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Comment on Amendment to the Regional Transportation Plan 2030 re. Verona Road
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When the Madison Area MPO unveiled its Regional Transportation Plan 2030 back in the Fall of 2006, several people from the Madison Area Bus Advocates testified that transit systems need to be looked at as a real way to move people. We argued that no new road construction in this area should occur without including plans for transit and we pointed out that transit could take various forms all the way from high-speed rail to rapid or express buses, to circulators and shuttles, to paratransit. As the current plan for Verona Road has no provision for transit, we find it totally unacceptable. Transit positively addresses highway congestion. Road widening is only a temporary solution that ends in as much congestion several years later. Thus, instead of a good Plan, we see an unimaginative and costly proposal to misuse public resources on the order of \$75 Million. How can the Madison Area and WisDOT, with their respective stated goals and objectives for environmentally sound and energy efficient transportation, do anything less than build in a transit component to every major highway improvement project in urbanized areas? We need a balanced transportation Plan in which transit is not limited to intercity High Speed Rail (HSR).

There are many advantages to a transit system that substitutes for many of the current Single Occupancy Vehicle trips that are economic, social, health-oriented and environmental in nature. So why does the Plan ignore transit? The project addresses one of the most congested corridors in the greater Madison Area, but the Plan makes no mention of current Metro service on Routes # 18, #19 and/or #55. The corridor is also the perfect setting for the installation of a Bus Rapid Transit line that could provide a good example of Land Use and Transit Planning Policy coordination in Dane County. There is no existing rail infrastructure available for a rail transit option. With a rapid bus, travel time could be competitive with that of an automobile but the traveler could spend that time reading or relaxing rather than navigating a car through traffic.

The City of Madison and Madison Metro will officially kick-off exploration of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) strategies at an October 1, 2009 forum. The forum will include the consideration of BRT strategies that give preferential treatment for express bus service in congested corridors and could address issues involving Transit Oriented Development as well. This is exactly the time, during a major improvement project, to incorporate provisions for future BRT and other transit strategies in transportation plans. Right-of-Way plans and programs in this corridor are not complete until exclusive lane treatments for BRT have been explored and accounted for.

While the federal administration may only be slowly building up momentum and funding allocation for urban transit initiatives, the State of Wisconsin including Madison falls farther and farther behind the curve in advancing high capacity urban transit projects, including BRT options in regional corridors. Although WisDOT is looking into intercity bus transportation and several park & ride projects, in general it still currently giving little more than token support to promoting transit as a serious travel mode around the State.

Madison Area Bus Advocates urgently requests a pause in finalizing the concept of Verona Road expansion to ensure that every feasible measure to facilitate BRT in this corridor has been incorporated.