

CITIZENS LEAGUE  
530 Syndicate Building  
Minneapolis, MN 55402

July 21, 1983

TO: Members, Metropolitan Council  
Richard P. Braun, Commissioner of Transportation

FROM: Citizens League

SUBJECT: Preferential Treatment for Transit in Expansion of I-35W

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is beginning this year to plan the expansion of I-35W by adding an extra lane in both directions, starting at County Road 42 in Dakota County and extending ultimately as far north as 46th Street in Minneapolis.

We urge that MnDOT only propose -- and that the Metropolitan Council only approve -- a design for expansion of I-35W which provides preferential lanes for buses, vans and carpools.

The provision of preferential lanes will:

- \* Insure a faster, easier trip for all persons who use the freeway, whether driving alone or driving or riding with others:

- \* Promote a reduction in the number of vehicles using the freeway and an increase in people riding, not driving, producing savings in road maintenance, traffic control and fuel.

- \* Promote a reduction in the overall cost of transportation, through more efficient use of the vehicle fleet.

- \* Make possible a basic transit strategy in which the vehicles go where the people want to go, reflecting the great variety of destinations people have.

- \* Make possible better rights-of-way for transit at minimal extra expense. The most limited form of preferential treatment would be the creation of diamond lanes which perhaps would be reserved for multi-passenger vehicles only during rush hours.

- \* Accelerate the already growing trend toward the use of buses, vans and carpools as acceptable alternatives to the personal and societal costs of driving alone.

I-35W already is a significant transit corridor. During the morning peak hour, approximately 12,000 persons are traveling on the four north-bound lanes at Lake Street. Of that number, about 28 percent are in carpools, either as drivers or riders; about 26 percent are riding in buses, and about 46 percent are driving alone. Even with this extent of transit usage, the freeway is extremely crowded, with about 1,900 vehicles per lane per hour. According to officials of MnDOT it is almost impossible to move more than 2,000 vehicles per lane per hour. Obviously, if any significant number of riders were driving alone, the freeway would be overloaded almost immediately, thereby reducing access to downtown Minneapolis and possibly discouraging future development there. The freedom of movement enjoyed by all drivers and riders is dependent upon attracting significant numbers of persons to buses, vans or carpools. Looking to the future, as travel demand increases, it is obvious that only a ride-sharing strategy can keep the freeway system from becoming overloaded, provide cost-saving benefits to persons who don't drive alone, environmental benefits to the entire region, and continued access to a growing downtown.

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