

Resolution opposing U.S. Highway 53 corridor alternative 5B-1 and requesting the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Transportation Projects Commission (TPC) to remove the project from the list of major highway projects.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has enumerated the U.S. Highway 53 corridor alternative 5B-1 (USH 53 Alt 5B-1), which travels approximately 6.1 miles and extends State Trunk Highway (STH) 157 to existing River Valley Drive near Palace Street, 12th Avenue from County Trunk Highway (CTH) SS to STH 16, and constructs a new interchange between the STH 157 and 12th Avenue extension, and follows the River Valley Drive corridor between Palace and St. James Streets, and follows the Harvey Street corridor between St. James and Monitor Streets, and follows the abandoned railroad corridor between Monitor and La Crosse Streets, and follows the Sixth and Seventh Street Corridors as a system connection to South Avenue; and

WHEREAS, the City of La Crosse's Transportation Vision Report of 2015, as approved by the La Crosse Common Council, summarized the City's transportation goals as follows:

- To be a beautiful, livable, vibrant, historic city between the rivers, bluffs and marsh that is the economic, educational, medical, social, cultural and transportation hub for the region.
- To reduce our overwhelming and unsustainable dependency on the single occupant vehicle as the primary mode of transportation and prioritize bicycling, walking, public and private transit, telecommuting, land use changes, parking changes, and other supportive measures; and

WHEREAS, USH 53 Alt 5B-1 and any manifestation that creates a new four lane highway through the La Crosse River Marsh and through the heart of our oldest neighborhoods does not meet the goals of the City's Transportation Vision, the City of La Crosse Comprehensive Plan nor any of the plans of the directly impacted neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, the projected costs, as of August 2016, for the USH 53 Alt 5B-1 is estimated at \$143.2 million, with the City of La Crosse required to maintain the majority of the new road in perpetuity; and

WHEREAS, the current estimated annual costs to provide utilities, basic services such as snowplowing and street sweeping and routine maintenance is estimated at more than \$20,000 per lane mile totaling \$488,000 for USH 53 Alt 5B-1 (6.1 miles x 4 lanes x \$20,000); and

WHEREAS, according to the Wisconsin Statutes 86.32(2)(am)8., from 1998 and thereafter the current WisDOT reimbursement rate for connecting highways in municipalities having a population of 35,001 to 150,000 is \$9,678 per lane mile totaling \$236,143 (6.1 miles x 4 lanes x \$9,678), creating an annual deficit of more than \$251,857 that City of La Crosse taxpayers will have to fund; and

WHEREAS, besides providing utilities, services, maintenance and funding the annual deficit, the City of La Crosse will be required to provide police, fire, emergency response, and flood control services on the majority of the new road; and

WHEREAS, in 1997 environmental and neighborhood groups opposed the USH 53 Alt 5B-1, and after initial approval by the City of La Crosse, the groups successfully launched a

petition drive for a binding referendum. On November 4, 1998 the voters spoke loud and clear by rejecting the North-South Corridor by a vote of 11,951 against vs. 7,076 in favor; and

WHEREAS, the neighborhood and environmental associations, as well as the City of La Crosse, continue to question the need for the currently enumerated USH 53 Alt 5B-1 and any of its manifestations, including during the most recent WisDOT Coulee Region Transportation Study of 2015; and

WHEREAS, the City of La Crosse, neighborhood associations and environmental associations opposed the adoption of all of the strategy packages of the Coulee Region Transportation Study of 2015 of USH 53 Alt 5B-1, except strategy package "H" – this strategy looks at utilizing improved bike, pedestrian and transit facilities and implementing better Travel Demand Management (TDM), Transportation System Management & Operations (TSMO) and policy/legislation to avoid the expansion or creation of roadways – when it came before the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC); and

WHEREAS, it is highly unlikely that any objective Environmental Impact Study (EIS), as required by the National Environmental Policy Act will yield an EIS that does not show USH 53 Alt 5B-1 having detrimental consequences on the environment and human health, as well as severe negative economic and social impacts on the residents of the City, especially our Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Common Council of the City of La Crosse that the City of La Crosse is:

- opposed to the currently enumerated U.S. Highway 53 corridor alternative 5B-1 of 1997 or any other manifestation of a new road through the La Crosse River Marsh and through our oldest neighborhoods, and
- is in favor of improvements to the existing streets and highways that provide for the safety of all modes of travel, including the people that are biking and walking; and
- is in favor of protecting and enhancing our natural resources and neighborhoods, and
- is in favor of using our limited financial resources wisely and in as economically sustainable ways possible, without adding to the burden of local property taxpayers, and
- is in favor of alternatives to the heavy reliance on single occupant vehicles, and
- hereby requests the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Transportation Projects Commission remove the currently enumerated U.S. Highway 53 corridor alternative 5B-1 of 1997 from the state's list of major highway projects, and
- utilize the funds available from the WisDOT budget and Federal Highway Administration for the improvements in the City of La Crosse as presented in the City's Transportation Vision and the Coulee Region Transportation Study strategy package "H."

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Clerk is hereby directed to send a certified copy of this Resolution to our State officials including Governor Evers, Secretary Thompson and the Transportation Projects Commission in time for the TPC's December 2020 meeting.