many
97 families, the division of the Washington Heights and Washington Park neighborhoods,
98 and the loss of approximately 10 percent of Washington Park's land, displacing the
99 then-Washington Park Zoo; and
100

101 WHEREAS, in the August 2017 City of Milwaukee Department of City
102 Development report titled, "Highway WIS 175 Visioning Study," the City partnered with
103 various local and State stakeholders and studied how an updated reconstruction or
104 reduction of STH 175 should:
105

- 106 1. "Improve neighborhood cohesion."
- 107 2. "Improve commercial vitality and support business attraction efforts along Lisbon
108 and North Avenues."
- 109 3. "Improve safety for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers."
- 110 4. "Maintain acceptable traffic operations."

111 ; and
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113

114 WHEREAS, according to the City of Milwaukee Department of City Development,
115 the demolition of the 0.8 mile Park East Spur in 2003 allowed for reintegration and
116 redevelopment of around 24 acres back into the fabric of the Westtown and Lower East
117 Side neighborhoods in the City of Milwaukee, improving urban living with new
118 commercial and residential developments, allowing better contiguity of the street grid,
119 experiencing more than \$1 billion in private investment, raising property values, and
120 returning significant land to the property tax rolls; and

121 WHEREAS, reconnecting the Washington Heights and Washington Park
122 neighborhoods would reunite divided communities and improve equity, providing easier
123 park access for Washington Heights, releasing many acres of land which could be
124 developed into housing and returned to the property tax rolls to mitigate the structural
125 deficit imposed on the City and County of Milwaukee by the State; and
126

127 WHEREAS, WisDOT announced on May 4, 2022 that it would study turning the
128 Stadium Freeway into a boulevard from Wisconsin Avenue northward to its STH 175's
129 northern terminus at West Lisbon Avenue; and
130

131 WHEREAS, studying the reconnection the streets and neighborhoods separated
132 by the Stadium Freeway is a positive gesture, the State of Wisconsin ought to cease
133 holding back the economic engine of Wisconsin, and WisDOT ought to truly listen to the
134 people who will be affected by their decisions and incorporate feedback; and
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136 WHEREAS, the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, at its meeting of
137 July 11, 2022, recommended adoption of File No. 22-659 (vote 3-0); now, therefore,
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139 BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County hereby calls upon the Wisconsin
140 Department of Transportation (WisDOT) to host public listening sessions for the
141 Milwaukee County public, especially those neighbors adjacent to the length of Interstate
142 94 East-West Project area from 70th Street to 16th Street, to voice their concerns in a
143 format that does not attempt to persuade the public but merely has WisDOT hear and
144 take note of public feedback; and
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146 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Milwaukee County hereby calls upon WisDOT to
147 eliminate as much of the Stadium Freeway, designated as Wisconsin State Trunk
148 Highway 175, as possible and turn over the land to local control so neighborhoods can
149 be reunified, the street grid reconnected, Washington Park can be made whole, and
150 land can be returned to the property tax rolls to maintain the services Milwaukee County
151 residents expect and deserve; and
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153 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Office of Government Affairs staff is
154 authorized and requested to communicate the contents of this resolution to the
155 Wisconsin Governor, State policymakers, and WisDOT, and support legislation and
156 policies which achieve the criteria outlined in this resolution.
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