By Supervisor Goodwin File No. 21-460

**A RESOLUTION**

Calling upon the State of Wisconsin to ensure a racially equitable balance in transportation funding between expressways and mass transit

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has identified the segment of Interstate 94 between 70th Street and 16th Street (I-94 East-West Corridor) in Milwaukee County for reconstruction as that freeway segment was constructed in 1961 and has exceeded its intended lifespan; and

WHEREAS, in 2014 WisDOT intended to further widen I-94 to increase lane mile road capacity for drivers and reconfigure an obsolete design which may pose safety issues, at an approximate cost of $850 million (File No. 14-941), while in 2015 Milwaukee County and the City of Milwaukee opposed widening, instead favoring in-kind replacement and funding for transit (File No. 15-426), leading to the Wisconsin Governor rescinding the project in 2017; and

WHEREAS, on July 8, 2020 the Wisconsin Governor revived the I-94 East-West Corridor project and in his proposed budget for the 2021-2023 Biennium grants WisDOT a debt authority of $40 million for the Corridor; and

WHEREAS, on April 15, 2021 WisDOT announced the agency would further study the Corridor by investigation and drafting of a supplemental environmental impact statement to “allow [WisDOT] time to better assess the changes in traffic patterns resulting from the pandemic, and to receive more public input. It will also help us make certain that our efforts to ensure racial equity with this project are comprehensive and aligned with federal priorities”; and

WHEREAS, racial inequity has taken center stage in Milwaukee County orientation and policy since declaring racism a public health crisis in File No. 19-397, with transportation being no exception; and

WHEREAS, previously when WisDOT was expanding Interstates 94, 894 and 41 in and around the Zoo Interchange, in 2012 a lawsuit was filed where the plaintiffs argued WisDOT was creating a disparate impact in Milwaukee County by prioritizing highways for predominantly White drivers at the expense of people of color; and

WHEREAS, in 2014 WisDOT subsequently settled to provide supplemental operations and advertising funding from 2014 to 2018 to the Milwaukee County Transit System; and

WHEREAS, the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC), which is the federally-designated metropolitan planning organization and regional planning commission for southeastern Wisconsin, including Milwaukee County, and among other things, provides long-range plans for land use development and transportation planning, most recently with “VISION 2050,” which debuted in 2016; and

WHEREAS, in File No. 21-397, relating to transportation Title VI requirements for federal transportation funding in Milwaukee County respectively, SEWRPC found:

* “[S]hould the reasonably available and expected funding for implementing the public transit element of VISION 2050 continue as estimated. . ., a disparate impact on the Region’s people of color, low-income populations, and people with disabilities is likely to occur.”
* “[B]uilding an equitable transportation system in Southeastern Wisconsin is not solely within Milwaukee County’s control. In particular, the State Legislature and the Governor would need to act to substantially increase State funding for transit and allow local governments or transit operators to raise additional revenue locally to avoid transportation-related disparate impact[s]. . .”

; and

WHEREAS, for far too long there has been an imbalance in State transportation priorities which has created a disparate impact for people of color; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, Milwaukee County hereby supports balanced transportation funding between expressways and public transit which will benefit all residents of Milwaukee County and opposes disparate impacts on any of its residents; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Milwaukee County hereby calls upon the Wisconsin Governor and Legislature to appropriate substantially more transit operating assistance, and supports WisDOT’s undertaking of a supplemental environmental impact statement prior to any remediation or expansion of Interstate 94; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Office of Government Affairs staff is authorized and requested to communicate the contents of this resolution to the Wisconsin Governor, State policymakers, and Wisconsin Counties Association, and support legislation that achieves the criteria outlined in this resolution.