

CITIZENS LEAGUE STATEMENT ON I-394

The Citizens League strongly urges the cities and neighborhoods involved in the planning decisions for the I-394 corridor to set aside narrow interests and to cooperate in getting a workable plan through the review process. With the growing probability that the federal share of the funding will be jeopardized by further delay, the League suggests that the communities involved agree on the fundamentals of a plan now, including at least a commitment to provide transit opportunities. Since most people agree that improved transportation in this corridor is vital to the future of the communities involved, it would be a needless tragedy for this opportunity to slip away into a morass of municipal conflicts.

We do reaffirm our position that what we build in this corridor should reflect the future more than the past. Simply a conventional freeway -- even a metered freeway -- could easily be obsolete before it is completed. A variety of possibilities have been discussed and debated for nearly two decades. Several studies have concentrated on the potential for greater efficiency, comparing high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, light-rail transit (LRT), and even a return to trolley buses. Whatever decision we make now should make use of one or more of these.

The League continues to recommend that, in any mix of transit strategies which may emerge, the greatest potential for progress lies in creating more incentives for ride-sharing. I-394 should include features which significantly encourage people to ride together, not to drive alone. Providing preferential access and lanes for vehicles with high occupancy still appears to be the best way of providing such incentives.

Including such lanes in this freeway will:

- \* Insure a faster, easier trip for those who carpool, vanpool or ride buses.
- \* Promote a reduction in the number of vehicles using the freeway, providing savings in road maintenance, traffic control, and fuel.
- \* Give us a basic transit strategy in which the vehicles go where the people want to go, reflecting the great variety of destinations people have.
- \* Be the least expensive of all the alternatives under consideration. In the I-394 project, the marginal cost for preferential lanes for high occupancy vehicles is less than 10% of the project costs.
- \* Be the easiest approach to combine with other forms of transit, such as an expanded bus system or light rail transit (LRT). Studies indicate no serious impact on ridership potential in the southwest diagonal corridor, if LRT was there, from providing preferential lanes on I-394. Moreover, HOV lanes and LRT serve substantially different markets.
- \* Add only seven feet to the total right-of-way requirements in the corridor, a very small concession compared with the savings in time and fuel.
- \* Accelerate the already growing trend toward carpooling and vanpooling as an acceptable alternative to the personal and societal costs of driving alone.