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Through Highways: Construction of the Expressway System in Milwaukee County, 1946-1977

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THROUGH HIGHWAYS: CONSTRUCTION OF THE EXPRESSWAY SYSTEM IN
MILWAUKEE COUNTY, 1946-1977

by

Gregory Dickenson

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

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ABSTRACT
THROUGH HIGHWAYS: CONSTRUCTION OF THE EXPRESSWAY SYSTEM IN
MILWAUKEE COUNTY, 1946-1977

by

Gregory Dickenson

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2015
Under the Supervision of Professor Amanda Seligman

This thesis traces the route selection and planning of the Interstate Highway System in Milwaukee County and places it within a larger national context. It asks why Milwaukee's expressways were built along their eventual routes and why certain routes were cancelled. The thesis finds that a combination of transportation studies, compromise between units of government, and the availability of funding—especially federal funding—most contributed to route selection, while decisions at the county and state level to cancel specific expressway segments came after citizen opposition and political pressure.

The need for a major system of express highways, wide boulevards or avenues, or similar major roads in Milwaukee dated to the 1920s. Immediately after World War II, demand for a solution to growing traffic congestion in the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods mounted. Mayors John Bohn and Frank Zeidler, Land Commissioner Elmer Krieger, and other officials to begin planning for a city-wide system of controlled access, divided express highways to move traffic across the city and into and out of the downtown area more effectively.

Within a few years, overwhelming costs and limited intergovernmental cooperation compelled Milwaukee to agree to shift oversight to Milwaukee County. Under the new organizational structure, an appointed Milwaukee County Expressway Commission planned the expressway system and worked out details regarding route

selection and highway construction, but the Milwaukee County Board retained fiscal control. Municipal governments were also allowed to formally object to route proposals, with the State Highway Commission serving as an intermediary in the event of disagreements between municipal governments and the Expressway Commission. After the passage of the Interstate Highway Act in 1956, additional federal funds became available for highway construction, prompting County officials to ask the federal government to designate several highway routes in Milwaukee County as interstate highways.

Public opinion generally favored the expressways in the 1940s and throughout the 1950s, but by the mid-1960s, support diminished. Expressway construction in older, densely populated neighborhoods brought the demolition of homes, businesses, and churches, and displaced thousands. Little or no relocation assistance was available before 1968. An anti-freeway movement opposed to additional construction began in 1967 and within a few years, won several political and public relations victories. A court ruling in 1972 halted a proposal to construct an expressway parallel to Lincoln Memorial Drive near the shore of Lake Michigan. The Milwaukee County Expressway Commission cancelled other routes in the 1970s. Afterward, expressway construction largely ended until 1999.

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Introduction

Prior to the late 18th century, the wild rice, fish, birds, beaver, and muskrat found along the Menomonee River and its tributaries provided Native Americans in the region with a natural source of food, clothing, and material with which to barter with the white traders who periodically visited the area. By the early 19th century, the Potawatomi established settlements on both sides of the Menomonee River Valley. Those settlements included permanent villages on what is now Jones Island and near the modern intersection of Forest Home and Muskego Avenues. They also included a cemetery along the lake bluffs not far from what became East Clybourn Street, a summer village shared with the Sac and Winnebago tribes at 11th & National, another summer village near modern East Michigan Street, and a community of 250 lodges with extensive gardens and corn fields in the area around what became West Clybourn Street between North 20th and 24th Streets.¹ Around 1795, French Canadian fur trader Jacques Vieau built a log home and warehouse on a bluff above the Menomonee Valley at the current site of Mitchell Park. It was conveniently located near the Potawatomi settlements and close to two important canoe routes: the Menomonee River watershed and Lake Michigan's western shoreline.

His clerk and future son-in-law, Solomon Juneau, arrived in 1818. By 1820 he worked alongside Vieau and later replaced him as the Milwaukee agent for the American Fur Company. The settlement Juneau established in the early 1820s near the present corner of Water Street and Wisconsin Avenue included his family home, a warehouse, and a trading store.² Within a decade, merchant George Walker and engineer Byron Kilbourn arrived in the area and established settlements south of the

¹ Harry H. Anderson and Frederick I. Olson, *Milwaukee: At the Gathering of the Waters* (Tulsa, OK: Continental Heritage Press, 1981), 11-13.

² Anderson and Olson, 14.

Menomonee River and west of the Milwaukee River, respectively. Land speculation beginning in 1835 around the mouth of the Milwaukee River and along the lakeshore drew investors and settlers to the region.³ By then, the U.S. government signed treaties with the native tribes in the area, moving the Menomonee, Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi to land west of the Mississippi River.⁴

From the era in which Solomon Juneau established his trading post, the region near the confluence of the Milwaukee, Menomonee, and Kinnickinnic Rivers has served as the economic and commercial center of the Milwaukee area. Waterways continued to serve as the primary routes of transportation for nearly another generation. Deep rivers and a six-mile wide bay made Milwaukee's harbor ideal and gave Milwaukee a competitive advantage over Port Washington, Racine, Kenosha, and even Chicago.⁵

After the Erie Canal opened in 1825, an increasing number of Yankee farmers, merchants, and professionals began to settle in the area.⁶ They were followed by the ethnic Irish farmers migrating from the eastern United States and Canada, who settled the Town of Greenfield in the late 1830s. Irish immigrant laborers arrived in the 1840s and concentrated initially in the Third Ward. A small number of Norwegians settled in the Walker's Point area and around Muskego Lake after 1839. A larger number of Germans began to arrive at about the same time. The German immigrants settled in the Kilbourntown area and established a more rural settlement called Freistadt northwest of the city.⁷

Juneau and Kilbourn incorporated their villages separately from one another in

³ Anderson and Olson, 17.

⁴ Anderson and Olson, 13.

⁵ John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 25.

⁶ Anderson and Olson, 21.

⁷ Anderson and Olson, 22.

1837. They merged with the Walker settlement in January 1846 to form the City of Milwaukee. Its initial borders extended from the lakeshore west to modern 27th Street, south to Greenfield Avenue, and north to North Avenue, 15th Street, and Walnut Street. The new city had approximately 9,500 residents. During negotiations in the territorial legislature, representatives from some of the rural townships in the western part of the county withheld their support for a new city charter and demanded a separate government. Thus, the county was partitioned; Milwaukee County's borders were set at their current locations, and Waukesha County formed separately.⁸

Within a few decades, traders, merchants, and farmers increasingly shipped their goods by land rather than by water. Plank roads began to replace dirt roads by the midpoint of the 19th century. The 58-mile Watertown Plank Road between Milwaukee and Watertown opened in 1853, and the Wisconsin Legislature eventually chartered 132 privately-owned turnpikes and plank roads statewide. Some of those roads linked Milwaukee to Waukesha, Appleton, Fond du Lac, Janesville, and Lisbon. Historian John Gurda notes that many of the original plank road corridors are still in use and bear their original names.⁹

Just as plank roads grew in popularity, one of Milwaukee's founding fathers launched separate business enterprises to connect Milwaukee to neighboring cities. Byron Kilbourn's initiative to build a canal to the Rock River proved fruitless, but his two railroad companies were far more successful. The Milwaukee and Waukesha Railroad, later the Milwaukee & Mississippi Railroad Company, organized in 1847 and had its original terminal on St. Paul Avenue at North 2nd Street. It first ran to Wauwatosa as early as 1850, carrying passengers there in 12 minutes at what was then

⁸ Anderson and Olson, 29.

⁹ Gurda, 80.

a high speed, 30 miles per hour.¹⁰ Kilbourn was removed as the company's president in 1852, but the line reached Waukesha by then and extended to Madison in 1854. It became Wisconsin's first train line to reach the Mississippi River when it expanded to Prairie du Chien in 1857. Kilbourn's other rail company, the La Crosse and Milwaukee Rail Road, reached the Mississippi River at La Crosse the same year.¹¹ Along the way, it connected Milwaukee to Hartford, Horicon, Beaver Dam, Portage, and Wisconsin Dells, while the Milwaukee & Mississippi passed through Eagle, Palmyra, Whitewater, and Milton. In 1863, the La Crosse and Milwaukee Rail Road came under the leadership of banker Alexander Mitchell, who purchased several other railroads including the Milwaukee & Mississippi. By then it was known as the Milwaukee & Prairie du Chien.¹² When Mitchell added a line to Chicago in 1874, he established the main network of what became the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Saint Paul Railroad Company, or the Milwaukee Road. Its main competition was the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad, although Mitchell actually served as president of both lines from 1869-1870.¹³ The growing railroads shipped wheat, whisky, pork, beef, and, due to the Civil War, leather for harnesses and army boots.¹⁴

As the Milwaukee area expanded, workers used streetcars to commute from their homes in residential neighborhoods and early suburbs to employers in the downtown area, the industrialized Menomonee River Valley, and elsewhere. Residents relied upon the electric streetcar during the first two decades of the 20th century. By the 1920s, ridership began to decrease as a growing percentage of the population preferred the personal automobile over public transportation. During the Great

¹⁰ Gurda, 81.

¹¹ Anderson and Olson, 35.

¹² Gurda, 100.

¹³ Anderson and Olson, 67.

¹⁴ Gurda, 101.

Depression and World War II, streetcar usage again increased due to wartime shortages of gasoline and rubber for tires. Mass transit ridership in Milwaukee, including both buses and streetcars, peaked in 1944.¹⁵ In the decade and a half after World War II, when private autos again became the primary means of transportation, use of mass transit declined once more. As automobiles again became dominant, traffic congestion created parking problems downtown and gridlock throughout the city, prompting officials to address the problem.

By the late 1940s, workers faced long commutes from the city center to their homes in the North Shore suburbs, western Milwaukee County, and near Mitchell Airport.¹⁶ To reduce congestion, Mayor Frank Zeidler supported constructing a series of express highways, or freeways, throughout the city. Early proposals included major north-south and east-west routes, as well as belt freeways at the edge of the city, a north-south "Stadium Freeway" route along the 43rd Street corridor, an east-west route extending from the lakefront north of downtown to the Stadium Freeway, and several connecting routes.¹⁷

The City of Milwaukee initiated construction of the proposed expressway system, beginning with the Stadium Freeway. The blueprint for planners was the "Preliminary Plan for Milwaukee Expressways," originally proposed in 1952.¹⁸ The Plan was based on previous studies, among them a 1946 survey of Milwaukee motorists. The "Origin-Destination Survey" attempted to ascertain the locations from which drivers began their normal commutes, their destinations, and their usual routes.

¹⁵ Gurda, 313.

¹⁶ Richard Cutler, *Greater Milwaukee's Growing Pains, 1950-2000: An Insider's View* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 2001), 66.

¹⁷ Cutler, 67.

¹⁸ "Preliminary Plan for Milwaukee Expressways," Ammann and Whitney Consulting Engineers, September 1952, Box 1, Expressways folder, Raleigh W. Gamble Papers, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection, Golda Meir Library Archives, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, hereafter cited Gamble Papers.

From the results of the survey, planners determined the need for the major north-south and east-west expressway routes, the Stadium Freeway, and later, beltlines around the Milwaukee area.

During the time expressway construction fell within the City's purview, the City laid a foundation for expressway planning by undertaking transportation studies and starting construction of the Stadium Freeway, but construction of the overall system did not progress quickly. Financing problems, delays in acquiring sufficient rights-of-way, and limited intergovernmental cooperation contributed to the slow progress. In 1953, city officials turned planning and construction over to Milwaukee County. Under this structure, an appointed Milwaukee County Expressway Commission held responsibility for route planning and actual construction, but state law granted the elected Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors final fiscal authority.

In 1956, Congress passed, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed, the Interstate Highway Act and the Highway Revenue Act. The Interstate Highway Act laid out a plan for construction of the 42,000-mile Interstate Highway System and directly involved the federal government in expressway planning and construction nationwide, including in major metropolitan areas. It also established a funding formula that spurred local governments to participate. The federal government would pay for ninety percent of expressway construction costs, while individual states were only responsible for ten percent. The Highway Revenue Act, meanwhile, provided a dedicated funding source for the System—a federal gas tax.¹⁹

The new Interstate System had several intended purposes. Its goals included improving existing roads, encouraging recreational travel, and linking metropolitan

¹⁹ Henry Moon, *The Interstate Highway System* (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Geographers, 1994), 10.

areas. The Interstate System also had a national defense component. Because planning and construction took place during the Cold War, federal officials wanted to be able to evacuate major cities quickly in the event of a national emergency and to be able to transport troops and supplies efficiently.²⁰ Thus, the expressways local leaders had planned for Milwaukee became part of a larger, grander, national network, controlled-access, high-speed Interstate Highway System.

Initially, Milwaukee residents generally supported the freeway project. Citizens welcomed a solution to frequent traffic gridlock, while policy makers often tended to support roads over mass transit options. However, to create new rights-of-way, many homes, businesses, churches, and other buildings had to be demolished, dislocating numerous residents and changing the character of entire neighborhoods. By the 1960s, many Milwaukee residents began to object to construction, resulting in strong protests at public hearings, as well as legal action.

Much of the freeway system planned for Milwaukee was eventually built, but a significant portion was not. The natural question to ask, then, is "Why not?" Additionally, the Milwaukee freeway system had been planned to address a specific need, but once local efforts became linked to a massive national endeavor, some local preferences had to be adjusted to fit into the federal road building program. Moreover, the activism of residents and community groups resulted in decisions not to complete several planned and proposed segments of the expressway system.

This thesis explores the history of expressway planning and construction in Milwaukee. Its goal is to explain why the final routes were selected, and why some portions were completed, while planners and policy makers cancelled other proposed or planned segments. The basic research question the thesis asks is "Why were

²⁰ Moon, 16.

freeways in the city of Milwaukee and neighboring communities constructed along their eventual routes and not along their originally proposed routes?” That research question will necessarily dovetail into a discussion of who supported and opposed freeway construction and who used the freeways once they were built. Additional questions raised by the research topic relate to engineering and highway planning. Those questions ask what existing rights-of-way were used for expressway construction, which rights-of-way had to be created, and how natural barriers such as the Milwaukee River and Menomonee River Valley influenced route planning and selection.

In short, certain routes were cancelled due to strong citizen opposition. Residents in Milwaukee neighborhoods at first welcomed the freeways as a way to relieve to overburdened surface streets, while Mayor Zeidler and downtown merchants saw the expressways as a way to draw save Downtown from the traffic congestion that made commuting to and from the central business district difficult. Yet after expressway construction in the 1950s and early 1960s displaced thousands of city residents, particularly on the West, North, and near South Sides, the popularity of the construction program diminished. West Milwaukee and Glendale raised similar concerns about the demolition of homes and elimination of parkland inside their municipal borders. Outlying communities such as Franklin, Brookfield, and Cedarburg objected to loss of farmland and the possible negative environmental impact brought by a proposed outer beltline at a time when traffic counts did not necessarily justify expressway construction in those areas. Business interests, highway engineers, and some elected officials at the city and county level supported the expressways well into the 1960s, but opposition from Milwaukee Common Council and Milwaukee County Board members, Mayor Henry Maier, community

organizations, and several state legislators brought an effective end to the project.

This thesis further explores the conflict between the professional disciplines involved in expressway planning. This conflict is well documented in academic literature.²¹ The highway engineers and traffic consultants who studied Milwaukee's traffic patterns, recommended particular routes, and had the ear of many elected officials often had approaches to planning that were dissimilar to the urban planners, parks officials, and other leaders who also tried to exert influence on land use and local public policy. Their decisions affected thousands of homeowners, businesses, churches, and private organizations located along or near proposed freeway routes, prompting them to react positively to some expressway proposals, and negatively to others. Elected officials frequently found themselves caught in the middle, or in opposition to one another.

Milwaukee's experience was not unique. Other cities observed a similar trend of initial public support, urban highway-building sponsored at first at the local and state level but later by the federal government, and declining support for the overall program after construction began. Writers in several disciplines have described the trend of expressway building which led to suburbanization and damage to historic neighborhoods. Historians Howard Chudacoff, Judith Smith, and Peter Baldwin suggest a pattern of considering downtown areas as hubs and building expressway routes radiating away from them like spokes, with beltlines encircling the city. Within this pattern, downtown areas were redefined primarily as commercial centers accessible from the suburbs.²² Journalist Ray Suarez more generally links building

²¹ See Mark Rose, *Interstate: Expressway Highway Politics, 1941-1956* (Lawrence, KS: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), 56. See also Jeffrey Brown, Eric A. Morris, and Brian D. Taylor, "Planning for Cars in Cities: Planners, Engineers, and Freeways in the 20th Century," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 75 (2009): 170.

²² Howard P. Chudacoff, Judith E. Smith, and Peter C. Baldwin, *The Evolution of American Urban Society*, 7th edition (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2010), 220.

roads leading out of the city to suburbanization. He does not discuss the interplay between expressway construction and urban renewal or displacement of residents whose homes were located along the new rights-of-way, but he does tie public policy favoring suburban growth and highway construction to the decline of central city areas.²³

Former Milwaukee Mayor John O. Norquist shares a similar sentiment. He is careful to acknowledge the value of cars in American society, but he too links accommodation of automobiles to suburban sprawl, and decries the impact of urban expressways on compact and historic neighborhoods. Freeway building in Cleveland, Norquist asserts, displaced some 19,000 residents. In Milwaukee, expressways destroyed the African-American cultural district near 8th and Walnut Streets called Bronzeville, and Our Lady of Pompeii Catholic Church, a center of faith and community for ethnic Italian residents in the Third Ward.²⁴

Academic writers also describe very negative consequences to building such roadways through densely populated urban areas. Chudacoff, Smith, and Baldwin observe that Atlanta and Miami saw massive forced relocations of African-American residents as a result of expressway building. Those expressways additionally served to further separate black and white neighborhoods. Boston, Cleveland, and other cities saw jobs migrate out of the city as manufacturers, retailers, and other employers relocated to industrial parks, shopping malls, and other commercial areas along suburban beltlines and away from the city center.²⁵

The late historian Raymond Mohl described this trend as well. Federal

²³ Ray Suarez, *The Old Neighborhood: What We Lost in the Great Suburban Migration: 1966-1999* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 18, 252.

²⁴ John O. Norquist, *The Wealth of Cities: Revitalizing the Centers of American Life* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1998), 159-161.

²⁵ Chudacoff, Smith, and Baldwin, 221.

legislation advocated in the 1930s and 1940s by highway engineers, truckers, and road builders promoted urban expressways radiating from and encircling major cities. Mayors, developers, department store owners, and others backed the initiatives. Their intent was to clear slums and rebuild urban core areas.²⁶

He goes on to detail the citizen opposition in San Francisco, Baltimore, and elsewhere that mounted against continued urban expressway construction after many residential and business districts were demolished. Mohl characterizes the trend of initial support followed by organized citizen opposition, often backed by local elected leaders, community groups, and civic elites, as a "freeway revolt" movement that began in San Francisco in 1959 and spread to other metropolitan areas.²⁷ Mohl's framework aptly describes Milwaukee's freeway construction narrative.

Taking into consideration the rivalry between disciplines, the evolution of both expressway planning and public sentiment, and the nationwide trend toward increased automobile use, the findings of this thesis place Milwaukee squarely into the broader national narrative of expressway construction. Specifically, it argues Milwaukee falls within the national pattern for beginning expressway construction projects at the local level and then shifting at least partial responsibility for both planning and funding to the state and federal level. It likewise fit into the national pattern of initial public support for expressways. Residents welcomed them as a solution to traffic congestion in the 1940s and 1950s, but by the mid-1960s perceived them as concrete ribbons tearing through residential neighborhoods and nearby commercial districts and dividing walkable communities. The negative view of expressways led to the widespread opposition that brought an end to expressway building in 1977, 31 years

²⁶ Raymond Mohl, "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities," *Journal of Urban History* 30 (2004): 677.

²⁷ Mohl, 675.

after publication of the Origin-Destination survey that laid the groundwork for the construction program.

For the purposes of this thesis, the terms "expressway" and "freeway" will be used interchangeably. The term "interstate" will refer to highways that were part of the federal Interstate Highway System. Many—but not all—expressways in Milwaukee became a part of the System. In addition to a starting point for major highway planning, the Origin-Destination Survey also offered a working definition of the term "expressway." According to the Survey, an expressway is "A limited access traffic facility, usually depressed or elevated, permitting the free flow of through traffic, without interference by cross traffic, traffic moving in the opposite direction, turning movements, parking, and pedestrians."²⁸

²⁸ Origin-Destination Traffic Survey: Milwaukee Metropolitan Area, "jointly conducted by the State Highway Commission and Local Government Units, in cooperation with the U.S. Public Roads Administration, 1946, retrieved from Golda Meir Library Stacks, UW-Milwaukee.

Chapter 1

By Evolution and Not Revolution: Visions for An Expressway in Milwaukee

To understand leaders' ideas for expressway route planning, it is necessary to understand the nature of Milwaukee's earlier growth and the development of its transportation systems. Milwaukee's expansion from the original downtown area and adjacent residential neighborhoods began during the second half of the 19th century, as streetcars enabled workers to live farther and farther away from their employers in the central business district and nearby factories. The city's population had been concentrated on the East Side near Juneau's settlement through the 1830s, though within twenty years the population on the West Side grew significantly, thanks in part to a dam on the Milwaukee River constructed by Byron Kilbourn.¹ In 1869, two decades after its incorporation, the city began promoting the Menomonee River Valley, already home to several tanneries and Milwaukee's largest industrial employer—the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad—as a location for new industry and built several canals through the valley. The efforts were successful, as two major employers, Miller Brewing Company and International Harvester, located in the Valley, along with several other companies. As Roger Simon stresses, the Valley tapped into several resources.² It was not only close to downtown, but it was also easily accessible for a large and growing workforce.

A similar compactness existed in other cities. As Sam Bass Warner noted, walking was the primary form of transportation in most cities until the mid-1800s, and the majority of cities were fairly densely developed. In Boston, for example, the city seldom spread out beyond a two- or three-mile radius, the distance an adult could

¹ Roger Simon, *The City Building Process: Housing and Services in New Milwaukee Neighborhoods, 1880-1910* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1996), 19.

² Simon, 20.

normally walk in an hour. Toward the end of the 1800s, though, the expansion of streetcar systems enabled growth along the edge of the city.³

Yet because Milwaukee's industrial employers were dispersed throughout the Valley and along the lakefront, workers could increasingly live farther from the central business district and still walk to work. A growing number of major streets also served as retail centers: Third Street and Fond du Lac Avenue west of the Milwaukee River, North Avenue east of the Milwaukee River, and Mitchell Street and Lincoln and Muskego Avenues on the South Side.⁴ Meanwhile, as Milwaukee's largely German immigrant population pushed north and west during the 1880s and 1890s, there was increasing development along major streets such as Fond du Lac Avenue, North Avenue, Teutonia Avenue, and Center Street. Several of those streets, particularly Fond du Lac, Teutonia, and Hopkins Avenues, had been country roads before the farmland they passed through was subdivided into residential and commercial blocks.⁵

In other cities, various forms of public transportation became available during the early 1800s. New York City saw the horse-drawn omnibus introduced in 1829, and other East Coast cities had omnibus service within a decade. However, it was not an especially comfortable mode of travel, especially on cobblestone or muddy streets, and did not spur significant suburban development.⁶ Rail lines radiating out of urban centers, though, were more effective, and prompted the growth of "commuter villages." Those small, residential towns along the rail lines existed just outside, but close to, cities such as New York and Chicago. Thus, by 1900, street railways made

³ Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 14.

⁴ Simon, 22-23.

⁵ Simon, 55.

⁶ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 34.

expansion of urban boundaries much more possible.⁷

Prior to the 1880s, Milwaukee's mass transit system was relatively disorganized. Post-Civil War start-up companies operated horse-drawn rail lines and one coal-powered steam line. Most companies did not coordinate their efforts and were often linked to entrepreneurs engaged in land speculation.⁸ Electrification of Milwaukee's streetcar beginning in 1890 definitely enabled more outlying neighborhoods to develop.⁹ The early 1890s saw new lines extend west toward the Soldier's Home, northwest on Fond du Lac Avenue, and southeast on Kinnickinnic Avenue to Bay View.¹⁰ However, because Milwaukee was so compactly developed, many residents were able to walk to work, and streetcar fares were too expensive for many lower-income workers. Consequently, Milwaukee had relatively low mass transportation ridership compared to other cities. In fact, the majority of riders were white-collar workers. Even so, streetcar service was key in opening peripheral areas to development,¹¹ although its routes concentrated in the downtown area.¹²

That period of rail growth propelled Milwaukee's outward expansion and annexation of additional territory. The industrial suburb of Bay View voted to be annexed into Milwaukee in 1887, while the city's municipal borders in 1900 reached north to Keefe Avenue, south to Cleveland Avenue, and west to approximately Thirty-Fifth Street.¹³ Around the same time, industrial and residential suburbs developed. The industrial village of Cudahy incorporated around Patrick Cudahy's meat packing

⁷ Jackson, 34.

⁸ Karen Woolley Moore, "Missed Connections: The Progressive Derailment of Public Transit in Metropolitan Milwaukee," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2008), 6.

⁹ Simon, 22.

¹⁰ Clay McShane, *Technology and Reform: Street Railways and the Growth of Milwaukee, 1887-1900* (Madison, University of Wisconsin, 1974), 87.

¹¹ Simon, 120.

¹² Simon, 23.

¹³ Gurda, 183.

plant in 1895, followed by the former North Milwaukee in 1897,¹⁴ West Allis in 1902, and West Milwaukee in 1906. Affluent, residential communities also grew near the urban edge. Whitefish Bay and East Milwaukee—which later changed its name to Shorewood—incorporated in 1892 and 1900, respectively, as homeowners left the city seeking the ability to have more control over tax rates and service levels.

Indeed, electrification of the streetcars significantly contributed to that suburban growth,¹⁵ and by the 1896 streetcar workers' strike, they were "lifelines" to outlying neighborhoods and developing suburbs.¹⁶ The first electrified streetcar line, owned by businessman Washington Becker, offered service along Grand Avenue (now Wisconsin Avenue) and Wells Street beginning in April 1890. Becker's route connected downtown to established businesses and neighborhoods west of the Milwaukee River, and prompted other lines to either electrify or sell franchises to investors.¹⁷ In 1891, brewery executive Frederick Pabst organized a successful suburban rapid transit line and leased it to a newly reorganized firm, The Milwaukee Electric Railway & Light Company, also known as TMER&L Co. Pabst's line offered ten cent fares and service to downtown without transfer.¹⁸ In 1918, TMER&L operated 180 miles of intra-city track in Milwaukee.¹⁹ A sister company of TMER&L called the Milwaukee Light Heat & Traction Co., meanwhile, offered interurban rail service to more distant communities, including New Berlin, East Troy, Waukesha, Racine, Kenosha, and later, Port Washington and Sheboygan.²⁰

After 1918, however, use of electric streetcars began to decline. By 1938, track

¹⁴ The Village of North Milwaukee was annexed into the City of Milwaukee in 1929.

¹⁵ Gurda, 183.

¹⁶ Gurda, 198.

¹⁷ Moore, 49.

¹⁸ Moore, 56.

¹⁹ Moore, 6.

²⁰ Moore, 61.

length decreased to 105 miles, although TMER&L also operated a number of trackless trolley and bus routes.²¹ Automobile use had increased significantly during the early decades of the 20th century, reducing streetcar ridership. Cars first outnumbered horses in Milwaukee in 1916, and by 1926, there were 100,000 personal automobiles in the city. Even with the shift from streetcars and interurban lines to autos, Milwaukee continued to expand outward.²²

Additionally, Milwaukee's leaders did not always agree in the area of transportation policy. Socialist Mayor Daniel Webster Hoan remained committed to maintaining an affordable mass transit system, and campaigned in favor of city control of the transit company. A critic of rubber-tired vehicles, Hoan complained that the automobile forced the city to spend heavily on street widening and traffic control officers, while children could no longer play safely in local streets.²³ Likewise, Hoan did not believe streets and highways were the best suited means of transportation to facilitate trucking and shipping. He noted that pavements for passenger cars and light trucks cost one-half as much as pavements for heavy trucks, and last longer. He also expressed concern over legislation at the state level establishing a highway system that would compete with railroads for freight transportation. If freight transportation shifted from railroads to highways, Hoan foresaw, the public would have to cover the cost.²⁴

Meanwhile, his fellow Socialist, park planner Charles Whitnall, encouraged automobile use and decentralization. As early as 1911, Whitnall wrote that the personal automobile would better facilitate decentralization and later promoted it as a

²¹ Moore, 6.

²² Gurda, 251.

²³ Moore, 232.

²⁴ Letter from Mayor Daniel Webster Hoan to Mr. S.E. Abrams, 24 October 1932, Box 18, Folder 433, Mayor Daniel Webster Hoan Papers, Harry H. Anderson Research Library, Milwaukee County Historical Society, hereafter cited as Hoan Papers.

superior form of transportation. In 1923, he proposed a major parkway plan, which entailed creation of both parks and through roads along Milwaukee's waterways. The city and county park boards—on both of which Whitnall served—wanted to create a network of local highways to accommodate anticipated future increases in auto traffic, as well as link park areas. Whitnall further envisioned a system of arterial streets and centralized parking areas, eventually proposing, in 1938, an arterial network with Capitol Drive and Oklahoma Avenue as the approximate northern and southern boundaries, respectively.²⁵

Early Traffic Relief Efforts

While he was certainly a proponent of mass transit, Mayor Hoan did not completely oppose automobile-based transportation solutions, as city planners and elected officials discussed options for relieving downtown congestion well before any expressway system was proposed. As far back as the mid-1920s, Hoan observed Milwaukee's "critical traffic and parking problem becoming more acute."²⁶ His solution was to create a "great wide artery" from the South Side to a point north of downtown to relieve present and growing traffic needs. If the city did not take action, Hoan wrote, concerned businesses in the central business district would suffer greatly, and 6th Street was best suited to serve as that artery. He argued that no other route was as desirable, because 6th Street was the only street in the immediate vicinity with a viaduct to the South Side.²⁷ Thus, Hoan's proposal in May 1927 was to widen North 6th Street from its viaduct over the Menomonee Valley north to Chestnut Street.²⁸

²⁵ Moore, 229, 232.

²⁶ Letter from Hoan to the Milwaukee Common Council, 25 May 1927, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers.

²⁷ Letter from Hoan to Common Council, 30 June 1927, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers.

²⁸ Chestnut Street was later renamed and hereafter will be referred to as Juneau Avenue. See "Kilbourn Av. Now Official," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 4 June 1929,

However, the city moved slowly on the project, delaying significant progress. The Mayor's Office, Common Council, and city departments took a careful, deliberate approach, attempting to balance cost, practicality, and longer term plans for the surrounding commercial district. This slow pace indicates not indecisiveness, but a general lack of urgency and a belief in the value of careful planning on the part of elected officials and bureaucrats to create an improved roadway through or near the central district. Socialist leaders such as Hoan tended to be cautious, especially in regard to spending, and the narrative of the 6th Street project offers an indication of the city's later approach to planning controlled-access express highways twenty years later.

Mayor Hoan himself had a reputation for integrity and frugality, and during the World War I era he took a more moderate anti-war position than many Socialists in Milwaukee and other states. His fellow Socialists did not always hold Common Council majorities but often proved able to form alliances with other aldermen. Hoan's own political priorities included professional administration, planning, and zoning; strong police and fire protection; public health; and city beautification. He also supported public ownership of the local electric utility and aligned himself closely with organized labor. On fiscal issues, he favored centralized purchasing and pay-as-you-go financing.²⁹ Debt reduction, the Socialists felt, reduced the hold of banks on city government and reduced the property tax burden for homeowners.³⁰ Socialists in eastern states derisively labeled Hoan's politics as "Sewer Socialism."³¹

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19290604&id=QZdQAAAIBAJ&sjid=rSEEA-AAIBAJ&pg=6996,1399644>, accessed 22 January 2014.

²⁹ Anderson and Olson, 110.

³⁰ Aims McGuinness, "The Revolution Begins Here: Milwaukee and the History of Socialism," in *Perspectives on Milwaukee's Past*, edited by Margo Anderson and Victor Greene (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2009), 85.

³¹ Anderson and Olson, 110.

Although Hoan desired an artery, he did not move forward until completion of a study by the city's real estate department.³² The report the Mayor received indicated the widening project could cost under \$2.5 million, with property owners along the widened stretch of Sixth Street paying fifty percent of the cost. Hoan worried that without the street improvements, downtown businesses would suffer greatly from congestion. The report cited a cost of \$8,000 per foot of street frontage for right-of-way acquisition. Hoan considered the figure excessive, but noted that a property at North 5th Street and West Wisconsin Avenue had sold to a hotel company for \$10,000 per foot and implied his support.³³

In February 1928, the Milwaukee Common Council passed a resolution directing the City Engineer to survey and plan for widening North 6th Street from West Saint Paul Avenue to West Juneau Avenue. The resolution likewise directed the Commissioner of Public Works to prepare a cost estimate for the planned expansion and determined that property acquisition would take place on the west side of the street.³⁴ The project was to be paid for by a bond issue, as would the planned viaduct over the Menomonee Valley at 35th Street. However, the bond issue would be subject to voter approval, and Mayor Hoan indicated concern that without proper publicity, city residents may oppose construction because they were also being asked to support a school bond. Hoan therefore asked for support from local organizations and civic clubs.³⁵

The Common Council adopted another resolution,³⁶ in May 1928, in support

³² Letter from Hoan to Common Council, 25 May 1927, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers.

³³ Letter from Hoan to Common Council, 30 June 1927, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers..

³⁴ Common Council resolution file # 37441, adopted 13 February 1928, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers.

³⁵ Letter from Hoan to Business Men's Committee Chairman Clement C. Smith, 11 February 1928, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers.

³⁶ Common Council resolution file # 37441, adopted 13 February 1928, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers.

of a widening plan for 6th Street. As of October 1929, the bond issue, passed, funds were available, and some properties had already been purchased or were donated to the city. Even so, additional complications delayed the project. The city had not yet decided whether to condemn additional properties along the strip in question. In addition, the city was still considering a setback line for building construction along the affected part of 6th Street.³⁷ Such a line established a minimum distance from the property line for any new building or building expansion. By spring of the following year, the 6th Street project was delayed by technical questions. Numerous other street and alley opening and widening projects were planned citywide, and the City Comptroller questioned whether special assessments on Sixth Street properties could be collected under current laws.³⁸

Additionally, the local business community had for several years generally supported widening 6th Street to 100 feet,³⁹ but a disputed property further delayed the project. Businessman George Uihlein had proposed to construct an office tower and theater at the corner of Sixth and Wisconsin, but a disagreement with the city over acquisition of a thirty foot strip delayed both its construction and street widening.⁴⁰ Uihlein, meanwhile, refused to sell the strip at a price of \$440,000, which delayed construction of the building. He believed his request to receive \$600,000 for the strip, while paying a \$120,000 special assessment for a nearby property, was reasonable, but he was willing to compromise.⁴¹ As one frustrated businessman in the area wrote

³⁷ Memo from Special Assistant City Attorney Clifton Williams to Hoan, 12 October 1929, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers.

³⁸ Memo from City Comptroller Louis Kotecki to City Real Estate Agent Edward Grieb, 11 April 1930, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers.

³⁹ Letter from Clement C. Smith to Hoan, 1 July 1927, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers.

⁴⁰ "New Theater is Planned at Sixth Street," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 5 April 1930, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19300405&id=Cl9QAAAAIABAJ&sjid=6w4EAA_AAIABAJ&pg=6846,569710, accessed 12 February 2014.

⁴¹ "Again Refuses \$440,000 Offer," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, 7 August 1930, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19300807&id=YdE_AAAAIABAJ&sjid=5g4EAA_AAIABAJ&pg=5307,952229, accessed 12 February 2014.

of the situation, the uncertainty of both projects made attracting tenants to the proposed office tower difficult.⁴² Uihlein and other property owners finally entered into an agreement with the city in late 1930, and the city put the Sixth Street widening plan on the 1931 building program.⁴³

Origin-Destination Survey

The Great Depression and World War II effectively halted the population growth of earlier decades. The city's population grew just 1.6 percent between 1930 and 1940, while the number of weddings dropped nearly 40 percent between 1929 and 1932. The birthrate from 1929-1933 likewise dropped. John Gurda attributes a decline in building construction to the decrease in the number of new families. Fewer families resulted in fewer new homes and businesses. That drop meant significantly curtailed new construction.⁴⁴ Municipal government, meanwhile, curbed spending significantly. With the exception of a few parkways and other county- and state-sponsored projects, very few locally-funded public improvements took place during the Depression era, impeding the city's growth and discouraging businesses from locating in the city.⁴⁵ Overall, Milwaukee remained financially stable, unlike some cities in Iowa, Indiana, and the East Coast; in 1932, the city carried a budget surplus of \$2.3 million, and a cash balance of \$4 million in the bank.⁴⁶ Even so, it paid a portion of its public employee wages in a municipal scrip called baby bonds, debt certificates issued in small denominations and backed by the city's ownership of tax delinquent property.⁴⁷

⁴² Letter from businessman Oscar Brachman to Hoan, 4 October 1929, Box 33, Folder 851, Hoan Papers.

⁴³ "Spur Viaduct and Widening," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 7 October 1930, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19301007&id=8VRQAAAIBAJ&sjid=Fg8EAAAIBAJ&pg=4997,1101234>, accessed 12 February 2014.

⁴⁴ Gurda, 300.

⁴⁵ Moore, 236.

⁴⁶ Moore, 246.

⁴⁷ Gurda, 281.

Traffic problems did not grow as significantly during the Depression and World War II, but by the 1940s, there was again a need to address the city's congestion. In July 1943, Alderman Milton McGuire sponsored a resolution to apply for federal aid through the State Highway Commission to fund an expressway project survey. Approved by the State Highway Commission chairman in September 1944, Milwaukee's Bureau of Electrical Services conducted a large scale Origin-Destination Survey, completing it in 1946 at a cost of \$100,000, with assistance from both the state and federal governments. Milwaukee County officials and local officials in neighboring Glendale and Fox Point also supported the survey, which took 43,000 interviews and a scientific sample of 10,000 residential units.⁴⁸

The 1946 Origin-Destination Survey served as the basis for most future expressway planning in Milwaukee. By tracking the beginning and end points of vehicular traffic in Milwaukee, the survey clearly indicated the primary routes and distances of commuters traveling intra-city to or from employers, schools, shopping districts, and other locations. The Survey further identified the areas of highest traffic density, and recommended a local express highway system as a solution.

⁴⁸ "Facts and Figures on Expressways in Milwaukee," The 1948 Corporation, 10 February 1948, Legislative Reference Bureau, Milwaukee City Hall, hereafter cited as LRB.



Figure 1: As of 1944, Milwaukee's borders extended north to Silver Spring Drive and south to Howard Avenue. West Allis and Wauwatosa were also significantly smaller.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ "Map of Milwaukee County Showing System of State & County Trunk Highways," Milwaukee County Highway Department, January 1944, personal collection of John Fleming.

To understand the extent to which the Survey served as a statistical and practical basis for future expressway planning in Milwaukee, it is important to understand the nature of the Survey. Methodologically, the Origin-Destination Survey took a comprehensive approach, interviewing a representative sample of drivers both along public streets and highways, as well as at their homes. The Survey referred to interviews taken from interview stations at major intersections throughout Milwaukee County as the External Study, and interviews conducted at businesses and private homes as the Internal Survey.⁵⁰ For the External Survey, interviewers stopped as many drivers as reasonably possible; all drivers were stopped during non-rush periods, and approximately one-half of trucks and passenger cars during rush periods were stopped. The survey area covered 99.3 square miles, or forty-two percent of Milwaukee County's land area, and included the corporate limits of the City of Milwaukee and nearby suburbs and rural areas in which residential growth resembled light urban development.⁵¹ Thus, the Survey gathered information on the commutes and other trips of not only Milwaukee residents, but also residents of West Allis, Wauwatosa, Shorewood, Whitefish Bay, and the South Shore suburbs. The Village of Greendale and unincorporated rural townships in northwestern and southwestern Milwaukee County were not included.⁵² Overall, the Survey established a total of thirty-eight interview stations, at points where main highways crossed the survey area boundary. For the Internal Survey, interviewers visited 10,000 homes. That number was consistent with the five percent sample size in similar Public Roads Administration surveys. In the Milwaukee survey, interviewers visited one in twenty homes in the survey area, except in Cudahy, South Milwaukee, the Town of Oak

⁵⁰ Origin-Destination Survey, page 26.

⁵¹ Origin-Destination Survey, page 25.

⁵² Origin-Destination Survey, page 26.

Creek, and the Town of Lake.⁵³ In those four areas, they visited one in ten homes, because a larger sample size was found to be more useful in smaller communities.⁵⁴

The Survey further researched commercial traffic in Milwaukee and surrounding areas. Researchers sought a twenty percent representative sample for the truck study, and accordingly, used state motor vehicle registrations for Milwaukee County to find truck operators. Those persons were interviewed at their homes or places of business. The survey of taxi traffic relied on a twenty-five percent sample based on records obtained from taxicab companies.⁵⁵

The time invested in the Origin-Destination Survey was significant. Interviews for the External Survey took place between October 16, 1944 and December 8, 1944, eventually resulting in the figure of approximately 43,000 total interviews representing eighty-two percent of vehicles passing the interview stations during that time period. Interviews conducted at private homes took place between December 1944 and April 1945. Householders were notified by mail that they would soon be visited and asked to provide the requested information, while newspaper publicity drew attention to the residential visits more generally.⁵⁶ Participants in the External Study were asked general questions, such as "Where did the trip begin?," "Where did the trip end?," "How did you travel?," and related questions about the purpose of the trip and parking facilities used. The Internal Study was conducted from Tuesday through Saturday, and asked even more detailed questions about the previous day's travel to and from home. Interviewers, who were specifically trained for tact and diplomacy, sought separate data for each household member over age five.

⁵³ After World War II, the western portion of the Town of Lake was annexed into the city of Milwaukee. The eastern section incorporated to form the City of Saint Francis.

⁵⁴ Origin-Destination Survey, page 27.

⁵⁵ Origin-Destination Survey, page 27.

⁵⁶ Origin-Destination Survey, page 29.

Additionally, the Survey implemented a statistical control variable tracking whether participants crossed any of three well-known bridges: the Wisconsin Avenue viaduct, the 16th Street viaduct, and the Holton Street viaduct.⁵⁷

Researchers sought information on what type of transportation respondents used, and controlled for what type of transportation they would have used under prewar conditions. Therefore, they were able to add potential automobile drivers to actual automobile drivers and subtract that number from public transit drivers, taking into consideration drivers who carpooled. This massive amount of data was then translated into numeric codes to enable use of machine tabulating equipment; in all 115,000 individual punch cards were used to compile the survey data.⁵⁸

The Survey suggested several possible expressway routes, based on survey results. The area with the greatest concentration of origins and destinations was the portion of the downtown area bordered by Clybourn Street, Juneau Avenue, North 12th Street, and Lake Michigan. Heavy traffic was most evenly distributed between Center Street on the north, Mitchell Street on the South, 1st Street on the east, and 35th Street on the west, with much of the vehicle flow moving west, north, northwest, and northeast from the city's central area. According to the statistical data, the geographic center of all traffic origins and destinations for auto, taxi, and truck trips was the intersection of North 16th Street and West Kilbourn Avenue. After accounting for public transit, the center shifted two blocks to North 18th Street and West Kilbourn Avenue, but in any case, the near West Side was in the mid-1940s the center of Milwaukee's traffic. Additionally, the Survey stated that the transportation problem could only be addressed from a metropolitan standpoint.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Origin-Destination Survey, page 30.

⁵⁸ Origin-Destination Survey, page 30.

⁵⁹ Origin-Destination Survey, page 70.

As a result of this information, the Survey suggested several possible routes for new expressways. One was an east-west route along West Highland Avenue from a connection with West Kilbourn Avenue near North 10th Street west to its intersection with the Menomonee River Valley, then farther west along the south bank of the River to near the county line. The Survey noted that this route was closest to the center of origins and destinations, that Kilbourn Avenue served as the main arterial street in the downtown area, and that it served the Milwaukee County Courthouse. The Survey's alternate east-west route was to follow the electric rapid transit line west of a railroad depot downtown, and east of the depot along Clybourn Street and over the Chicago and Northwestern Railway to a connection with Lincoln Memorial Drive.

The Survey likewise proposed a variety of north-south express highway routes: along the lakefront, along North and South 6th Street, and along North and South 16th and South 20th Streets. The potential lakeshore routes—an inner and outer harbor drive—followed plans already under consideration for a southerly extension of Lincoln Memorial Drive over the Port of Milwaukee to a connection with the Near South Side and Bay View neighborhood. The 16th Street route would have more closely served the center of trip origins and destinations, the Survey stated, while the 6th Street route would have followed South Chase and Howell Avenues and terminated at what it referred to as Milwaukee County Airport.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the Survey did not make a specific route recommendation.⁶¹

Upon completion of the Origin-Destination Survey in 1946, Milwaukee's elected officials, engineering and planning professionals, and other leaders began the task of responding to the survey. Their response was to consider not only the

⁶⁰ Origin-Destination Survey, page 58.

⁶¹ "Report on Central Area Radiating Expressway," Carl Bergstrom, retired engineer, 23 March 1948, LRB.

construction of an expressway in principle, but to identify funding sources, determine potential routes, and gain support from the public and business community for creating a massive transportation infrastructure. However, the expressway construction program began slowly, under the jurisdiction of the City of Milwaukee, and due to the deliberate nature of the bureaucratic process, years passed before any construction work began.

Expressway Planning

Elected officials, planners, and bureaucrats spent the majority of 1947 planning the expressway system in Milwaukee, based on the Survey's results. On March 13, Milwaukee's Long Term Improvement Technical Committee asked the Board of Public Land Commissioners to make a recommendation concerning the Origin-Destination Survey. Specifically, it was interested in the role of expressways in the city's "Major Street System" master plan. The Commission unanimously approved the report, and the Milwaukee Common Council resolved that the Survey should serve as the basis for future development of Milwaukee's "Major Street System."⁶²

The Survey made a series of route recommendations tentatively accepted by the Land Commission report. They included a major north-south route in the vicinity of North and South Sixteenth Street, a major east-west route in the vicinity of West Highland Avenue, and a second east-west route along Clybourn Street from North 16th Street to the lakefront and up to East Kilbourn Avenue. The Survey only indicated one plan along each of the proposed routes, but that was sufficient to obtain an approximate cost estimate.⁶³ The overall plan proposed in the Origin-Destination

⁶² Memo from Elmer Krieger and Robert Filtzer to Board of Public Land Commissioners, 2 December 1947, Box 164, Folder 1, Official and Personal Papers of Carl F. and Frank P. Zeidler, Frank Zeidler Humanities Room, Milwaukee Public Library, hereafter cited Zeidler Papers.

⁶³ Ibid.

Survey was 10.73 miles of expressways, and a total of 14.82 miles of expressways when surface connections within city limits were included.

This early plan also called for razing over 2,000 buildings and entailed a significant cost. Specifically, 2,469 structures would need to be torn down, including 399 commercial or industrial buildings, and a total of 4,069 residential units would be lost. Property acquisition cost alone was expected in late 1947 to be about \$24,330,000, while construction would cost \$79,214,000. Local financial responsibility equaled \$31,093,000, while the state was anticipated to contribute \$19,815,000 and the federal contribution was to be \$28,306,000. The federal government's contribution at that time was seen as insufficient; however, planners and officials at the local level believed that additional federal aid might become available at a later time.⁶⁴

Preparations and ideas for expressway construction made their way through the city's bureaucracy during the spring, summer, and autumn of 1947. In April, twenty city officials and business representatives traveled to Detroit to see the new Industrial and Davison Expressways and returned to Milwaukee in strong support. On June 4th, the Land Commission approved a report calling the expressways "desirable."⁶⁵ Later that month, as already noted, the Common Council's joint committee on Streets and Alleys and Finance voted unanimously to adopt the expressways plan "as the basis for the development of the Milwaukee major street system."⁶⁶ By autumn, Mayor Bohn asked the Common Council to make a "policy decision" on expressways, and advocated a referendum on a bond issue for the expressways. On November 5th, the Finance Committee and Streets and Alleys

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "Facts and Figures on Expressways in Milwaukee," The 1948 Corporation, 10 February 1948, LRB.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Committee approved the bond issue at a joint meeting. The committees further instructed the Milwaukee Public Works Commissioner Walter Swietlik to draw preconstruction plans and arrange with the State Highway Commission and federal Public Roads Administration for highway planning aids. Five days later, the full Common Council approved a Milwaukee expressway, almost a full year after it was first recommended, by a 22-4 vote.⁶⁷

It is important to understand that local leaders initially expected to include expressways as part of a larger initiative for transportation and post-war infrastructure improvements in the broader urban area. Planners Elmer Krieger and Robert Filtzer believed that discussion of expressways had been oversimplified in the public's mind, and that instead of asking if expressways were desirable, the question should have been how expressways fit into the city's larger plan. Further, the city already planned a number of street improvement projects, funded by federal aid, intended to improve traffic problems in those specific areas. This federal aid for street improvements was possible because the 1944 Federal Highway Act specifically set aside funds for improvements to connecting streets within the Federal Aid Highway System, with state and local matching requirements. The 1945 Wisconsin Legislature set aside \$2,000,000 to help with matching funds.⁶⁸ Under the Act, the U.S. government recognized the need for an urban transportation solution, and established, a decade before the Interstate Highway Act, a funding formula for urban transportation infrastructure improvements. Under the formula, the federal government would pay 50% of construction costs and one-third of right-of-way acquisition costs, the state would pay about 70% of the federal amount, and the city would cover the rest.⁶⁹ As of

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Letter from State Transportation Commission Chairman James R. Law to Mayor Zeidler, 28 April 1948, Box 164, Folder 1, Zeidler Papers.

⁶⁹ "Facts and Figures on Expressways in Milwaukee," The 1948 Corporation, 10 February 1948, LRB.

late 1947, Milwaukee planned to:

- Widen Green Bay Avenue from Capitol Drive to city limits or the urban boundary.
- Widen and improve North and South 44th Streets from Lisbon Avenue to the southern urban boundary.⁷⁰
- Widen Clybourn Street from North 8th Street to North Van Buren Street.
- Connect West Blue Mound Road to West Clybourn Street between North 34th Street and Story Parkway and improve Clybourn from North 27th Street to North 35th Street.
- Connect South Superior Street to East Greenfield Avenue with an extension over the south harbor tract and the Kinnickinnic River Basin.
- Connect North 27th Street to North Teutonia Avenue north of West Ruby Avenue.
- Extend South 1st Street from West Lincoln Avenue to South Chase Avenue.
- Eliminate street-grade rail crossings on South Clement Avenue at East Ohio Avenue and on South 35th Street between West Lincoln and West Forest Home Avenues.⁷¹

Leaders and planners intended such street improvement projects to alleviate traffic congestion in many neighborhoods. Simultaneously, they debated the need for expressways, weighing the need for a traffic solution against the fact that so many homes and businesses would be demolished. Mayor Bohn, meanwhile, criticized the slow progress of expressway planning and construction. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* concurred, stating on December 7th that a full month after the Common Council endorsed construction, there was no significant accomplishment with regard to the expressways. Even so, the winter of 1947-1948 proved significant in the timetable of

⁷⁰ The Stadium Freeway, proposed in 1949 but only partially completed, was to have followed this route.

⁷¹ Memo from Elmer Krieger and Robert Filtzer to Board of Public Land Commissioners, 2 December 1947, Box 164, Folder 1, Zeidler Papers.

expressway planning.

On December 10, 1947, Krieger submitted a report to the city Land Commission that rejected expressway plans under consideration in favor of street widening and improvements. The Land Commission subsequently adopted the report by a 4-3 vote. The same day, Mayor John Bohn directed a statement to the planning staff of the Land Commission saying that the staff had been "remiss in its duties to inform the Mayor and the Council on matters of technical consequence."⁷² A few days later, however, at a meeting between Walter Swietlik, state transportation officials, and representatives from the federal Public Roads Administration, federal Division Engineer S.L. Taylor stated unambiguously that a traffic congestion relief plan for the city that did not include freeways would not be looked upon "as favorably" as one that did.

Other elected leaders also supported construction and wanted faster progress. Pursuant to orders from the Common Council, Swietlik appointed Raleigh Gamble "expediter of expressways" on December 26, 1947. In early January 1948, the Council voted 25-1 to authorize Swietlik to proceed with plans to locate and acquire land for expressway construction, then build the proposed East-West route near West Highland Avenue from North 35th Street to North 60th Street. Then, on January 19, 1948, the Council approved a referendum question for the spring election, seeking permission from voters for a \$5,000,000 bond issue to cover the expressway project.

In April 1948, Milwaukee residents approved the bond issue with 88,510 of 165,657 votes, or approximately 53% of voters, supporting it. Voters likewise approved bond issues to fund off-street parking projects, blight elimination, and veterans' housing, but rejected other bond proposals for street improvements and

⁷² "Facts and Figures on Expressways in Milwaukee," The 1948 Corporation, 10 February 1948, LRB.

widening on South 1st and 2nd Streets and North and South 44th Streets.⁷³ In the same election voters chose 35-year old Frank Zeidler, a local Socialist Party leader, over attorney Henry Reuss for mayor. Zeidler previously gained public service experience serving on the Milwaukee School Board and working as a community activist. He defeated Reuss convincingly, receiving nearly 56% of the vote.

In regard to bonds, Zeidler did not actually support the expressway bonds, but said that he would be "bound to observe the will of the voters."⁷⁴ He pledged not to continue his personal objection to the use of bonds for expressway financing, but clearly stated that he wanted to obtain the best possible terms for any bond issues. Zeidler further expressed an interest in identifying less costly alternative expressway routes which would still serve the same number of vehicles.⁷⁵

Route Selection

With official support from city government and Mayor Zeidler, expressway construction continued at a slow but measurable pace. However, as stated previously, while the Origin-Destination Survey considered a set of possible routes it did not make a specific recommendation for a North-South route north or south of downtown. Additionally, as one professional observer noted, expressways in other cities generally followed rivers, valleys, or other natural topography. The suggested Highland Avenue route could potentially eliminate over 3,000 residential and business units, while the North-South expressway along 16th Street would serve as a crosstown artery but

⁷³ "Voters Favor 4 Bond Issues," *Milwaukee Journal*, 7 April 1948, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19480407&id=Bx8aAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=HSUEAAAIIBAJ&pg=2951,3206881>, accessed 4 April 2014.

⁷⁴ "Zeidler Wins Race for Mayor, Defeating Reuss by 24,000," *Milwaukee Journal*, 7 April 1948, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19480407&id=Bx8aAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=HSUEAAAIIBAJ&pg=2951,3206881>, accessed 4 April 2014.

⁷⁵ "Voters Favor 4 Bond Issues," *Milwaukee Journal*, 7 April 1948, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19480407&id=Bx8aAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=HSUEAAAIIBAJ&pg=2951,3206881>, accessed 4 April 2014.

would be less effective as a route radiating from the central business district. Moreover, a viable alternative existed to the Highland Avenue route, along St. Paul Avenue. Such a route would better serve truck traffic in the industrialized Menomonee River Valley, require the elimination or relocation of far fewer buildings, and could be integrated with the Rapid Transit line already in place along a parallel East-West route.⁷⁶

The city and state jointly retained the De Leuw, Cather & Co. of Chicago, a traffic engineering consulting firm, to identify appropriate routes for the planned expressways. The De Leuw and Cather report predicted a 23% increase in vehicle traffic from late 1948 through 1960 and proposed an extensive, five-armed expressway network. The firm criticized as futile the city's stopgap traffic congestion improvement measures, calling the proposed series of underpasses, street widening, and bypasses useless and expensive. Instead, the firm stated flatly that in Milwaukee, as in other cities, only limited access expressways would solve the problem.⁷⁷

De Leuw and Cather recommended an expressway system that differed greatly from the system suggested by the Origin-Destination survey. Instead of running east to west along Highland Avenue, the firm strongly recommended a route along or close to Clybourn Street west of North 8th Street, to pass north of the Soldier's Home and link to West Blue Mound Road near the Waukesha County line. The proposal further included a plan for a North-South route crossing the Menomonee Valley at 8th Street, continuing south nearly to Oklahoma Avenue, and then turning south to meet Highway 41 near Loomis Road. There would also be another east-west leg, running

⁷⁶ Carl Bergstrom, "Report on Central Area Radiating Expressway," 3 March 1948, LRB.

⁷⁷ "Expressways? City Needs 5 of Them," by William A. Norris, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 25 November 1948,

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19481125&id=a7cVAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=Cw4EAAIAIBAJ&pg=6002,391289>, accessed 8 April 2014.

from approximately the intersection of South 8th Street and West Virginia Street to the lakefront, where it was to have connected with Lincoln Memorial Drive near East Clybourn Street. North of the valley, that same route would branch into two arms just south of North Avenue. One arm would swing east and follow the Milwaukee River north and northwest to connect with Port Washington Road and Green Bay Avenue near the city of Milwaukee's northern municipal boundary. The second arm was to have run west along North Avenue to approximately North 35th Street before branching northwest to a connection with Appleton Avenue near either West Capitol Drive or West Hampton Avenue.⁷⁸

The firm went on to predict that the radiating arms of the expressway would serve 40,000-50,000 vehicles per day, while the central leg serving the downtown area could serve about 60,000. In addition, said Charles De Leuw, President of the firm, Milwaukee had a higher percentage of truck traffic than many other cities, and as many as one-third of the vehicles using the expressways would be trucks. Therefore, he argued, the expressways would be particularly valuable in removing a significant amount of truck traffic from city streets.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ "Expressways to Channel Trucks of Side Streets," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 28 January 1949, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19490128&id=C-MeAAAIAIAJ&sjid=-AwEAAAIAIAJ&pg=4557,131108>, accessed 8 April 2014.

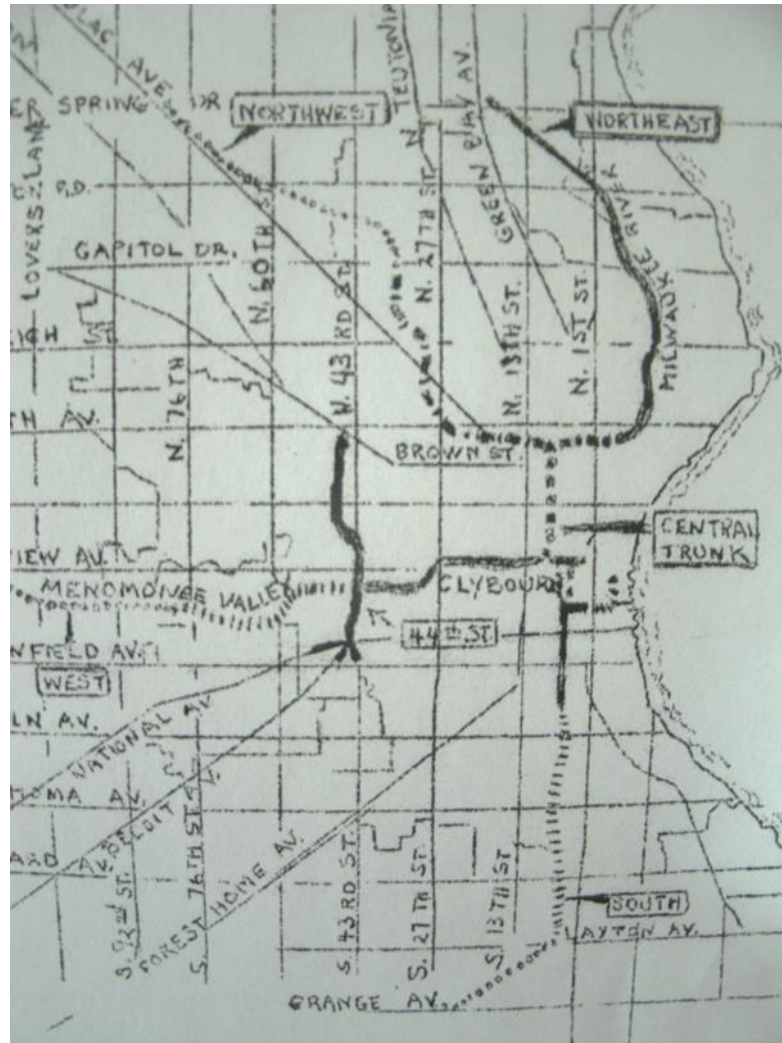


Figure 2: A version of the route De Leuw and Cather proposed in 1949.⁸⁰

The De Leuw and Cather proposal was intended to offer an alternative to constructing a depressed expressway through densely populated residential areas. By constructing the east-west route along the Menomonee Valley rather than along Highland Avenue, the expressway would keep truck traffic out of residential neighborhoods on the West Side. Furthermore, this plan would follow Milwaukee's natural geography and utilize the Milwaukee and Menomonee River Valleys, as well

⁸⁰ "History of Expressway Surveys in Milwaukee," no author or date listed, Box 164, Folder 1, Zeidler Papers.

as the "valley" of lower cost land in blighted areas, as a means to reduce costs.⁸¹

Mayor Zeidler, in particular, was pleased with the opportunity to reduce costs. The following year, 1949, De Leuw and Cather updated their recommendation to include an expressway feeder route, running along North and South 44th Streets from National Avenue to Lisbon Avenue.

Originally intended to pass under the Wisconsin Avenue viaduct, the city Land Commission adjusted the plan to pass through an open cut just west of the viaduct.⁸² As plans progressed to begin construction of the overall system, the 44th Street Expressway quickly became a priority for planners and elected leaders. Mayor Zeidler believed the route should be given the first priority for construction and wanted "the plans pushed as fast as possible."⁸³ His reasoning was that because the Milwaukee County Board had already approved construction of a new Milwaukee County Stadium on the nearby site of an old quarry, the Expressway would be indispensable in serving the crowds attending events there. Additionally, the route would improve crosstown traffic conditions, allowing motorists to travel more freely between the West Side and Southwest Side. Moreover, upon its completion, the 44th Street Expressway would relieve overcrowded 35th Street.⁸⁴

As of mid-1949, the city planned to move forward several major projects. Taking into consideration the De Leuw and Cather report, the Milwaukee Board of

⁸¹ "See 30 Miles of Expressways for City," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 25 November 1948, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19481125&id=a7cVAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=Cw4EAAIAIBAJ&pg=6002,391289>, accessed 8 April 2014.

⁸² "First Two Expressway Units Given Approval," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 14 July 1949, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19490714&id=YUxQAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=AA4EAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5987,2680270>, accessed 8 April 2014.

⁸³ "Give 44th Street Priority, Plea," *Milwaukee Journal*, 4 May 1949, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19490504&id=5BoaAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=HCQEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5687,2671254>, accessed 8 April 2014.

⁸⁴ "First Two Expressway Units Given Approval," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 14 July 1949, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19490714&id=YUxQAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=AA4EAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5987,2680270>, accessed 8 April 2014.

Land Commissioners officially recommended making the 44th Street project part of the first phase of road improvements, in addition to construction of the East-West Expressway along Clybourn and Canal Streets from North 6th Street to North 44th Street. By selecting the east-west route along the northern slope of the valley, Elmer Krieger noted, there would be less disruption to surrounding residential and industrial areas, at a lower cost. The new freeway also provided a much needed additional east-to-west alternative, thereby relieving Wisconsin Avenue and Clybourn Street of traffic congestion. The Commission also recognized the overcrowding on both 35th Street and Hawley Road and supported the 44th Street freeway as a means of improving those conditions, in addition to granting greater access to the new stadium site.⁸⁵

Leaders did not follow all of the statements and recommendations from De Leuw and Cather, and local officials such as the Mayor, Common Council, and Land Commission remained decision-makers into the early 1950s. It is important to note, though, that city officials and planners were not unified in their views. For example, in 1947, the Common Council had endorsed expressway routes along Highland Avenue and 16th Street, as suggested in the Origin-Destination Survey, but the De Leuw and Cather study did not contain those routes. The result was possible confusion among property owners in potentially affected neighborhoods. Moreover, the Land Commission itself had endorsed the Clybourn Street route for the East-West Expressway.

In addition to recommending routes for the East-West and 44th Street Expressways, the Land Commission recommended several important street improvements, despite the fact that the consulting engineers saw street improvements

⁸⁵ Letter from Elmer Krieger to joint Common Council Committee on Streets, Alleys, and Sewers, and Finance and Printing, 5 May 1949, Box 164, Folder 1, Zeidler Papers.

as useless to relieve traffic congestion. Some of those projects had been under consideration for several years. Among the projects recommended by the Land Commission in May 1949 were improving the intersection of North 35th and West Burleigh Streets at West Fond du Lac Avenue, extending North 27th Street, improving South 1st Street from Mitchell Street to Lincoln Avenue, and extending 1st Street from Lincoln to Chase Avenue.⁸⁶ Subsequently, the Department of Public Works moved forward with the 1st and 35th Street plans and began to work with the State Highway Commission on some projects.⁸⁷

Other constituencies expressed concern over the expressway route selection process, as well. The Line Material Company, for example, had already been dislocated to make room for the Civic Center, and purchased the Campbell Laundry Building at 714 West Michigan Street. With conflicting expressway plans, the Company was unsure of whether to begin remodeling that building or move to a different site. In 1949, the president of the company wrote to Mayor Zeidler, demanding a quick answer.⁸⁸ The Line Material Company was not the only firm with such fears. The Wisconsin Telephone Company, which had constructed a new building near 35th and Kilbourn, shared those concerns, prompting the possible expressway route through that area to be modified.⁸⁹ Still others objected to the placement of the northeast arm along the Milwaukee River. Although that route would have low land acquisition costs, it would potentially draw a significant amount of traffic, including truck traffic, off Teutonia and Green Bay Avenues and Port

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Letter from Public Works Commissioner Walter Swietlik to Common Council, undated, Box 164, Folder 1, Zeidler Papers.

⁸⁸ Letter from Line Material Company President C.J.A. Hazelwood to Mayor Zeidler, 21 March 1949, Box 164, Folder 1, Zeidler Papers.

⁸⁹ Letter from City Attorney Clyde Sheets to Mayor Zeidler, 21 March 1949, Box 164, Folder 1, Zeidler Papers.

Washington and Mill Roads and into a scenic area. If constructed, it would have also destroyed a bird sanctuary and traveled through Gordon, Kern, and Estabrook Parks, seen as valuable public assets because the west bank of the Milwaukee River was one of the only riverfront areas not to be developed. Additionally, the route was not seen as practical, because it would take drivers headed downtown farther east than they needed to go.⁹⁰

Planning and Funding

As the 1950s began, Milwaukee still lacked an expressway system, nearly four years after the Origin-Destination Survey identified the city's major traffic patterns, endorsed a system of expressways, and considered possible expressway routes. Constructing a system of controlled access, divided highways in a developed urban area was a massive undertaking, while funding questions and administrative delays further hindered progress. The De Leuw and Cather study recommended that the central interchange be located at approximately 6th and Clybourn. The Land Commission, on the other hand, favored placing it closer to 11th Street.⁹¹ Up to that point, government agencies also had not communicated effectively with one another. Before the federal government could fund any construction projects, it required that planning and programming for a number of projects be coordinated between transportation departments at the local, state, and federal level. This was particularly important because the city would have difficulty funding the 44th Street and East-West

⁹⁰ "Northeast Route of Proposed X-Ways," no author or date given, Box 164, Folder 1, Zeidler Papers. From the tone of this document, it was likely composed and circulated by a community group or neighborhood association concerned about construction of De Luew and Cather's proposed northeast expressway arm in an environmentally sensitive area.

⁹¹ Memo from Zeidler to Alderman Quirk, Meyers, Fleming, Haack, and Schreiber, 18 January 1950, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers.

Expressways on its own, but the project could progress faster, several planners felt, with state matching funds.⁹²

To that end, the city accepted a \$7,500,000 offer from the State Highway Commission. The combination of state funding and revenue from the bond issue put the project on a "sound financial basis," allowing Raleigh Gamble, Superintendent of Street Construction and Repair,⁹³ to recommend directing a consultant to prepare location plans for the East-West Expressway between the 44th Street Expressway and Hawley Road, to extend the construction contract east to North 25th Street, and to enable negotiations with the Department of Veterans Affairs and one cemetery for land acquisition.⁹⁴ However, by mid-1952, that strong financial position weakened. The Swietlik-Gamble program for expressway development at that time included both the East-West Expressway east of 44th Street and the 44th Street Expressway from National Avenue to Wells Street. It now faced a \$19,000,000 shortfall, even though its funding included the entirety of the bond issue and state and federal funds. Disturbed by his news, Zeidler stated that he wanted expressway expenditures closely monitored, and that he did not want any large expenditures without results, given that not even one mile of the proposed system had been completed.⁹⁵ In response, the city's budget director proposed a series of solutions to expedite the project. Noting that Milwaukee was among the first large cities to address traffic problems with expressways, he recommended that the head of the Expressway Division be relieved

⁹² "Conference Notes," Conference of representatives from the State Highway Commission, U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, and City of Milwaukee, 7 February 1950, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers. Attendees at the conference included chief City Engineer Joseph Schwada, Raleigh Gamble, and State Highway Commission Chair James R. Law.

⁹³ In 1950, the Superintendent of Street Construction and Repair had been appointed by Public Works Commissioner Walter Swietlik as the city's expressways representative. George Saffran, "A Review of Milwaukee's Expressway Organization," July 1952, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers.

⁹⁴ R. W. Gamble, "Milwaukee Expressways: Present Status and Recommendations," 29 November 1950, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers.

⁹⁵ Memo from Zeidler to Budget Supervisor George Saffran, 19 June 1952, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers.

of other duties so that he could focus his efforts on the project. He further recommended that because negotiations with utility companies were generally with their executives, city representatives should have the authority to make prompt and final decisions.⁹⁶ However, those recommendations did not address the fiscal issue of construction. In 1952, the city requested \$17,400,000 over two years in highway aid from the state, but received only \$5 million.⁹⁷

Right-of-way Acquisition

In addition to financing concerns, the city encountered questions about land acquisition, leading to further delays. Intended to relieve Hawley Road and 35th Street of congestion, the 44th Street Expressway was among the first routes planned. Planners considered the right-of-way for the 44th Street Expressway, also called the Stadium Freeway, to be easy to acquire. There were few parcels of land along the route, and the area was "relatively unimproved."⁹⁸ Up to that point, no suburbs had participated in expressway planning, although because officials planned at that time to terminate the route at National Avenue, the Village of West Milwaukee was to eventually be involved.⁹⁹

However, discussion of the precise route for the East-West Expressway consumed significant time and resources in the early 1950s. The De Leuw and Cather study had recommended that the east-west freeway follow Clybourn Street and Blue

⁹⁶ "A Review of Milwaukee's Expressway Organization," LRB.

⁹⁷ William Norris, "We Can Lick Expressway Problem with Bond Issue," 8 August 1952, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19520808&id=yAUkAAAIAIAJ&sjid=AxAEAAAIAIAJ&pg=1290,3725643>, accessed 16 April 2014.

⁹⁸ "Report on progress on expressways to date and interim program for planning and design, right-of-way acquisition, construction and financing of expressways during the next two years," Milwaukee Bureau of Street Construction and Repairs, September 1953, LRB.

⁹⁹ Letter from Raleigh Gamble to Milton College *Wildcat* Executive Editor Lawrence Bursten, 29 May 1952, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers.

Mound Road. However, in the same way that the Highland Avenue route previously favored by Gamble would contribute to the housing shortage, the East-West Expressway along the Menomonee Valley also created problems. Many potentially displaced residents along the Clybourn-Blue Mound route could not afford to buy their own houses, nor could they be placed in public housing projects, contributing to both the ongoing housing shortage and higher costs.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, the city of Milwaukee continued forward with its expressway planning program but was able to take advantage of an unexpected opportunity to reduce expenditures significantly. In June 1951, federal judge Robert Tehan ordered the rapid transit line operated by the Transport Co. to cease operations.¹⁰¹ Already in debt, the Transport Co., which served interurban transit lines connecting Milwaukee to Waukesha and Hales Corners, had been operating at a loss of \$5,000-\$7,000 per month and did not anticipate any increases of revenue or significant cost saving measures.¹⁰² Yet despite efforts to keep the Transport Co. alive—the state legislature passed legislation enabling a metropolitan transit authority, while a high profile creditor argued that fare increases and greater efficiencies could return the interurban to profitability—it could not remain open. The Transport Co. had not paid the Electric Co. for over five months of electric service and rent on the right-of-way the Electric Co. owned and was potentially liable for several personal injury claims.

¹⁰⁰ "Statement on Expressways," 20 October 1952, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers.

¹⁰¹ A complicated corporate structure and several sales of the company caused this privately-owned public transportation provider to operate under several names in the early 1950s. The Milwaukee Electric Railway & Transport Co., a subsidiary of the Wisconsin Electric Company, or Electric Co., sold its rapid transit operating transit system, the Transport Co., to the newly organized Milwaukee & Suburban Transport Corp., which retained the simpler name Transport Co. Meanwhile, the Milwaukee Electric Railway & Transport Co. continued to operate freight rail service linking the Lakeside power plant in St. Francis to railroad lines in western Milwaukee County, while holding millions of dollars of the Transport Co.'s debt even after the sale. See "Still the Transport Co.," 17 July 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*,

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19530717&id=YNRQAAAAIBAJ&sjid=1iMEA AAAIBAJ&pg=5208,611856>, accessed 18 April 2014.

¹⁰² The amount here is 1950s dollars.

The value of the rapid transit line to the expressway program cannot be over emphasized. Originally created in the late 1920s by the Electric Co. for use by its rapid transit division, the route along the north bluff of the Menomonee Valley offered convenient access to downtown. To create the right-of-way initially, a row of homes from 16th Street to 42nd Street had been razed during the 1920s,¹⁰³ but in the 1950s, it enabled expressway engineers and local officials to plan a route along a direct east-west path, with little additional demolition work involved. This greatly minimized the number of displaced individuals in the 1950s. Additionally, the line had no grade crossings, and followed a route over and under crossing streets.¹⁰⁴

Closure of the line and changing the route from a transit to a traffic route did not draw unanimous support from the community. West Allis Mayor Arnold Klentz proposed using the line as a "streetcar expressway," linking West Allis to downtown Milwaukee. He wrote to the president of the Transport Co., arguing that his proposal would benefit residents and if carried out "many hundreds of commuters could leave their automobiles in their garages."¹⁰⁵ Some Waukesha County land owners opposed closure due to concerns that property along the transit line would be devalued after operations ceased. Additionally, an attorney for the company advocated a municipal takeover of the line, while transportation official Albert Kalmbach noted Los Angeles and several Midwestern cities, including Toronto, Chicago, and Detroit, had either established rapid transit systems already or incorporated them into their expressway plans. He further noted that it was the only high-speed, off-street transportation

¹⁰³ "Electric Co. Rushes Work on Rapid Transit Line," 2 June 1929, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19290602&id=P5dQAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=rSEEA-AAIIBAJ&pg=5439,561959>, accessed 21 April 2014.

¹⁰⁴ "Four Mile Section of Old Rapid Transit Right of Way Offered for Sale for Expressway Use," 9 July 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19530709&id=kvkjAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=9yMEAA-AAIIBAJ&pg=4760,2649955>, accessed 21 June 2014.

¹⁰⁵ "Expressway Rail Plan Rejected," 18 July 1951, *Milwaukee Journal*, Box 1, "Newspaper Clippings June 1951-August 1961 folder," Gamble Papers.

system in the city and predicted that the city would someday have to spend millions of dollars to replace it. Douglas Adair, a rapid transit motorman and one of about 60 Transport Co. employees to lose his job with the closure of the line, likewise foresaw that in the future, residents of both Milwaukee and Waukesha would recognize that they needed such a mass transit line.¹⁰⁶

Even so, the line was not financially solvent, despite serving 2,000 regular commuters daily, and could not remain open. A U.S. attorney supported liquidation of the company due to federal taxes owed, while Judge Tehan ruled running the line until establishment of a transit authority to be infeasible. At that time, establishment of the transit authority still required Governor Walter Kohler to sign the bill, followed by public approval in a referendum in affected communities.¹⁰⁷ Attorneys representing personal injury claimants also supported closure of the line.

The line's suspension and liquidation were directly tied to the shift in the postwar era toward greater use of the personal automobile. Although the line served 2,000 regular commuters and approximately 1,600 occasional riders, it faced declining ridership. As Milwaukee Alderman Walter A. Koepke noted, if it had been a profitable operation, another company would have purchased the line. Transport Co. official Bruno Bitker said although the company would utilize buses to provide alternate transportation for riders, he predicted that many riders would turn to private autos. Likewise, Koepke stated that the city would have difficulty justifying an investment in the line, or assuming management of it, when it projected spending \$200 million over ten years on expressways. He also felt that it would be

¹⁰⁶ "Rapid Transit Line Must Stop Running," 19 June 1951, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19510619&id=8L5QAAAIBAJ&sjid=cyMEAAAIBAJ&pg=6880,1462574>, accessed 18 April 2014.

¹⁰⁷ No transit authority was ever created, although Moore asserts that the idea may have contributed to the establishment of the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission a few years later.

"impractical" for Milwaukee to acquire the right-of-way for the expressway system, citing the "prohibitive" cost of putting high tension power lines along the right-of-way underground.¹⁰⁸

City traffic engineer Howard Ilgner, meanwhile, recommended using a portion of collected motorist taxes to save transit, an idea supported by Perry Anderson, a representative of the Downtown Association. Klentz was also open to a greater local government role in preserving the line, suggesting a commission of city, county, and suburban representatives look into the matter. However, the idea of municipal involvement drew opposition from other officials, such as Alderman Patrick Fass, who said public or quasi-public ownership would require taxpayers to cover the costs of any potential operating cost shortages.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, although it fell outside his jurisdiction, Waukesha Mayor Bruce Beaty lobbied the Wisconsin Highway Commission to make the rapid transit line a highway.¹¹⁰

It is important to take a moment to consider the context of the closure. A combination of factors had contributed to the decline in ridership and weaker financial position of the line. Karen W. Moore attributes the demise of the rapid transit interurban line largely to a decline in city-suburban relations. Although a trend toward greater use of the personal automobile had been underway for years, she argues a power shift from city to county government dating back to the 1930s hastened its demise. Disputes between the city and its suburbs over boundaries, funding, and responsibilities, as well as public improvement projects delayed by the Great

¹⁰⁸ "Rapid Transit Line Must Stop Running," 19 June 1951, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19510619&id=8L5QAAAIBAJ&sjid=cyMEAAAIBAJ&pg=6880,1462574>, accessed 18 April 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Moore, 338.

¹¹⁰ "Ask Highway on Transit Line," 17 September 1951, *Milwaukee Journal*, Box 1, "Newspaper Clippings June 1951-August 1961 folder," Gamble Papers.

Depression, further contributed.¹¹¹ Then, two accidents undermined the status of the interurban company. The first accident, along the route that is today I-94, injured seventeen people in August 1949. The second, a "ghastly" collision in September 1950 between a small rail car headed back to Milwaukee from Hales Corners and a larger car headed south, killed ten. Afterward, the line slid into bankruptcy.¹¹² The *Milwaukee Journal* in 1951 made observations similar to those of Moore. It did not specifically mention the accidents as reasons for the line's demise but attributed it to the Depression, a workers' strike in 1934, and competition with buses and private autos.¹¹³ Russell Schultz also describes the Great Depression, the worker's strike, and pressure from the Securities and Exchange Commission for the electric utility to separate itself from transit as factors in a broader shift from rail-based to rubber tire-based public transportation.¹¹⁴

In any case, after the rapid transit line ceased operations, the city almost immediately sought the right-of-way for expressway use. On July 31, 1951, the Milwaukee Common Council authorized city expressway director Raleigh Gamble to represent the city in negotiations to obtain part of the right-of-way. Not all Council members supported the action. Aldermen Michael Jendusa and James H. Collers opposed it because they did not want to hamper efforts by rapid transit riders to raise capital to resurrect the line. However, Gamble projected that Milwaukee could save \$500,000 in construction costs and eliminate the need for underpasses under the rapid transit tracks if it built a portion of the interchange of the 44th Street and East-West Expressways along the right-of-way. Ultimately, the Council voted 14-7 in favor of

¹¹¹ Moore, 236.

¹¹² Moore, 330.

¹¹³ Rod Van Every, "Rapid Transit Expires as Woodchucks Stare," 1 July 1951, *Milwaukee Journal*, Box 1, "Newspaper Clippings June 1951-August 1961" folder, Gamble Papers.

¹¹⁴ Russell Schultz, *The Trackless Trolley Years: A Milwaukee Transport Era* (Glendale, CA: Interurbans, 1980), 10.

authorizing Gamble to negotiate.¹¹⁵

Members of the public also saw the value of using the abandoned rapid transit right-of-way for expressway use, as fewer properties, if any, would have to be condemned.¹¹⁶ The Wisconsin Electric Power Company, meanwhile, was very cooperative and submitted a contract proposal for the right-of-way between 6th and Clybourn and North 25th Street. Acquisition of an expressway route on the West Side was more difficult, though. Some sections of the rapid transit line were too narrow for the new road, while other parts had sharp curves, for which reason the expressway in some areas needed to go outside the existing right-of-way boundaries.¹¹⁷ Indeed, the original width of the rapid transit right-of-way varied, from 90 feet to 200 feet. The expressway required a width of 112 feet between outer curbs, with additional space for sloping, prompting the need for additional land to be acquired.

One such area was along the western leg of the expressway, west of the Stadium Freeway, where the right-of-way bordered three cemeteries. The city quickly entered negotiations to purchase a section of Spring Hill Cemetery, just east of Hawley Road along the southern border of the expressway route. By fall 1952, the trustees of Gilead Lodge, which owned the cemetery, agreed to sell a 90 foot by 635 foot tract for \$70,000.¹¹⁸ The tract had no graves and only one dwelling unit on it, but trustees still wanted to retain an independent attorney to confirm their right to convey the property, and the right of the state to condemn it.¹¹⁹ By January 1953, the Lodge

¹¹⁵ "Rapid Transit Tract Sought," 1 August 1951, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19510801&id=3gIkAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=wSMEAAAIIBAJ&pg=5522,36064>, accessed 19 April 2014.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Krupinski to Zeidler, 7 September 1952, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Mayor Zeidler to Wauwatosa resident John Serdhely, 18 September 1952, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers. Serdhely previously wrote to Zeidler recommending use of the right -of-way for the expressway.

¹¹⁸ That is, \$70,000 in 1950s dollars.

¹¹⁹ Memo from Assistant City Attorney Clyde Sheets to Zeidler, 19 November 1952, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers.

had agreed to sell the property for a price of \$70,625.¹²⁰

The city attorney's office hoped to use the Spring Hill acquisition as a pattern for negotiations with Beth Hamedrosh Cemetery. Closure of the Spring Hill transaction thus allowed the city to be independent in its negotiations with nearby Beth Hamedrosh Cemetery.¹²¹ This cemetery tract, 30 feet wide by 835 feet long, bordered the rapid transit right-of-way along its northern edge. The city actually began condemnation proceedings against the cemetery owners, after a year of unsuccessful negotiations, but in September 1953, the two sides reached an agreement. Ultimately, the city purchased the tract for \$36,500.¹²²

The same year, Milwaukee received further approval from the federal Bureau of Public Roads and the Veterans' Administration to locate a portion of the expressway route on Soldiers' Home land. However, unlike with Spring Hill Cemetery, expressway construction required removal of 44 graves in the veterans' cemetery. The project also required filling Lake Huston, a small body of water in the area. Despite the presence of three cemeteries clustered together, as well as the need to move graves, there appeared to be no alternative to constructing the route through that area. Engineers regarded this east-west corridor as the logical route for the expressway. No other point existed nearby in which the expressway could continue to the west.

Delays in acquiring a sufficient right-of-way already hampered progress on planning a definite route west of Hawley Road. With completion of the land

¹²⁰ "Freeway Gets Burial Tract," 9 January 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19530109&id=IAMkAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=4SMEAAIAIBAJ&pg=6621,3129225>, accessed 21 April 2014.

¹²¹ Letter from Assistant City Attorney Clyde Sheets to State Highway Commissioner Ed Plautz, 9 January 1953, Box 164, Folder 3, Zeidler Papers.

¹²² "X-Way Strip Purchase," 3 September 1953, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19530903&id=9VcxAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=1A8EAAIAIBAJ&pg=2321,3961073>, accessed 21 April 2014.

purchases, the traffic consulting engineering firm Ammann & Whitney could begin plotting a route to the western city limits and a connection with Blue Mound Road near the Waukesha County line. Upon completion of the right-of-way acquisition, the city of Milwaukee owned a strip of land for the western leg of the Clybourn-Blue Mound expressway route that was 120 feet wide, sufficient for three twelve-foot lanes in each direction, as well as a median.¹²³

Shift to County Oversight

During the discussion of purchasing the rapid transit right-of-way, another change occurred in the expressway planning process. In 1952, the city retained a different consulting firm, Ammann & Whitney, for expressway planning. Although two previous studies—the Origin-Destination Survey in 1946 and the De Leuw and Cather study in 1949—investigated the city's traffic problems and made recommendations accordingly, neither plan was actually implemented, partly because some members of the Land Commission disagreed with aspects of the De Leuw and Cather report.¹²⁴

Despite that, Ammann and Whitney's "Preliminary Plan for Milwaukee Expressways," presented in September 1952, incorporated a number of the earlier recommendations. In other ways, though, it differed greatly. The larger and more comprehensive Preliminary Plan eliminated the idea of a north-south route splitting into two directions north of downtown, instead favoring a route starting at North Port Washington Road near the northern city limits, passing along the western edge of

¹²³ "Freeway Gets Burial Tract," 9 January 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19530109&id=IAMkAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=4SMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6621,3129225>, accessed 21 April 2014.

¹²⁴ William Norris, "Less Study, More Action Needed on Expressways," 5 December 1952, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19521205&id=oCkxAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=tA8EAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6688,2380611>, accessed 21 April 2014.

downtown between North 10th and 11th Streets, and continuing on to the South Side, with a southern terminus west of Wilson Park. Ammann and Whitney further recommended the East-West Expressway extend all the way east to the lakefront, rather than terminating near 6th or 11th and Clybourn. Total construction cost over fifteen years was estimated at \$172 million.

On December 16, 1952, the Milwaukee Common Council, by an 18-7 vote, adopted the Preliminary Plan. The Plan drew support from Alderman Fass, Streets and Expressways Committee chairman, who favored an increase in annual expressway spending, and an auto tax, more state and federal aid, and additional municipal bond issues to fund that spending. Alderman Matt Schimenz called the Preliminary Plan a "culmination of studies made in the last six years."¹²⁵

Yet although a new plan was in place and the rapid transit line had officially been offered for sale at a price of \$1,000,800, plus the \$300,000 cost of removing transmission lines from the right-of-way,¹²⁶ the city could still only proceed at a slow pace in regard to construction. In fact, Milwaukee's ability to actually complete the city wide interstate project on its own was limited. As expressway engineer Walter Tacke noted, the project progressed nicely, but much of that progress was unseen and included planning, design, and right-of-way acquisition, not actual building. As of August 1953, the sale of the rapid transit right-of-way from North 8th Street to the Veterans' Administration grounds was still under negotiation. Milwaukee County also insisted that the city furnish land for 3,000-4,000 parking places near the new

¹²⁵ "Council Officially Adopts 24 Mile Freeway Plan," 31 December 1952, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19521231&id=T7UdAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=uCMEA AAAIIBAJ&pg=5117,5335576>, accessed 21 April 2014.

¹²⁶ "Four Mile Section of Old Rapid Transit Right of Way Offered for Sale for Expressway Use," 9 July 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19530709&id=kvkjAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=9yMEAA AAIBAJ&pg=4760,2649955>, accessed 21 April 2014.

Milwaukee County Stadium site before a deed transfer of land for the 44th Street Expressway.¹²⁷

In its December 1952 report, the city Land Commission stated that the expressway system should be considered on a metropolitan basis, and that the Common Council should refer its report to the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors and officials in West Allis, West Milwaukee, Wauwatosa, River Hills, Glendale, and St. Francis. The earlier expressway surveys, the Commission noted, indicated that the system would have to extend to other areas in Milwaukee County to be effective. It also noted the routes proposed by Ammann and Whitney traveled through Milwaukee County Parks land and some unincorporated areas outside city limits. Under state laws in effect at the time, each municipality had sole responsibility over its own section of the expressway, and could in effect veto any extension. The Citizens Governmental Research Bureau agreed, and called for comprehensive agreement between city, county, and state officials. Although the city and county were already cooperating on some projects, such as expressway approaches to County Stadium and an extension of Lincoln Memorial Drive, only a comprehensive agreement would assure joint planning, construction, and operation of the new expressway system. The project, it said, "profoundly affects the planning, the financing, and the future growth of the entire metropolitan community."¹²⁸

Alderman Fred Meyers, who voted against adoption of the Preliminary Plan, held a similar sentiment. In his view, the city had to confer with suburban communities, because the suburbs had a direct interest in any plan the city adopted. Meyers also advocated greater cooperation with all levels of government in order to

¹²⁷ Report from Expressway Engineer Walter Tacke to Zeidler, 8 August 1953, Box 164, Folder 3, Zeidler Papers.

¹²⁸ "Bulletin," Citizens Governmental Research Bureau, 11 December 1952, Box 164, Folder 3, Zeidler Papers.

improve the funding situation. Initially, he argued, the city was expected to pay 15% of the costs, but so far, it had incurred 42% of the costs, and could end up paying as much as 60%. Thus, he asked City Comptroller Virgil Hurless and City Attorney Walter Mattison to research whether Milwaukee could shift costs to the state, as had been done in other cities.¹²⁹

Mayor Frank Zeidler himself expressed a belief that downtown industry could only be saved by public transportation, whether by bus or rapid transit, but not by private auto. He lamented that the "fantastic costs involved with expressways" were difficult to meet with present systems of taxation but was reluctant to shift to any other system.¹³⁰ As far back as 1948, he expressed concern over the cost of expressway construction for the city and county, and supported state financing similar to a funding model in California. He also believed in general the city should receive a greater percentage of gas, inheritance, gift, and estate taxes paid to the state.¹³¹ He was also careful in his use of the city's credit. Like fellow Socialist Mayor Daniel Hoan before him, Zeidler preferred pay-as-you-go financing.¹³² He further remarked that the financing question could be easier if more federal funds became available, and stated that he would try to impress upon the federal government the value of freeways for civil defense.¹³³

The Zeidler administration was promptly criticized for his handling of the expressway funding issue. The primary reason was because the Mayor vetoed a new,

¹²⁹ "Council Officially Adopts 24 Mile Freeway Plan," 31 December 1952, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19521231&id=T7UdAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=uCMEA AAAIIBAJ&pg=5117,5335576>, accessed 21 April 2014.

¹³⁰ Memo from Zeidler to Traffic Engineer Howard Ilgner, 5 August 1953, Box 164, Folder 3, Zeidler Papers.

¹³¹ "Mayor Urges State Pay For City Expressways," 26 September 1948, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19480926&id=a64VAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=IQ4EAA AAIIBAJ&pg=7185,68037&hl=en>, accessed 22 March 2015.

¹³² William A. Norris, "Editorial: The Mayor Dislikes Bonds So City Progress Stalls," 31 July 1953, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Box 164, Folder 3, Zeidler Papers.

¹³³ Memo from Zeidler to Gamble, 1 September 1953, Box 164, Folder 3, Zeidler Papers.

long-term bond issue, stating a preference for short-term bonds, although the Common Council overrode his veto. *Milwaukee Sentinel* columnist William Norris subsequently complained that even though the public fully supported expressways and use of bonds to pay for them, Zeidler was too cautious with the city's credit. Norris criticized the Mayor for wanting to return to a cash basis for funding larger projects, even if it meant slower expressway progress.¹³⁴

Throughout 1953, calls mounted for a change in administration. In February 1953, the Citizen's Governmental Research Bureau convened a "committee of 21," consisting of representatives from Milwaukee, the County, and the suburbs. It recommended a plan to shift expressway control to Milwaukee County. Under its proposal, oversight fell to a five-member County Expressway Commission. The bill was introduced in the state legislature but for several reasons did not initially pass.

No precedent existed for such a commission. Most other cities with expressway projects underway left their programs under the oversight of the local city or county public works department. Among large cities, only Milwaukee, Detroit, Chicago, and Los Angeles even had separate divisions within the street construction department. Additionally, the Milwaukee Common Council did not support the plan at first, and several suburban and Milwaukee County officials raised concerns.¹³⁵ Mayor Zeidler also opposed it.¹³⁶

The chief objection the Common Council raised was that a corresponding bill in the state legislature proposed increasing the size of the Milwaukee County Board of

¹³⁴ William A. Norris, "Editorial: The Mayor Dislikes Bonds So City Progress Stalls," 31 July 1953, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Box 164, Folder 3, Zeidler Papers.

¹³⁵ "Urges Action on Freeways," 21 August 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19530821&id=DgoAAAIAIAJ&sjid=uyMEAAIAIAJ&pg=7145,2890371&hl=en>, accessed 22 March 2015.

¹³⁶ William Norris, "Financial Experts Shocked at Zeidler's Veto," 9 July 1953, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19530709&id=nXIxAAAIAIAJ&sjid=0A8EAAIAIAJ&pg=6875,671640&hl=en>, accessed 22 March 2015.

Supervisors to give suburban residents a disproportionately large number of representatives. Alderman Patrick Fass expressed a concern that a County Board "packed" with suburban members might try to "soak" property taxpayers in Milwaukee.¹³⁷

The County Board also failed to support the transfer bill when it was first introduced. The heart of the debate was over who within County government should control the expressway program under such a transfer. Also at issue was whether the County or suburban governments would build expressway links outside the city proper. The expressway transfer bill proposed giving control to an expressway commission appointed by the governor, but County Board Chairman Lawrence Timmerman wanted authority vested in the Board itself. He argued if county government were to join in planning and financing expressways on a county-wide scale, the costs to city taxpayers could increase, and cited a \$50 million figure. Supervisor Bert Busby countered that the city saved money by shifting authority to the County. The Common Council and a committee of the County Board persuaded the legislature to delay a final vote on the measure until it reconvened after its summer recess.¹³⁸ In October, the legislature reconsidered it. By then, it had support from the Council and Mayor Zeidler.¹³⁹

In November 1953, the Wisconsin Legislature passed, and Governor Walter Kohler signed, legislation to establish a five-member Milwaukee County Expressway Commission. The bill attempted to accommodate several of the concerns raised. City,

¹³⁷ "Freeway Plan Strikes a Snag," 13 May 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19530513&id=hEYaAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=fiMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=4481,6352391&hl=en>, accessed 22 March 2015.

¹³⁸ "Freeway Bill Argued Anew," 26 June 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19530626&id=O8pQAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=nyMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6862,4871988&hl=en>, accessed 22 March 2015.

¹³⁹ "Freeway Vote Is Given Praise," 15 October 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19531015&id=bgEqAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=oCMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6696,7483341&hl=en>, accessed 22 March 2015.

county, and suburban officials favored the legislation. Commission members were to be appointed by the governor, for staggered terms, and the Commission was granted authority to plan and build an expressway system, and acquire land on which to do so.

The new expressways law further directed the Commission to elect a chairman from its members, to keep all meetings open to the public, and to develop a general expressway plan. As part of that planning, the Commission was to provide reasonably detailed budget estimates, including figures on state and federal aid. The County Board retained authority for final approval of all proposed and planned routes, as well as annual budgets. Additionally, the new law provided for Milwaukee to be reimbursed for some of its expressway costs, over a period of ten years, because it was the only city to have incurred costs up to that point.¹⁴⁰

As already noted, several factors contributed to the transfer for expressway planning, construction, and oversight. The primary reason for transferring the expressway to County control was cost excess. The Ammann and Whitney plan simply exceeded the resources of Milwaukee property taxpayers. The Zeidler administration considered other revenue sources, such as a gas tax and \$10 wheel tax, but both options put the cost back upon the taxpayer. Thus, he saw a change in administration as a solution.

Zeidler reiterated his position from 1948 that the expressway plan should be integrated into Milwaukee's overall traffic plan and not be rushed. He also agreed that expressway construction affected suburban communities. The Village of West Milwaukee was the most affected, due to the fact the Stadium Freeway terminated at National Avenue, its municipal boundary. The Village, Zeidler believed, was ill

¹⁴⁰ "Expressway Commission Is Created by New Law," 26 November 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19531126&id=1NBQAAAIAIAJ&sjid=5yQEAAIAIAJ&pg=4766,2541554>, accessed 21 April 2014.

prepared to deal with the corresponding traffic increase. West Allis and Wauwatosa, he reasoned, were less involved, but traffic relief on Hawley Road affected both. Moreover, having a five-member, appointed commission was expected to reduce distrust between city, county, and suburban officials.¹⁴¹

His cautious style mirrored Hoan's. At first, Zeidler opposed shifting the city's oversight over expressway planning and construction to the County.¹⁴² But by October 1953, he supported it.¹⁴³ He recognized Milwaukee could not afford to build the expressway system on its own, and it needed cooperation from suburban governments to construct an integrated highway network serving residents and businesses throughout the county. At least some federal and state aid was available for construction, but Milwaukee risked losing it if it could not demonstrate progress or proceed according to a defined plan.¹⁴⁴

As 1953 ended, planning for Milwaukee's expressway system was well underway, but nothing had been constructed.¹⁴⁵ As one observer wrote, expressway planning and construction under city government took place "by evolution not revolution."¹⁴⁶ The city of Milwaukee undertook a massive public improvement project, sought funding for it, and began to acquire land for the rights-of-way. It sponsored multiple professional studies, received public input, and made definite

¹⁴¹ Draft Statement made at Public Enterprise Committee meeting, probably by Zeidler, 28 May 1953, Box 165, Folder 4, Zeidler Papers.

¹⁴² William Norris, "Financial Experts Shocked at Zeidler's Veto," 9 July 1953, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19530709&id=nXIxAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=0A8EAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6875,671640&hl=en>, accessed 22 March 2015.

¹⁴³ "Freeway Vote Is Given Praise," 15 October 1953, *Milwaukee Journal*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19531015&id=bgEqAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=oCMEAIAIAIBAJ&pg=6696,7483341&hl=en>, accessed 22 March 2015.

¹⁴⁴ "Expressway is Argued in Debate Over WTMJ," 18 February 1954, *Milwaukee Journal*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19540217&id=PEUaAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=biMEAIAIAIBAJ&pg=7369,933593&hl=en>, accessed 22 March 2015.

¹⁴⁵ Draft Statement made at Public Enterprise Committee meeting, probably by Zeidler, 28 May 1953, Box 165, Folder 4, Zeidler Papers.

¹⁴⁶ "Statement on Expressways," 20 October 1952, Box 164, Folder 2, Zeidler Papers.

progress toward construction. Lack of funding, exacerbated by limited collaboration between city and suburban officials, prevented faster progress.

As a result, authority shifted to Milwaukee County. At first, it continued most of the city's routes and initiatives, but later, tied the local expressway network into the Interstate Highway System. Subsequent chapters of this thesis continue that narrative.

Chapter 2

Bit by Bit: Expressway Planning Moves Forward

This chapter narrates the planning for Milwaukee's expressways after Milwaukee County assumed oversight. It attempts to describe the planning process and to link several national trends to Milwaukee. After the Wisconsin Legislature passed the bill that relieved Milwaukee of its expressway-related responsibilities, planning and construction began to take place on a more metropolitan basis. The legislation gave municipal governments the ability to raise concerns about routes running through their jurisdictions and recommend solutions. Milwaukee, four suburban governments, and the Milwaukee County Park Commission did just that. They did not necessarily oppose the expressways in principle, but wanted the routes modified. Often, neighborhood residents, businesses, or other interests encouraged their elected leaders to speak out.

In Milwaukee and West Milwaukee, the objectors opposed demolition of homes and businesses in densely populated, older neighborhoods. In the rapidly expanding western suburbs of West Allis and Wauwatosa, officials actually wanted more expressway miles to accommodate increasing traffic and projected additional development. Meanwhile, Milwaukee Mayor Frank Zeidler's vision for a decentralized metropolitan area included the city's annexation of new territory to insure that even though future industrial and residential growth took place away from the city center, it would still technically remain within city limits. He saw expressways as an important element of that model, particularly in light of the national trend toward suburbanization after World War II, although he did not believe Milwaukee's property taxpayers alone should shoulder the cost of construction.

Thus, Milwaukee County pursued expressway planning on a metropolitan basis. It attempted to balance several goals in its planning: more convenient commutes for suburban residents coming into the city for work, traffic relief downtown and near the new Milwaukee County Stadium, and adequate transportation facilities in anticipation of future urban growth. As a result, expressway construction moved forward bit by bit and with a great deal of debate.

Formal Transfer

The year 1954 saw Milwaukee County government accept responsibility for planning and constructing an expressway system started by the city of Milwaukee, but which benefited the entire Milwaukee area. Yet transferring authority to Milwaukee did not immediately hasten progress. In fact, the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission, lacking time and manpower to insure a smooth transition, got off to a slow start.

Mayor Frank Zeidler, City Comptroller Virgil Hurless, and the City Attorney's office wanted to transfer oversight to the County soon after the expressway law was passed in late 1953, with Assistant City Attorney Clyde Sheets using the analogy that the jurisdictional shift was like a relay race. The City had already started the process, and now it was the County's turn to take over. The City wanted work on the system to continue uninterrupted, and according to the City Comptroller, had enough funds on hand to complete work already planned. However, Zeidler observed that the city's work could not go on, because there was no guarantee that the County Board would accept it as part of the overall expressway plan the Board was required to create.

Zeidler insisted on turning over maps, studies, and other documents quickly, and that doing so was the correct legal procedure, given the recent state expressway law. County Public Works Director Eugene A. Howard did not want to accept them immediately, though. He said accepting the documents was not practical, given that the county did not have sufficient staff, and accepting the transfer required approval from the County Board. He felt it would take the Commission four to six weeks to prepare. Sheets responded by reminding Howard that the Milwaukee Common Council held special meetings to address expressway-related problems, and that if the County Board wanted to expedite the process, it could do the same. Milwaukee County Assistant Corporation Counsel C. Stanley Perry agreed with Zeidler that transferring expressway oversight was indeed the correct legal procedure but argued the law did not call for any particular haste. Hurless warned, however, that the State Highway Commission chairman had already indicated Milwaukee would lose \$7 million of state and federal expressway aids unless the County acted without delay.¹

On March 26, 1954, the city officially relinquished expressway oversight to Milwaukee County. It was a formal ceremony, with Mayor Zeidler and other officials participating, while a truck with plans, reports, contracts, and soil test samples was loaded and ready to deliver the documents.² Immediately, the question of staffing and compensation became an issue. Initially, officials anticipated that expressway staff would transfer to the county. City expressway director Raleigh W. Gamble soon raised concerns, questioning how the city could pay the staff if it no longer had jurisdiction over the project and describing as "unrealistic" a plan by the Milwaukee

¹ "City Will Bow Out Friday in Freeways Tiff," 25 March 1954, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19540325&id=oQQkAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=9iMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5188,4276078>, accessed 14 December 2014.

² Lloyd Gladfelter, "Okays Hiring of Consultants," 27 March 1954, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=jvrRlaHg2sAC&dat=19540327&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 14 December 2014.

County highway commissioner for thirteen of fifteen expressway staff members to accept a pay cut upon their transfer.³ He went on to state that he was unsure of how many staff members actually wanted to accept employment with the County. City government temporarily solved that problem. Deputy Public Works Commissioner John Tanghe said that those staff members could be transferred to other departments, while Hurless agreed to sign their paychecks as long as the city attorney's office issued a written opinion stating that such an arrangement was legal. Assistant City Attorney Clyde Sheets said he was confident of the legality.⁴ After the formal expressway transfer took place, Milwaukee's chief right-of-way acquisition agent, Edward A. Bielefeld, and five other staff, including three civil engineers, transferred to County employment and accepted civil service status. City expressways director Raleigh Gamble did not make the change, remaining in his position as superintendent of street construction and repair. Eight other staff members, including Gamble's assistant, Walter Tacke, also declined to make the transfer, citing the pay cut as a chief reason.⁵

Even so, other legal problems remained. Hurless insisted that the city meet all of the commitments already pledged to the freeway program, pursuant to the new state expressways law, while Sheets believed the county could not continue expressway progress until after the formal transfer of documents had been made. Ultimately, a special committee of expressway officials, meeting in the Mayor's office, voted to submit a resolution to the Common Council authorizing the City

³ "County to Get Freeway Role," 20 March 1954, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19540320&id=nAQkAAAIAIAJ&sjid=9iMEAAIAIAJ&pg=7040,1694606>, accessed 28 April 2014.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Lloyd Gladfelter, "Okays Hiring of Consultants," 27 March 1954, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=jvrRlaHg2sAC&dat=19540327&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 14 December 2014.

expressway division to retain engineers, right-of-way agents, and other staff until the transfer to the county was completed. They also voted to ask the County Board and Expressway Commission to accept or reject within 30 days the city's contract with consultants Ammann & Whitney, the engineering firm which had prepared an overall expressway plan.⁶

In April, the city formally prepared to transfer documents and files. However, with Milwaukee County unprepared to receive the transfer, the *Milwaukee Journal* sharply criticized the County's situation, noting that Wisconsin Legislature passed the expressways bill providing for the transfer five months earlier, and that the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission had been appointed three months earlier. It editorialized that Milwaukee Aldermen and County Supervisors often represented the same people and that supervisors should start acting as though they realized they were running a metropolitan government. The reason the County needed to act more quickly, the paper argued, was because the spring construction season had arrived. Furthermore, if work did not begin promptly, the expressway program would have risked losing the \$7 million dollars in highway funds from state government.⁷ By May, the Milwaukee County Corporation Counsel ruled that where construction work was already underway, it had to be completed. Consequently, the City of Milwaukee began the process of extending two Ammann & Whitney contracts under its jurisdiction, on a reimbursement basis.⁸

⁶ "County to Get Freeway Role," 20 March 1954, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19540320&id=nAQkAAAIAIAJ&sjid=9iMEAAAIAIAJ&pg=7040,1694606>, accessed 28 April 2014.

⁷ "County Must Speed Up Expressway Action or Lose Money," 6 April 1954, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19540406&id=b5QAAAAIAIAJ&sjid=niMEAAAIAIAJ&pg=3440,2738447>, accessed 21 July 2014.

⁸ "Transcript of Joint Meeting of City Board of Land Commissioners and Milwaukee County Parks Commission with representatives of other Townships, Villages, and Cities Present," 25 May 1954, Box 6, Folder 4, Walter Bender Papers, Milwaukee Manuscript Collection, Golda Meir Library Archives, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, hereafter cited Bender Papers.

County Jurisdiction

As Milwaukee County assumed oversight of the expressway system, it debated whether to hire a consulting firm to survey community needs and initiate planning, or form a team of planning engineers, who could submit a county-wide report.

Supervisor George Herrman argued in favor of the County developing its own team of engineers, believing their suggestions would be more practical than those of an outside firm. County Highway Commissioner E.A. Howard disagreed, stating that the county lacked the trained engineers needed to make traffic counts and complicated analyses necessary to receive state and federal aid. Commissioner Robert C. Johnson stressed the need for getting the study done quickly, and observed that it might take as long as 18-24 months to hire and train such an engineering staff. Thus, the County retained another engineering consulting firm, Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Hall and MacDonald of New York, to work with Ammann and Whitney to create an expressways report, for a fee of \$150,000.⁹ Working together, they completed their own expressway plan in early 1955.¹⁰ This fourth plan was substantially similar to the 1952 plan submitted by Ammann and Whitney, when it was under contract with the City. Responsibility to study and approve the newly proposed routes thus fell on the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission and affected municipalities.¹¹

Under the expressway law passed by the Wisconsin Legislature the previous year, any city, village, or town through which the expressway was proposed to run

⁹ Lloyd Gladfelter, "Okays Hiring of Consultants," 27 March 1954, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=jvrRlaHg2sAC&dat=19540327&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 14 December 2014.

¹⁰ William Norris, "Building Expressway: Nothing Goes Right," 10 July 1957, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19570710&id=819QAAAAIABJ&sjid=LhAEAAAIABJ&pg=7456,3911416>, accessed 17 November 2014.

¹¹ "County to Act Jan. 19 on 1st X-Ways," 5 January 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550105&id=3BQAAAAIABJ&sjid=kg8EAAAAIABJ&pg=5308,7057355>, accessed 17 November 1955.

had the right to object within 60 days after plans had been submitted to them. The procedure to resolve such concerns was to hold conferences, and if those conferences could not yield a mutually agreeable solution, the question would be submitted to the state highway commission for a decision, and the County Board would vote on the overall plan.¹² This structure, with an independent expressway commission within county government, made Milwaukee somewhat unusual among large cities undertaking similar projects. Such a structure later allowed Milwaukee, Glendale, and West Milwaukee's municipal governments to object to some routes and push for adjustments.

Although leaders in three other metropolitan areas—Cleveland, Los Angeles, and the Twin Cities—recommended to Milwaukee that the county, rather than the city, administer the expressway program, most other cities had arrangements different from Milwaukee's. In Los Angeles, Chicago, and Detroit, separate expressway divisions existed within the municipal department of public works, but they did not oversee and fund the programs. In Los Angeles, all expressways were considered state highways and were maintained by the state, although the city was responsible for funding alterations to streets, sewers, and storm drains. Under Detroit's organizational system, the municipal highway and expressway division held responsibility for planning, but like in Los Angeles, the actual expressways were the responsibility of the Michigan highway department. The approach in Boston was the exact opposite. There, no local control existed whatsoever, and the state handled all expressway matters.

¹² "North-South Freeway Route Draws Protests," 14 April 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550414&id=zmsjAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=rSMEAAIAIBAJ&pg=4730,7404669>, accessed 25 October 2014.

In most cities, right-of-way acquisitions fell to the city or county, with the state paying a portion of the costs. A few exceptions existed, however. In California, the state paid for acquisitions in Los Angeles and San Francisco. Texas, conversely, did not contribute for right-of-way acquisitions, allowing Dallas, Houston, and San Antonio to cover acquisition costs on their own.¹³

In any case, in Milwaukee, the County Expressway Commission was responsible for planning, with funding secured by the County Board. The actual process for moving the expressway system forward after the County took over led to a series of hearings, public meetings, proposals, revised proposals, and collaboration between units of government, which continued on for much of 1955 and into the following year. The process, while perhaps cumbersome and time consuming, enabled multiple units of government, as well as businesses and private citizens represented by their mayors and city council members, to communicate and voice concerns. Planners at the local level—in this case, Milwaukee County—listened and took those concerns seriously. And while they usually defended their own position and initial proposals, they showed a willingness to collaborate with other governments and consider modifications to the most recent expressway plan.

General Plan

In February 1955, the Expressway Commission approved the new 40-mile General Plan of seven separate but linked expressways in Milwaukee County. It was generally consistent with the 1952 recommendation approved by the City, but added additional routes. The Commission further endorsed a 22-mile system extension to be

¹³ Citizens Governmental Research Bureau Bulletin, Volume 41, 22 August 1953, Box 1, Folder 12, Walter F. Hintz Papers, Anderson Research Library, Milwaukee County Historical Society, hereafter cited Hintz Papers.

completed after 1980 and ordered copies of the approved route plans be sent to the municipalities whose boundaries the 40-mile network crossed. Those municipalities needed to approve the section of the expressway passing through their borders before actual construction could begin.¹⁴

Some of the routes the Expressway Commission approved were already planned or under construction. The East-West Expressway, also known as the Clybourn-Blue Mound route, had been planned by the City of Milwaukee, and the city began to acquire the right-of-way for it. As discussed earlier in this thesis, principal right-of-way acquisition began with negotiations to purchase the former Rapid Transit Line but also included acquisition of land owned by cemeteries adjoining the right-of-way to the west of the County Stadium site and Veterans' Administration grounds. By 1955, the Expressway Commission had completed negotiations to acquire the right-of-way from the Wisconsin Electric Power Co.¹⁵ The County plan also extended the East-West Expressway from the City's planned terminus at Hawley Road west to near the Waukesha County line.¹⁶ The 44th Street Expressway, meanwhile, had already been completed from West National Avenue to a point about 3400 feet north of National Avenue, in the Stadium Interchange area.¹⁷

However, the General Plan was a large and comprehensive network, with numerous interconnecting routes and interchanges. It further included likely future extensions. The map below provides a visual representation of the General Plan. The seven routes were the:

¹⁴ "Commission Approves 40 Mile Freeway Plan," 25 February 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550225&id=8uEpAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=hCMEAAAIIBAJ&pg=5540,4216734>, accessed 17 November 2014.

¹⁵ "Second Annual Report," Milwaukee County Expressway Commission, 1955, Box 1, Folder 12, Hintz Papers.

¹⁶ "General Plan," Milwaukee County Highway Commission, undated, Box 1, Folder 12, Hintz Papers.

¹⁷ "Second Annual Report," Milwaukee County Expressway Commission, 1955, Box 1, Folder 12, Hintz Papers.

- East-West Expressway, 9.7 miles: The route was proposed to start at Lake Michigan and run along a line just south of Clybourn Street, follow the north slope of the Menomonee Valley and pass north of County Stadium to connect with Blue Mound Road near the Waukesha County line.
- North-South Expressway, 11.1 miles: Starting slightly south of Silver Spring Drive west of Port Washington Road, the Expressway Commission proposed a north-south artery which crossing the Menomonee Valley at 11th Street on a low level bridge and terminating at West Layton Avenue east of South 20th Street. The Expressway was to have three lanes in each direction between Capitol Drive and Lincoln Avenue.
- 44th Street Expressway, 5.1 miles: The General Plan extended the 44th Street Expressway south from National Avenue, through the Village of West Milwaukee and part of Milwaukee's Southwest Side, to a point south of Howard Avenue. There, it would connect to State Highway 36, also known as Loomis Road.
- Northwest Expressway, 4.7 miles: Under the Commission's plan, the Commission would extend the northern half of the 44th Street Expressway from the Stadium Interchange to West Appleton Avenue/Highway 41 and then northwest to Capitol Drive. At a later time, the expressway could continue beyond Capitol Drive to connect with Highway 145 north of West Mill Road.
- North Avenue Expressway, 2.6 miles: Running along a line north of North Avenue, the Expressway Commission intended this route to connect the North-South and Northwest Expressways. It was also expected to create an inner loop around part of the city's central business and commercial district.
- Howard Avenue Expressway, 1.5 miles: Planned to run along another abandoned railroad right-of-way, the Lakeside belt line, the Howard Avenue

Expressway would connect the southern points of the 44th Street Expressway and North-South Expressway.

- West Expressway: To accommodate rapid industrial and residential development in western Milwaukee County, the Expressway Commission intended this route to run east of 100th Street and South Barkenow Avenue from West National Avenue to a point south of North Avenue. It would thus pass through both West Allis and Wauwatosa, enter the Milwaukee County Grounds north of Blue Mound Road, and initially intersect with Highway 100.

The Plan left room for future expansions of the expressway system, suggesting an extension of the Howard Avenue Expressway to continue along the Lakeside Belt Line westward from South 20th Street to connect with Highway 100. Likewise, a later extension of the West Expressway might travel farther north to intersect with Highway 100 at West Hampton Avenue. To supplement the 40-mile expressway network, the Commission also proposed several improvements to arterial streets, particularly on the South Side. Among the recommended improvements were:

- Extension of Lincoln Memorial Drive over the harbor on a high level bridge, to connect with South Clement, Whitnall, Pennsylvania, and Nicholson Avenues and continue south to Ryan Road.

- A short arterial between the proposed northern terminus of the North-South Expressway and Port Washington Road south of West Silver Spring Drive.

- A new arterial connecting South Superior Street to Burnham Street, continuing west to into West Allis, where it would swing south and connect with Lincoln Avenue.



Figure 3: The 1955 General Plan for Expressways in Milwaukee County, proposing expressways to be built before 1980.¹⁸

¹⁸ "General Plan for Milwaukee County Expressway System in 1980," Milwaukee County Expressway System, February 1955, Box 164, Folder 4, Zeidler Papers.

Expressway Commission Chairman Eliot G. Fitch listed the already-underway East-West Expressway as the top priority, followed by the North-South and Northwest routes, and noted construction of the 44th Street Expressway had also started. He believed the Commission and Milwaukee County could tackle several of the projects at once, and stated that prioritization of one project did not necessarily mean it would be completed first. Fitch also emphasized the need to complete the Stadium Interchange, saying Milwaukee had to be "big league" in handling not only its stadium and parking, but also its traffic.¹⁹ Less than two years earlier, the Boston Braves major-league baseball team had relocated to Milwaukee.²⁰

In addition to the approved system, earlier drafts of the General Plan suggested other freeway routes, but they were not included in the final, official version.

Ammann and Whitney, for example, recommended another east-west route, along Good Hope Road from Port Washington Road to a connection with Highway 41, but ultimately omitted it. Likewise, they recommended a route along Layton Avenue east from South 20th Street to Pennsylvania Avenue, but that route also did not make it into the approved draft. Meanwhile, the Wisconsin Highway Commission, rather than the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission, assumed responsibility for developing a connecting north-south route through the North Shore suburbs, from Silver Spring Drive along North Port Washington Road to the county line.²¹

In regard to its physical footprint, the majority of the expressway system was to be depressed or below ground, except in industrial areas, with landscaped slopes, 12-foot traffic lanes, and wide shoulders for snow removal and disabled vehicles. Speed limits

¹⁹ "Commission Approves 40 Mile Freeway Plan," 25 February 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550225&id=8uEpAAAAIABAJ&sjid=hCMEAAAIABAJ&pg=5540.4216734>, accessed 17 November 2014.

²⁰ John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 351.

²¹ "Memo from Mayor Zeidler to Common Council, 25 March 1955, Box 164, Folder 4, Zeidler Papers.

were to be 50 miles per hour on the expressways themselves, and 35 miles per hour at interchanges. There were to be no cross streets and no parking allowed, while intersecting streets would pass over or under the expressways. The Commission anticipated interruptions in traffic flow only at two select locations: lift bridges crossing the Milwaukee River and North Menomonee Canal.²²

Several parties immediately expressed support for the system the Expressway Commission approved, while other groups objected. County Supervisor Bert Busby, frequently a spokesman for the suburban point of view on the County Board, indicated little objection would come from suburban governments. F.J. Sawyer, the project engineer for both consulting firms, promoted the system as a means to improve mass transit by relieving congestion and allowing freer movement of buses on city streets and as a way to tie scattered industrial areas together. Additionally, Sawyer advocated the expressways as a means of eliminating blight by acquiring wide rights-of-way through deteriorated neighborhoods, facilitating mass evacuation of the city in the event of an enemy attack, and serving as firebreaks in case of bombing.²³

Local newspaper columnist William Norris, writing in the *Milwaukee Sentinel*, also supported the proposal. He felt that the system, along with planned improvements to Highway 36/Loomis Road, would better link Greendale and Hales Corners, as well as northwestern Racine County, southeastern Waukesha County, and more even distant northeast Walworth County, to Downtown Milwaukee by eliminating traffic bottlenecks in southwestern Milwaukee County. Likewise, he praised the newly-added West Expressway recommendation as an alternative to the increasingly

²² "Commission Approves 40 Mile Freeway Plan," 25 February 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550225&id=8uEpAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=hCMEAAAIIBAJ&pg=5540,4216734>, accessed 17 November 2014.

²³ "Commission Approves 40 Mile Freeway Plan," 25 February 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550225&id=8uEpAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=hCMEAAAIIBAJ&pg=5540,4216734>, accessed 17 November 2014.

congested Highway 100.²⁴ Several South Side businessmen, on the other hand, raised concerns about the North-South Expressway at the Commission meeting, immediately after the initial expressway presentation. Proposed to follow North 7th and 8th Streets on the North Side,²⁵ cross the Valley at 11th Street, and run along South 16th and 20th Streets on the South Side, they opposed the southern leg's trajectory and wanted it moved eastward.²⁶

Funding

In approving the General Plan, the Expressway Commission did not offer a cost estimate. During the February 24, 1955 Expressway Commission meeting at which the General Plan was approved, Chairman Fitch assured officials and the public that cost estimates would come later for each project, and that the Commission was committed to using available state and federal funds to pay for as much of the project as possible. He went on to state that the project might benefit from the "101 billion dollar, 10 year national road program which President Eisenhower has submitted to congress [*sic*]."²⁷

It is noteworthy that Fitch referenced President Dwight D. Eisenhower's road program. Destined to pass as the Interstate Highway Act, which provided federal funding and oversight for both inter-urban and intra-urban freeways, the bill before

²⁴ William Norris, "Expressways to Benefit Areas Southwest of City," 2 March 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19550302&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 17 November 2014.

²⁵ "40 Mile X-Way Outlined By Commission," 25 February 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19550225&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 17 November 2014.

²⁶ "Commission Approves 40 Mile Freeway Plan," 25 February 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550225&id=8uEpAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=hCMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5540,4216734>, accessed 17 November 2014.

²⁷ "Commission Approves 40 Mile Freeway Plan," 25 February 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550225&id=8uEpAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=hCMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5540,4216734>, accessed 17 November 2014.

Congress would create the national system of controlled access, divided highways not only linking distant cities, but also cutting through existing urban areas. The freeway system planned at this time by Milwaukee County, in collaboration with the City of Milwaukee, suburban communities, and the State of Wisconsin, would eventually become a part of the Interstate System. However, the bill would not pass in the U.S. Congress until June 29, 1956, for which reason the expressways remained under local jurisdiction for more than another year.

In the meantime, the Milwaukee County Board passed a bond issue to serve as the County's contribution. The \$4,850,000 issue, approved in June 1955, combined with a \$2 million sum placed in the 1956 budget, was intended to meet the County's funding responsibilities through December 1956. The State of Wisconsin contributed \$5,748,450 for that same period, while the federal government contributed \$6,207,500.²⁸

Decentralization and the Suburbs

This version of the expressway system fit well into the Socialists' vision for urban decentralization, the postwar trend of suburbanization and metropolitan growth, and the objective of relieving traffic congestion in the downtown area and elsewhere. The General Plan, which included additional routes such as the North Avenue and Northwest Expressways, still intended to provide relief to congested streets downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. However, routes on the edge of Milwaukee, such the West and Howard Avenue Expressways were to accommodate growth and growing

²⁸ "X-Way Bond Issue Voted By Board," 22 June 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19550622&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 29 November 2014.

congestion along the urban boundary. The Plan linked those routes—and the distinct yet overlapping needs they addressed—into a single, integrated highway network.

The General Plan further reflected the extent to which the priorities of planners, engineers, elected officials, and community members had shifted. In the 1920s, Mayor Daniel Hoan envisioned a "great wide artery" from north to south, to alleviate traffic congestion. The traffic problem grew worse by the 1940s, prompting Milwaukee under Mayor Bohn to undertake a study of the problem. His successor, Frank Zeidler—like Hoan, a Socialist—continued the expressway construction program, despite reservations about the costs the city incurred. Yet by the mid-1950s, relieving congestion in the city was not the only goal of planners or policymakers; they wanted to facilitate longer commutes and other intra-urban travel from increasingly distant areas of the metropolitan area.

It is also necessary to consider the expressway system in light of Zeidler's other priorities, such as improved public housing, elimination of blight, and annexation of surrounding townships. The Socialists' vision was not necessarily the suburbanization, per se, that followed World War II, but the postwar growth at the edge of the metropolitan area was also not entirely dissimilar from the decentralization of the metropolitan area desired by Hoan and Whitnall in the 1920s, Zeidler in the 1950s, and other Socialists. Whitnall in particular had always disliked the urban form of industrial cities and believed congestion was ruining urban America.

Congestion, Whitnall said, was Milwaukee's most pressing problem, and he wanted to use planning and zoning to remedy it. Consequently, he supported a zoning ordinance promoting single-family homes, and pushed for planned decentralization. Decentralization of the urban area, Whitnall argued, brought urban residents closer to

nature and improved the quality of life for city residents.²⁹ Thus Whitnall, his political ally, Mayor Hoan, and other Socialists after World War I implemented a comprehensive zoning ordinance to enable decentralization, while a major system of parks and parkways was to link those newly decentralized areas together.

Additionally, Hoan began annexing open land surrounding city limits, intending his annexation campaign to be a means for the city to keep pace with metropolitan growth.³⁰ Meanwhile, he also promoted a cooperative housing project, Garden Homes, as a means to alleviate housing congestion and slum conditions.³¹

Zeidler's political priorities aligned with those of Milwaukee's previous Socialist leaders. After his election in 1948, his top priorities were addressing the post-World War II housing shortage and slum clearance, followed closely by urban growth.³² His campaign committee's platform did not contain any references to downtown redevelopment.³³ Believing urban growth was essential to the city's long-term health, Milwaukee under Zeidler annexed land rapidly, annexing an average of 1,338 acres annually from 1948-1956. The program was as expensive as it was expansive, as annexation meant the city would need to extend services to developing or newly-developed areas; services such as police and fire protection, streets and sidewalks, schools, branch libraries, sewers, and especially water enticed surrounding townships to join Milwaukee rather than merge into another municipality or incorporate independently.³⁴

²⁹ John McCarthy, "Dreaming of a Decentralized Metropolis," *Michigan Historical Review* 32 (2006): 35.

³⁰ McCarthy, "Dreaming of a Decentralized Metropolis," 39.

³¹ McCarthy, "Dreaming of a Decentralized Metropolis," 50.

³² Gurda, 338.

³³ Joel Rast, "Critical Junctures, Long Term Processes: Urban Redevelopment in Chicago and Milwaukee, 1945-1980," *Social Science History* 33 (2009): 407.

³⁴ Gurda, 338.

Annexation was also one of Mayor Zeidler's priorities because he shared the views of earlier Socialists about decentralization. As more prosperous Milwaukee residents moved outward, by acquiring new lands, Milwaukee insured that at least some of them would remain in city limits. Moreover, during the Cold War era, he felt "planned decentralization" was important to civil defense, as the atomic bomb greatly threatened metropolitan areas.³⁵ Political leaders elsewhere, encouraged by academics, shared his concern. As early as 1947, the National Security Council listed industrial dispersal as an important component to national defense. In 1951, a prominent physicist and two social scientists warned that in the event of an atomic or nuclear conflict, high-density urban areas "would become deathtraps."³⁶ Urban planners agreed, with one professional planning journal publishing an article in 1950 which similarly warned of the threat of atomic attack. Planners likewise argued before Congress in favor of housing dispersal. By the mid-1950s, federal housing and transportation policies, including the Interstate Highway Act, promoted decentralization.³⁷

The land acquisition Zeidler pursued also enabled Milwaukee to retain manufacturing jobs. The newly acquired vacant land increased Milwaukee's supply of property desirable for factories and other industrial plants seeking to locate, relocate, or expand in the city. From 1950-1960, Milwaukee gained 2,500 manufacturing jobs, while Chicago, in contrast, lost 90,000.³⁸

The decentralization Zeidler and other Socialists envisioned is not necessarily synonymous with postwar suburbanization. They are separate but overlapping

³⁵ Gurda, 339.

³⁶ Kathleen Tobin, "The Reduction of Urban Vulnerability: Revisiting 1950s American Suburbanization as National Defense," *Cold War History* 2 (2002): 7.

³⁷ Tobin, 24-25.

³⁸ Rast, 408.

historical concepts, with the suburbanization of metropolitan Milwaukee and other cities falling with the broader movement toward deconcentration of jobs, manufacturing, and residential areas after World War II. A detailed discussion of suburbanization, its causes, and whether suburbanization preceded or followed expressway construction is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, to understand the place of the expressway in Milwaukee and other urban areas, it is necessary to understand the national trend of expressway construction in metropolitan areas at the same time those metropolises expanded exponentially.

Mayor Zeidler favored comprehensive decentralization, including residential, industrial, and recreational development outside the city's inner core. Historian Kenneth Jackson places postwar suburbanization within that decentralization. Describing massive and sustained population growth as a condition, but not necessarily a cause, of suburbanization, he characterizes 20th century metropolitan growth as horizontal rather than vertical. He also describes the "suburban ideal," in which the American people seek the seemingly near-universal aspiration of a private dwelling and a proper balance between country and city, as another condition of suburbanization.³⁹ He attributes the actual causes of suburbanization to racial prejudice and inexpensive housing. An influx of African-Americans into northern cities from southern states after World War I, followed by the desegregation of public schools ordered by the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Public Education* decision in 1954, served as a major cause of suburbanization. Far more diverse than most cities in England, Germany, Japan, and other countries, American cities long had large minority populations, and the court-ordered busing and overall racial change in

³⁹ Jackson, 289.

American cities—especially northern cities—accelerated the process of middle class white Americans, driven by racial fears, fleeing the inner city.

Perhaps even more so than race, economics also prompted suburbanization. As one of the most prosperous nations in history, with inexpensive land, affordable residential lots, and a vast middle class in the post-World War II era, the United States could afford the low density housing that England, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Japan, and other industrial nations could not. In other words, as forests, farms, and open land have always been plentiful in the United States, unlike in Europe or Japan, abundant land has resulted in comparatively cheap land, enabling growth on the metropolitan fringe.⁴⁰

Kathleen Tobin agrees. Like Jackson, she attributes the causes of suburbanization to the postwar population boom, economic growth, and plentiful land and notes federal subsidies for suburban development, tax deductions for mortgage interest and property taxes, and federal spending on highway projects contributed to suburbanization, as well. Additionally, American cities encountered a set of challenges different from European and Asian cities in the years after World War II. While Europe and Japan experienced population growth too, the nations whose cities had been devastated by wartime bombing concentrated on rebuilding their urban centers. In contrast, the United States, untouched by air raids, initiated some urban renewal projects during and after the Great Depression, but was better positioned to concentrate on development outside the traditional urban centers, and did so.⁴¹

Whatever the cause of suburbanization at the national level, Zeidler essentially sought to pursue a form of the suburban ideal but simultaneously keep people, jobs,

⁴⁰ Jackson, 291.

⁴¹ Tobin, 2.

and industry within city limits. He wanted the city to grow in such a way that its newly developed areas would be largely suburban in character, but not in name, and include a significant amount of industry. The expressways were a component of that, and facilitated automobile transportation both within the city and between more distant areas of Milwaukee County and beyond.

North-South Expressway

Even so, several municipalities expressed concerns about the freeway routes to run through their jurisdictions. They did not necessarily oppose the freeways in principle, but objected to the proposed placements. Route selection for the North-South Expressway in Milwaukee proved especially problematic, and its city government raised objections. Glendale and the Milwaukee County Park Commission also challenged sections of its route. On the opposite side of the county, Wauwatosa and West Allis voiced concerns about the West Expressway. Perhaps because it received the first priority, route placement for the North-South Expressway drew the most immediate and widespread concern. This thesis has thus far discussed in some depth the planning of the East-West Expressway and the history and need for the expressway system as a whole, so at this juncture, it is necessary to understand the planning of the North-South route and its effects.

On the South Side, planners and elected leaders eventually decided to realign the Expressway route along South 6th Street, but only after considerable discussion and debate. Both sides, that is, those in favor of a 6th Street alignment and those in favor of a route near 16th Street, presented numerous pros and cons for each option, and seemingly did so with the best interests of the city as a whole in mind. Even so, the lengthy disagreement and the number of parties involved reflect the difficulty in

planning a major civic improvement such as constructing an expressway system in an urban area.

The Expressway Commission's proposal to run the southern leg of the North-South Expressway along 16th and 20th Streets was not new. The Origin-Destination Survey first proposed such a trajectory,⁴² and as far back as 1948, Raleigh Gamble envisioned the North-South route running close to the commercial areas near the intersections of 13th Street & Lincoln Avenue and 13th & Mitchell Streets on the South Side, 12th & Vliet Streets just north of downtown, and 20th Street & North Avenue a bit farther northwest.⁴³ Subsequently, the 1949 De Leuw and Cather study proposed moving the route about ten blocks eastward, parallel to South 6th Street. Three years later, the Ammann and Whitney study revisited the original route, favoring an expressway similar to the one the Origin-Destination Survey suggested and considered by city planners: close to 16th Street but running gradually southwestward toward South 20th Street. After jurisdiction for expressway planning shifted from City to County government, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors consulted another national firm, Parsons, Brinkerhoff, Hall, and MacDonald, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The firm also endorsed the 16th-20th Street route and estimated it to be \$7,800,000 less expensive than an expressway along 6th Street.⁴⁴

The Milwaukee Board of Public Land Commissioners disagreed with the endorsement. They argued the 16th-20th Street route would be disruptive to existing zoning and could stimulate industrial development in areas intended for residential

⁴² William Norris, "Land Commission Sets Up Old Road-Block on X-Way," 15 April 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550415&id=a3BQAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=ww8EAAAIIBAJ&pg=6763,7769777>, accessed 12 October 2014.

⁴³ Letter from R. W. Gamble to Mayor Frank Zeidler, 1 June 1948, Box 164, Folder 1, Zeidler Papers.

⁴⁴ William Norris, "Land Commission Sets Up Old Road-Block on X-Way," 15 April 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550415&id=a3BQAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=ww8EAAAIIBAJ&pg=6763,7769777>, accessed 12 October 2014.

use. Sixth Street, wrote Elmer Krieger, offered a more natural buffer between present and future industrial areas to the east and the residential neighborhoods and small businesses to the west. A freeway along 6th Street had the advantage of running adjacent to the Chicago, North Shore, and Milwaukee Railway right-of-way, which already separated existing neighborhoods and street communications.⁴⁵

The Board cited a number of practical reasons for favoring the 6th Street route, as well. One important reason is that the concentration of trucking firms southeast of 13th & Clybourn would be better served by the 6th Street alignment.⁴⁶ More than ten percent of Milwaukee County's labor force or approximately 38,500 people, the Board noted, were employed at that time in the general area east of 6th Street and south of Florida Street, generating significant traffic. A 6th Street route would enable drivers to use the 6th Street viaduct as a feeder into downtown, making traffic more efficient, given that the central interchange would be nearby.

Moreover, a freeway along 6th Street would not cut the commercial area around 11th and Mitchell Streets off from the customer base to its west the same way a route along 16th and 20th Streets would. A route along 16th and 20th Streets, meanwhile, was too close to the proposed 43rd Street route south of National Avenue to be economically justifiable. Lastly, the Milwaukee Board of Land Commissioners argued that a 6th Street route would take less park land than the 16th Street plan.⁴⁷

The opinion of the Board of Public Land Commissioners was an important part of the city's role in expressway route selection, even after Milwaukee County assumed responsibility for planning and construction. Initially known as the

⁴⁵ Some sources refer to the Chicago, North Shore, and Milwaukee Railway simply as the "North Shore Railroad."

⁴⁶ Letter from Milwaukee Board of Public Land Commissioners Executive Secretary Elmer Krieger to State Highway Commission, 22 June 1955, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

⁴⁷ Ibid. The 16th-20th Street route would have run through the western section of Wilson Park, on the Far South Side.

Metropolitan Parks Commission, the Board of Land Commissioners, or Land Commission, formed in 1907 during the brief administration of Republican Mayor Sherburn Becker. State legislation in 1915 enabled it to become Milwaukee's official planning arm.⁴⁸

Milwaukee Sentinel columnist William Norris criticized the Land Commission's objections, however. He believed the uncertainty about the expressway's route was due to "stubborn opposition" by members of the Commission's technical staff, although he generally favored giving the Commission greater powers, and attributed the reason for the number of transportation studies undertaken to "confusion" on the part of the Milwaukee Common Council over the numerous conflicting opinions.⁴⁹ Norris supported the 16th Street plan, favored by County government, stating that while the South 6th Street would serve the downtown and Mitchell Street business districts, the 16th Street plan would serve those same areas, as well as businesses on South 16th Street itself and the Southgate shopping center. He further argued that the 6th Street route would eliminate a larger total number of houses and residential units and speculated it would eliminate more stores and commercial properties than the 16th Street route. Even so, he conceded an expressway along 6th Street had the advantage of better serving the airport and Port of Milwaukee and would not take part of Wilson Park.⁵⁰

Likewise, Mayor Zeidler did not share the Land Commission's view. In June 1955, he vetoed a Common Council resolution directing the Board of Land

⁴⁸ John McCarthy, "Dreaming of a Decentralized Metropolis," 44-45.

⁴⁹ William Norris, "Land Commission Sets Up Old Road-Block on X-Way," 15 April 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550415&id=a3BQAAAIAIAJ&sjid=ww8EAAIAIAJ&pg=6763,7769777>, accessed 12 October 2014.

⁵⁰ William Norris, "6th or 16th—Where To Put Expressway," 12 May 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550512&id=r1cxAAAIAIAJ&sjid=DhAEAAIAIAJ&pg=7175,6880943>, accessed 12 October 2014.

Commissioners to represent the City of Milwaukee at State Highway Commission hearings. That same resolution prevented the Commissioner of Public Works and City Engineer from being heard at Highway Commission hearings, and while Zeidler did not object to members of the Board of Land Commissioners being heard at meetings, he did not agree with their position. Zeidler believed a route along 16th-20th Streets to be less expensive than along 6th Street. He further argued it would displace fewer residents and disrupt the South Side less than the 6th Street route.⁵¹

Nevertheless, members of the Mitchell Street Association feared the 16th Street proposal.⁵² The route, they believed, gave better access to competitors at Southgate.⁵³ Conversely, Mayor Zeidler felt the 16th Street route would bring more business to the West Mitchell Street commercial corridor, rather than block it.⁵⁴ The Association's concern was that an expressway along South 16th Street would block access to Mitchell Street from side streets, which at the time was the second largest shopping area in the city. Association member Henry Wojick also expressed concern that the route could adversely affect the business district on Lincoln Avenue. He favored the 6th Street proposal, and like the Land Commission, felt it would better serve the industrial areas in the southeastern section of Milwaukee.

Those concerns were aired officially at a meeting of the Milwaukee Common Council's Streets and Zoning Committee in April 1955, the first of several meetings on the matter. The Board of Land Commissioners raised several of its concerns, including that the expressway would run through Kosciuszko, Pulaski, and Wilson

⁵¹ Veto message from Zeidler to Milwaukee Common Council, 20 June 1955, Box 164, Folder 4, Zeidler Papers.

⁵² Letter from South Side resident Melvin Kwass to Traffic Engineer E.G. Plautz, 23 June 1955, Box 164, Folder 4, Zeidler Papers.

⁵³ Developed in the 1950s, the Southgate shopping center near South 27th Street and West Morgan Avenue was one of the first shopping malls in the Milwaukee area.

⁵⁴ Letter from Zeidler to Melvin Kwass, 7 July 1955, Box 164, Folder 4, Zeidler Papers.

Parks. Alderman Patrick H. Fass, committee chairman, responded by calling another meeting with expressway officials to give them a chance to defend their preferred routes.⁵⁵

That meeting proved critical insofar as it offered planners, local leaders, and business groups the initial opportunity to publically air their concerns and present their views, while giving elected leaders the opportunity to vote on a particular aspect of expressway planning. Numerous stakeholders spoke, and from news accounts, it appears both sides took advantage of ample opportunities to express their views. Prior to the meeting, William Norris countered the Mitchell Street Association's objections in his *Sentinel* column. Agreeing that as a group, Mitchell Street merchants were generally civic-minded and reasonable, with far-sighted ideas, he disputed their assertion that the 16th Street expressway would serve as a sort of Chinese wall, forming a barrier between residents west of 16th Street and the businesses they were trying to reach. Sixteenth Street itself, he argued, was a barrier, carrying a high volume of vehicles, including truck traffic, and often delaying with heavy congestion eastbound or westbound motorists trying to get *across* 16th Street. A depressed expressway parallel to it, he believed, would allow traffic on most east-west streets to pass through without much interference from north-south traffic, enabling potential customers to better reach their destinations along Mitchell Street.⁵⁶

At the April 25, 1955 meeting, Milwaukee County Expressway Engineer Henry Wildschut, along with Fred Sawyer, the project engineer for Parsons,

⁵⁵ "North-South Freeway Route Draws Protests," 14 April 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550414&id=zmsjAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=rSMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=4730,7404669>, accessed 25 October 2014.

⁵⁶ William Norris, "Mitchell Street Would Benefit By 16th Street Expressway," 20 April 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550420&id=mlcxAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=DhAEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6765,1612926>, accessed 25 October 2014.

Brinckerhoff, Hall & MacDonald and Ammann & Whitney, defended the 16th Street plan. Sawyer argued that the 16th Street route would preserve the arterial capacity of other major traffic-carrying streets, most notably South 6th Street, which would be disrupted if an expressway was built near it. Constructing along 16th Street would also save approximately \$10 million. Moreover, he argued the 16th Street route better provided "balanced spacing" of major traffic arteries, given that it would be situated about halfway between the planned south extension of Lincoln Memorial Drive and the proposed 44th Street expressway. Sawyer went on to concede that the consultants had given the 6th Street route intensive, detailed study, and that it had merits, but that the consultants still believed a route near 16th Street was a superior choice.⁵⁸

Board of Land Commissioners Secretary Elmer Krieger rebutted their argument, clearly indicating several of the Board's key objections. They included:

- The 16th Street would actually be too close to the 44th Street Freeway, creating a duplication of facilities.
- A freeway along 6th Street would serve as a buffer between industry to the east and residential and business areas to the west.
- Industry and trucking would be better served by the 6th Street route, which would be closer to the harbor and adjacent industrial areas.
- Truck traffic from those areas would have to travel farther to get to a 16th Street expressway.
- The 6th Street route eliminated a need for allowing truck traffic on the proposed outer harbor drive, regarded by the Board of Land Commissioners as a parkway.

⁵⁸ "City Council Rejects Part of Freeway Plan," 26 April 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550426&id=qC8aAAAIAIAJ&sjid=9iQEAAAIAIAJ&pg=5691,5997147>, accessed 25 October 2014.

- An expressway near South 6th Street better served Mitchell Field, Cudahy, and South Milwaukee.
- That same route would better serve valuable but under-developed industrial areas in the former Town of Lake.

Other representatives of the planning commission raised their own concerns. Planning engineer Robert Filtzer maintained that the proposed 6th Street route would actually cross the Menomonee Valley in the same place as if it were aligned along 16th Street. Under the adjusted route, it would cross at about 11th Street but then swing eastward between West Bruce and West Virginia Streets and continue southward between South 5th and 6th Streets. Doing so would also allow the North Shore Railroad to relocate to the center of the freeway, Filtzer said. City planning director Alvin Bromm, meanwhile, argued the \$10 million savings of the 16th Street route would be consumed by surface street construction nearby. Under the County plan, the 16th Street project necessitated improvements to roads between 16th Street and Lake Michigan.⁵⁹

However, Sawyer defended the County's reasoning on those issues. He stated the engineering consultants he represented already considered relocating the North Shore line, but rejected the idea because the future of the railroad was uncertain. He also disagreed with the argument that building along 16th Street would not actually save money because of the corresponding street improvements was not correct. Sawyer said that the freeway serves a specific function and not a solution for all traffic ills, stating, "Wherever the expressway goes, surface streets will have to supplement it."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ "City Council Rejects Part of Freeway Plan," 26 April 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550426&id=qC8aAAAIAIAJ&sjid=9iQEAAAIAIAJ&pg=5691,5997147>, accessed 25 October 2014.

⁶⁰ "City Council Rejects Part of Freeway Plan," 26 April 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*,

Local business leaders did not accept the County's argument. Mitchell Street Association members, joined by business owners from South 16th Street, South Muskego Avenue, and West Lincoln Avenue, supported the Land Commission's position. Realtor Herbert Engel downplayed the additional \$10 million cost of the 6th Street plan, saying that in the overall picture of a \$200 million program, \$10 million was negligible. Robert Irwin of the Mitchell Street Advancement Association, meanwhile, argued that a 16th Street route would lead to an overconcentration of arterial routes in the central part of the South Side and may encourage trucking on surface streets.

Community residents themselves were not unified, although a great many also preferred the 6th Street route. At the April 25, 1955 meeting, Chairman Fass asked for a show of hands to indicate support for the routes. A majority of the 40-50 people attending the meeting supported building the expressway along 6th Street, but 7-8 individuals in attendance favored 16th Street.⁶¹ Another South Side resident argued for a route east of 6th Street, along 2nd and 3rd Streets for perhaps less business-minded reasons than the Land Commission and Mitchell Street Association. In her April 1955 letter to the Mayor, she stated that the area east of 6th Street was becoming blighted, populated by "Mexicans and D. P.'s who have little care or finances to maintain property," and further complained that the only bank in the area was at 4th & National.⁶²

In contrast, resident L.J. Rugalski, of 1554 West Forest Home Avenue, objected to the 6th Street proposal. Constructing along 6th Street, he feared, could obstruct a school and two churches, including a local landmark, St. Josephat's

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550426&id=qC8aAAAIAIAJ&sjid=9iQEAAAIAIAJ&pg=5691,5997147>, accessed 25 October 2014.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Letter from Mrs. K. to Mayor Zeidler, 4 April 1955, Box 164, Folder 4, Zeidler Papers.

Basilica. In his opinion, businesses along Mitchell Street should not have had so much influence because they did not in fact own many of the buildings they occupied.⁶³ He likewise criticized the higher cost of the 6th Street expressway, stating that the people who support should have to pay for it.⁶⁴

Ultimately, at their April 25, 1955 meeting, the Streets and Zoning Committee voted 5-1 to disapprove of the general expressway plan as submitted by the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission. Only Chairman Fass voted against the resolution. He felt the committee should approve the general expressway plan and dispute the South Side leg in question. Fass stated he recognized the reason the committee voted against the General Plan was due to residents' objections to the expressway leg, but he cautioned that by opposing the Plan as a whole, Council members would potentially send the wrong message to outsiders.

The next day, the full Common Council passed, by a vote of 21-2, a resolution that rejected some portions of the expressway plan. The resolution did not specify which routes the Council opposed, but the vote was based on the objections to the southern leg of the North-South Expressway. The same resolution approved other expressway segments already under construction or planned for construction, including the East-West Expressway between North 6th Street and Hawley Road, and the 44th Street Expressway between National Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue.⁶⁵

The Milwaukee County Expressway Commission's two consulting firms, Parsons, Brinckerhoff, Hall, and MacDonald and Amman and Whitney, responded by discussing the routes, as well as expressway costs, in their report in June of that year.

⁶³ Letter from Mr. L.J. Rugalski to Mayor Zeidler, June 1955, Box 164, Folder 4, Zeidler Papers.

⁶⁴ Letter from L.J. Rugalski to Mayor Zeidler, 1 October 1955, Box 164, Folder 4, Zeidler Papers.

⁶⁵ "City Council Rejects Part of Freeway Plan," 26 April 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550426&id=qC8aAAAIBAJ&sjid=9iQEAAAIBAJ&pg=5691,5997147>, accessed 25 October 2014.

Overall, they anticipated a cost of \$221,084,603 over a period of 25 years, from 1955-1980, to build the Milwaukee County expressway network and envisioned a total of 38.47 miles of four- and six-lane highways. The consultants also predicted a need for an expanded West Expressway before 1980.

They directly criticized the 6th Street route, for several reasons. The consultants argued that by building the route further east, it would lengthen the proposed beltline connection along Howard Avenue between the 44th Street Expressway and the North-South Expressway from 1.5 miles to 2.5 miles and require grade crossings at the North Shore and Milwaukee Road railroad crossings. The extra cost alone for that would be, in their estimate, \$3 million.

Additionally, the consultants countered the argument by the Land Commission and Mitchell Street Association that an expressway closer to 6th Street could better serve the Port of Milwaukee. They believed the opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway might encourage growth of the Port and nearby industrial areas and that a more easterly expressway location could in fact inhibit westward expansion of the area and increase the traffic burden on nearby arteries by introducing tributary traffic on local streets. Even more traffic delays could result, they feared, as they anticipated the choice of 6th Street to entail two bascule bridges over the Menomonee River Valley rather than one. Other projects, they felt, provided adequate service to the port area. Those projects included the proposed southern extension of Lincoln Memorial Drive and a high level bridge over the harbor. Furthermore, they noted that the 6th Street viaduct was still to be widened, and there were proposed improvements for South Clement Avenue.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ "Expressways Cost Set at \$221,084,603," 16 June 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550616&id=YXBIAAAAIBA&sjid=OhAEA AAAIBA&pg=7211,564504>, accessed 7 November 2014.

Both sides—those for constructing the southern leg of the North-South Expressway along 16th Street and those believing it should be moved closer to 6th Street—ultimately had the opportunity to present their views to the Wisconsin Highway Commission. The Highway Commission held formal hearings on expressway route placement in June 1955, attended by Commission Chairman Harold Plummer and other state transportation officials, at the Milwaukee County Courthouse. Like the Common Council meetings, the hearings demonstrated the extent to which local highway planners and elected officials were divided on specific questions related to expressway construction.

Although City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County officials agreed generally that the area needed the higher speed, controlled access highways proposed and planned, they did not agree on specifics such as placement. As noted, the County had jurisdiction over the project and planned its routes based on the recommendations of the private consultants, but individual municipalities could dissent. Yet city government was divided, with the Land Commission and a majority of the Common Council in favor of a 6th Street route, while Mayor Zeidler, Acting Traffic Engineer Martin E. Bruening, and Commissioner of Public Works Walter Swietlik favored 16th Street. The hearing, which followed other meetings, consultants' reports, and a series of letters and statements by area residents and representatives of the business community, is also representative of the wider process of how Milwaukee County's freeway system was planned and constructed by leaders at the local level: bit by bit, with significant deliberation. It also reflects on the willingness of City, County, and State officials to consider the needs of the larger metropolitan area and its future growth, demonstrate some concern for constituents and neighborhood businesses, and if not compromise, than at least consider each side's view.

At the Commission hearing on June 22, 1955, South Side business leaders Robert Irwin of the Mitchell Street Advancement Association, Herbert Engel of the 16th Street and Muskego Avenue Business Men's Association, and realtor Henry Irwin all spoke, indicating their objections to the route along 16th Street. Perry G. Anderson, Executive Secretary of the Downtown Association, contended that expressway plans needed to be revised to enable motorists to better enter and exit the downtown area. He stressed that his organization supported the East-West Expressway and the North-South Expressway north of the Menomonee River, but complained that the issue of downtown access had not received sufficient attention up to that point.

Milwaukee Board of Land Commissioners Executive Secretary Elmer Krieger spoke for the City and presented its already-established argument, but also added another view. He stated his belief that a 6th Street route would reduce truck traffic on the planned outer harbor drive outside the actual harbor area, given that the expressway could serve as an "all-purpose traffic carrier."⁶⁷ Alderman Fred Meyers, a supporter of the 6th Street route, likewise spoke. He told the Wisconsin Highway Commission that it was a mistake to place one freeway along South 44th Street and another nearby, along South 20th Street. He even ventured the highway commissioners were missing the point of the broader expressway project by planning the two routes so close together, asking, perhaps sarcastically, "Is it for the purpose of selling real estate in the Village of Greendale?"⁶⁸

In response to the objections, Milwaukee County Expressway Commission Chairman Elliot Fitch stated that the southern half of the North-South Expressway had

⁶⁷ "Road Group's Suggestions on X-Way Await Study," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 23 June 1955, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19550623&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 10 November 2014.

⁶⁸ "Council Gag on X-Way, Mayor Says," 23 June 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19550623&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 10 November 2014.

received intensive study, more than any other section of the system. He said 16th Street had been found preferable and noted "You can't build an expressway without hurting somebody."⁶⁹ Mayor Zeidler, meanwhile, complained that other City planning staff were not able to testify. The Common Council, he alleged, decided that the staff could attend the meeting to sit and listen, but not answer fundamental questions. Alderman Fred Meyers, who supported the 6th Street route, rejected Zeidler's assertion. He stated that the majority of the Council believed they should appear at the hearing and answer all questions, but not as official representatives of the City.⁷⁰

In order to accommodate both sides and give each argument consideration, Harold Plummer promised several weeks of study by State Highway Commission members and the Commission's engineers. They also requested written reports from Swietlik and Bruening. After that time, Plummer pledged the Highway Commission would make a recommendation on the expressway route.⁷¹

Objections to Other Routes

The location of southern leg of the North-South Expressway was not the only route about which Milwaukee-area residents and elected officials were concerned. Four suburban communities—West Milwaukee, West Allis, Wauwatosa, and Glendale—also raised questions about route placements and planning the system as a whole. Additionally, the Milwaukee County Parks Commission objected to the loss of

⁶⁹ "Road Group's Suggestions on X-Way Await Study," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 23 June 1955, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19550623&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 10 November 2014

⁷⁰ "Council Gag on X-Way, Mayor Says," 23 June 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19550623&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 10 November 2014.

⁷¹ "Road Group's Suggestions on X-Way Await Study," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 23 June 1955, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19550623&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 10 November 2014.

park land and lobbied to relocate some of the routes to preserve as much open space in the city as possible.

The Village of West Milwaukee's primary objection was that the 44th Street Expressway, bisecting the Village on a north-south trajectory, would have a highly negative effect on the small community. Like the City of Milwaukee, suburban communities had the opportunity to present their concerns to the Expressway Commission at the June 1955 hearings, and they did so. West Milwaukee Village President Charles J. Becker stated that he supported the plan as a whole, but he contended that the 44th Street Expressway did not need to extend south of National Avenue through the Village at that time. By rebuilding National Avenue, removing streetcars from it, and completing other street improvement projects, he felt traffic needs in the village would be addressed for several years. In 1953, the Village had retained its own consulting firm, Klug and Smith, whose study indicated the Village could improve and widen existing streets into connections with the Expressway, addressing traffic needs as far into the future as 1980.⁷²

With a population of less than 6,000 at that time,⁷³ Becker was concerned about the impact on Village residents and businesses, as well. As it was proposed, creation of the 44th Expressway right-of-way entailed demolishing a number of residential homes in the Village. Citing a study in 1953 by Joseph Schwel, principal of West Milwaukee High School, Becker contended that 23 businesses and 159 homes would have to be removed, displacing 820 people in 219 families, a number

⁷² "Suburb Urges Delay in 44th X-Way Leg," 21 June 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550621&id=ZnBIAAAAIBAJ&sjid=OhAEAAAIBAJ&pg=7353,2051559>, accessed 19 November 2014.

⁷³ "Milwaukee: West Milwaukee Show's Little Understanding of Area's Needs," 28 June 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550628&id=dzEoAAAIBAJ&sjid=0CMEAAAIBAJ&pg=3508,5993105>, accessed 19 November 1955.

equal to about 15% of the Village's population. Many of the displaced, he said, were elderly persons living on fixed incomes, who had no means to purchase or build new homes. Additionally, a number of residents preferred to remain in the Village but would not be able to because of a shortage of available lots. He said he had already been told by Expressway Commission personnel that a freeway through West Milwaukee would not be needed for 15 years, and he believed it should be subject to review before then. Consequently, his solution to the issue was to place the route through the Village on "a tentative basis" and not take any private property.⁷⁴ Overall, he supported the General Plan for the expressway system, but objected to the timing of construction through West Milwaukee.

Becker was not alone in his views. The Village Board concurred with his position, as did Milwaukee County Supervisor Bert Busby. Busby, a Village resident, also generally supported the expressway system but believed the metropolitan area needed the East-West and North-South Expressways first and that they should receive top priority. Consequently, Busby objected to shifting the North-South Expressway along 16th and 20th Streets eastward to parallel, South 6th Street, fearing the shift would accelerate construction of the 44th Street Expressway.⁷⁵ His views were already widely known. While the City of Milwaukee was still planning the expressway system, he opposed the Stadium Interchange, and in early 1954 encouraged the City to focus on the East-West Expressway. His argument at that time was that by completing the Stadium Interchange, the City would commit Milwaukee County, after the transfer of expressway jurisdiction, to completing a Milwaukee-sponsored system

⁷⁴ "Suburb Urges Delay in 44th X-Way Leg," 21 June 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550621&id=ZnBIAAAAIBAJ&sjid=OhAEAAAIBAJ&pg=7353,2051559>, accessed 19 November 2014.

⁷⁵ "Suburb Urges Delay in 44th X-Way Leg," 21 June 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550621&id=ZnBIAAAAIBAJ&sjid=OhAEAAAIBAJ&pg=7353,2051559>, accessed 19 November 2014.

cutting through West Milwaukee. At that time, Milwaukee County Assistant Corporation Counsel C. Stanley Perry stated that the Expressway Commission was bound to complete work already started, while Mayor Zeidler urged cooperation between the municipalities, and indicated a willingness to adjust routes entering West Milwaukee.⁷⁶

In any case, the *Milwaukee Journal* criticized West Milwaukee's reluctance at the Expressway Commission hearings to allow the 44th Street Expressway to pass through its borders. The impact on approximately 218 families was small compared to the needs of the metropolitan area as a whole. The issue should be considered on a metropolitan basis, and "tiny minority desires" should not be allowed to hold up the entire expressway program, the paper argued.⁷⁷ After the hearing, the Highway Commission did not take any immediate action, given that the 44th Street route was not immediately needed, and the North-South Expressway was the route receiving the most study at that time.⁷⁸

The Village of West Milwaukee was not the only suburban community in Milwaukee County to object to the General Plan. Glendale expressed concerns about the General Plan, as well. Its leaders' and residents' objections concerned the placement of the North-South Expressway through residential areas and the effect on the parks in Glendale.

⁷⁶ "City Nears Transfer of X-Way Task," 26 January 1954, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19540126&id=tnUxAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=SBAEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=7236,1782599>, accessed 23 November 2014.

⁷⁷ "Milwaukee: West Milwaukee Show's Little Understanding of Area's Needs," 28 June 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550628&id=dzEoAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=0CMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=3508,5993105>, accessed 19 November 1955.

⁷⁸ "Suburb Urges Delay in 44th X-Way Leg," 21 June 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19550621&id=ZnBIAAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=OhAEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=7353,2051559>, accessed 19 November 2014.

Like Milwaukee, Glendale held a local-level public hearing in April 1955 to address residents' concerns. More than 250 residents attended. The process was similar: the Glendale Common Council had 60 days to approve or reject the proposal, and if it rejected the tentative expressway plans, the matter would be sent to the state highway commission for a determination. At the April 11, 1955 meeting, Peter Day, president of the expressways committee of the Glendale Advancement Association, presented a petition signed by 241 area residents objecting to the North-South Expressway's trajectory through the municipality.

Under the proposed plan, the North-South Expressway was to enter Glendale west of North Port Washington Road near North 6th and 7th Streets, pass over the Milwaukee River, through the east side of Lincoln Park, and under the North Western Railroad to connect with the proposed Highway 141 near Lexington Boulevard. Residents objected strongly, particularly to the effect on Lincoln Park. Calling the plan an "invasion" of Lincoln Park, Day lamented that it would disrupt the Lincoln Park Golf Course, one of the few public golf courses in Milwaukee County, and charged that the expressway system was being planned with a "very casual attitude toward parks," in general.⁷⁹ Day further stated that the route would destroy a beautiful and valuable residential area and inhibit the growth of industrial areas by curving around them. Glendale Alderman Lloyd A. Sweeny, meanwhile, suggested running the North-South Expressway above Port Washington Road as an elevated, but Wildschut explained that the cost would be prohibitive. To create adequate foundations for an elevated structure, sewers, water mains, and utility lines would

⁷⁹ "250 Glendale Residents Protest Expressway Site," 12 April 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550412&id=zGsjAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=rSMEAAAIBAJ&pg=7210,6176729>, accessed 24 November 2014.

have to be moved, he said. He further downplayed the impact on the City of Glendale, noting that it would be four to five years before any major construction would begin.⁸⁰

The City of Glendale's counter proposal was relatively simple: shift the route eastward. The Glendale Common Council voted unanimously in June of that year to amend the North-South Expressway's trajectory to parallel Port Washington Road on the east side of the street, and run partly below grade and partly at surface level. Near the north end of Glendale, it would curve closer to the eastern edge of Lincoln Park, in order to preserve as much green space as possible. Glendale's Common Council did not stand alone in advocating for the change. Mayor Gerald J. Kenehan concurred with the Common Council, and spoke for the city at the expressway commission hearings. Like his counterpart in West Milwaukee, he did not oppose the expressway system as a whole, but a segment of the section that ran through Glendale.⁸¹

In contrast to Milwaukee, West Milwaukee, and Glendale, two suburban communities in western Milwaukee County offered objections to the General Plan that concerned not where the routes were to run, but where they did not run. At that time, western Milwaukee County was experiencing significant population and business growth, meaning higher traffic counts. As a result, both West Allis and Wauwatosa felt that the proposal for the West Expressway was insufficient, and wanted it extended farther through their communities.

From a population of 13,745 in 1920 and 34,671 in 1930,⁸² West Allis had grown to 42,959 residents by 1950, making it the seventh-largest city in Wisconsin.⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ "Glendale Presents New X-Way Route," 22 June 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19550622&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 29 November 2014.

⁸² Gurda, 248.

⁸³ John McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 171.

It was also home to Allis-Chalmers, a major manufacturer and employer. Like Milwaukee under Mayor Zeidler, West Allis sought to annex new land as it grew. When two large manufacturers announced in 1950 their intention to locate plants in the Town of Greenfield, West Allis attempted—unsuccessfully—to annex the land on which they were to build. The Village of West Milwaukee ultimately extended its municipal borders southwest to include the future General Electric and Hotpoint properties, but West Allis subsequently sought 13.5 square miles elsewhere in the Town of Greenfield, just to keep Milwaukee from acquiring it during the metropolitan area's city-suburb annexation war in the 1950s.⁸⁴

Wauwatosa, meanwhile, was also emerging. Initially settled in 1837, Wauwatosa incorporated as a village in 1882 and as a city in 1897, beginning as an industrial community along the Menomonee River, with water from the river supplying power to local businesses. The Watertown Plank Road and Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad encouraged additional growth.⁸⁵ By the 1920s, it gained a reputation as a bedroom community of Milwaukee.⁸⁶ As Milwaukee expanded westward during the 1920s, Wauwatosa also expanded, annexing land near Blue Mound Road, south of the original village.⁸⁷

It grew substantially in the first half of the 20th century, from a population of 3,346 in 1910 to 21,194 in 1930.⁸⁸ Feeling threatened by Milwaukee during the larger city's postwar annexation campaign, many Town of Wauwatosa residents felt inclined to join the city of Wauwatosa. In 1953, Wauwatosa successfully annexed 8.5 square

⁸⁴ McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 176, 182.

⁸⁵ Gurda, 187.

⁸⁶ William Janz, "Tosa Battled to Keep Above and in Water," 6 July 1963, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19630706&id=J_ojAAAAIBAJ&sjid=mxAEAA_AAIBAJ&pg=959,1471207, accessed 30 November 2014.

⁸⁷ McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 75.

⁸⁸ Gurda, 248.

miles of the Town, including the site for what is now Mayfair Mall.⁸⁹ Partly due to the annexation, Wauwatosa's population increased by 60% from 1950-1954, from 33,324 to 53,200.⁹⁰

Wauwatosa disagreed not with the route selection for the West Expressway, but with the fact the route did not extend farther north. Under the County's initial proposal, the West Expressway was to enter Wauwatosa near Blue Mound Road and run generally northwest toward Highway 100, terminating south of West North Avenue. Mayor William B. Knuese believed the route was too short and should continue to a point beyond West Hampton Avenue.⁹¹ Predicting increased traffic on and near Highway 100, Wauwatosa traffic consultant George Barton stated the extended West Expressway would be necessary between 1968 and 1975. Mayor Knuese agreed and urged the Expressway Commission to extend the route based on his concern that in the future, higher costs of right-of-way acquisition might make costs prohibitive. To justify his argument, he cited the large residential, industrial, and commercial developments north of North Avenue.

West Allis had similar reasoning for wanting the West Expressway to continue farther through its territory. Under the General Plan, the West Expressway was to terminate near National Avenue,⁹² but the West Allis Common Council favored extending it as far as West Oklahoma Avenue, the southern boundary of the suburb. Fred Sawyer defended the County's proposal, contending that traffic counts did not

⁸⁹ McCarthy, *Making Milwaukee Mightier*, 192.

⁹⁰ William Janz, "Tosa Battled to Keep Above and in Water," 6 July 1963, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19630706&id=J_ojAAAAIABAJ&sjid=mxAEAA_AABAJ&pg=959,1471207, accessed 30 November 2014.

⁹¹ The General Plan actually included that route, but as a possible addition after 1980. Knuese wanted it built sooner.

⁹² Although a 20 June 1955 *Milwaukee Journal* article cited West Schlinger Avenue as the southern terminus of the West Expressway, the General Plan actually extended it to National Avenue. This was reported in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* on 25 February 1955, and verified by the map of the proposed system included in this chapter.

warrant building the route so far south. Instead, it was to be built in such a way as to allow future extensions. Mayor Arnold Klentz and City Attorney George Schmus asserted, however, that Highway 100 was already overloaded in that area, and police encountered difficulty managing weekend traffic along the thoroughfare.⁹³

The Milwaukee County Parks Commission objected to aspects of the General Plan as well, due to the fact that it would have an adverse impact on several parks within the Milwaukee County Parks System. It was Parks Commission President Walter Bender's opinion that the Parks Commission and the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission should cooperate but interfere as little as possible in each other's business.⁹⁴ He also agreed with the Wisconsin Highway Commission's position that more could be accomplished through informal conferences between the Parks and Expressway Commissions than through formal hearings,⁹⁵ although like local governments, the Parks Commission did hold a joint meeting with the County Highway Commission in June 1955.

The Parks Commission's concerns centered around the potential loss of parks land at numerous sites: Lincoln Park, which as already discussed would be affected by the North-South Expressway; Washington and Jackson Parks, which were to be affected by extensions of the 44th Street Expressway; Wilson Park, a portion which would have been affected by the debated South 16th-20th Street segment of the North-South Expressway; Red Arrow Park,⁹⁶ which was to be entirely consumed by the North-South Expressway; Currie Park and the Menomonee River Parkway, which

⁹³ "Hear Express Route Critics," 20 June 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550620&id=bzEoAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=0CMEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=7196,2346198>, accessed 30 November 2014.

⁹⁴ Letter from Bender to County Expressway Commission Chairman Elliot Fitch, 18 May 1955, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

⁹⁵ Letter from Bender to State Highway Commission, 7 June 1955, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

⁹⁶ At that time, Red Arrow Park was located near North 10th Street and West Wisconsin Avenue.

were endangered by potential extensions of the West Expressway; and the new Milwaukee County Zoo site, affected by the East-West and West Expressways. The Commission lobbied strongly for adjustments to the proposed routes in an effort to preserve as much parkland as possible. Furthermore, the Parks Commission demanded reimbursement for lost land and insisted that it receive compensatory land, in order to replace land lost to the new freeways with parks elsewhere within its jurisdiction.

Along with the City of Glendale, the Parks Commission disagreed with the placement of the North-South Expressway through Lincoln Park. Although Glendale residents were somewhat divided on the expressway routing issue, Glendale's government opposed it, partly because it would take about 400 feet at the northwest corner of the park, including the tip of the lagoon,⁹⁷ as well as four holes at the Lincoln Park Golf Course. In total, Lincoln Park was to lose over 20 of 309.3 acres, an area equal to about 7% of the park's total land. The effect on Wilson Park was to be even greater, with the Expressway consuming 14.80 acres, or 19%, of the 78.5-acre park.

At the same time, the Parks Commission anticipated significant damages to Washington and Lincoln Parks from the 44th Street/Northwest Expressway. Under the General Plan, the expressway was to take 27.65 acres, or 13%, of Washington Park's land area. Jackson Park, on the South Side, was to lose a similar proportion, 14.76 or about 12% of its land area.⁹⁸ The land the expressway was to take at Jackson Park included part of a wooded area near South 43rd Street, along with land adjoining a school in the southwestern corner of the park, at 43rd Street and West Forest Home

⁹⁷ "Memorandum as to the Effect of Present Expressway Plans on Milwaukee County Parks and Parkways," undated, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

⁹⁸ "Effect of Expressway on Milwaukee County Park Lands," Milwaukee County Parks Commission, 25 April 2014, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

Avenue. Taking that land, wrote Parks Commission landscape architect Howard Gregg, might require giving that school other land in compensation. There were limited alternatives to the route, though. Construction on the west side of South 43rd Street was an option; however, Gregg implied a reluctance to do so, noting the west side of the street had some "nice homes."⁹⁹

Expressway placement near the new Milwaukee County Zoo site, on Milwaukee's Far West Side, also concerned commission members. The North-South and East-West Expressways had the potential to create more traffic in that area, wrote Parks Commission General Manager Alfred Boerner.¹⁰⁰ Traffic layouts along the West Expressway, including exits at either Blue Mound Road or Wisconsin Avenue, were likely to make pedestrian and auto access to the Zoo more difficult. Boerner also opposed taking Zoo land for the Expressway because it was needed for parking.¹⁰¹

At the June 1955 Expressway Commission hearing on damage to the park system, Commission President Walter Bender presented his concerns and detailed the parks and property to be lost. He also emphasized his point that the park system should receive compensatory land for acres lost to expressway construction. Bender and the Parks Commission members further pledged to work together to minimize damage to the parks. Speaking for the Expressway Commission, Elliot Fitch said his agency's objective was to do the least amount of damage possible to the parks.

⁹⁹ Parks Commission Landscape Architect Howard Gregg, "Report on the Effects of the Proposed Milwaukee County Expressway System on County Park and Parkway Development," May 1955, Box 5, Folder 5, Bender Papers.

¹⁰⁰ Boerner passed away on Saturday, June 18, 1955. Commission member Jerome Dretzka subsequently assumed his responsibilities as interim General Manager. Walter Bender remained President of the Parks Commission. It was during this time that the Parks Commission began to lobby for adjustments to the freeway routes. See "Dretzka Appointed Park System Chief," 22 June 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19550622&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 29 November 2014.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Alfred Boerner to the Parks Commission, 3 March 2014, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

Concerned about the possible post-1980 extension of the West Expressway through Wauwatosa, Bender advocated for a modification of the potential future route to preserve the Currie Park Golf Course and Menomonee River Parkway.

Recognizing that some land might be lost to the West Expressway, Bender stated he supported acquiring new land to offset those losses. He specifically recommended purchasing undeveloped land south of Currie Park. Expressway Commission member Robert Stevenson countered that post-1980 extensions fell outside of the Expressway Commission's purview, because it was charged with the specific task of planning an expressway system to be built *before* 1980. Thus, he said there was no need to consider extensions or modifications to them yet.

Yet Bender was not just concerned about expressways to be built or extended after 1980. He was equally concerned about more immediate damage to other parks in the system. Jackson, Lincoln, and Washington Parks, in particular, were top priorities. Land losses at Wilson Park and a yet-undeveloped park on the Northwest Side also concerned him. In regard to the southern segment of the 44th Street Expressway, Bender supported a slight westward shift to preserve a wooded area in Jackson Park and reduce the impact on a school in the southwest corner of the park. His solution at Wilson Park was similar: move the southern terminus of the North-South Expressway slightly west, to preserve the vista of the lagoon.

Two of his other recommendations for preserving park properties included not only route modifications, but new land acquisitions as well. He directly addressed Alfred Boerner's concerns about taking land at the new zoo site at the meeting by suggesting the purchase of additional property. Bender further recommended adjusting one lane of the nearby freeway interchange.¹⁰² For Lincoln Park, Bender's supported Glendale's

¹⁰² The interchange he referred to was the intersection of the East-West Expressway, now I-94, and the

position that the North-South Expressway needed to be moved eastward. He noted the loss of the nine-hole golf course at the park but proposed buying land north of the Northwest Railroad for a golf course expansion.¹⁰³

His goal of replacing lost land fit into the Park Commission's overall plans. As the metropolitan area's population grew, the Commission sought to expand the amount of public green space and intended to acquire additional park land in several areas elsewhere in County. However, growth in Milwaukee County was already so rapid that Bender was concerned that even if the Parks Commission received compensation for lost land, gaining new land might be difficult. Thus, expressway construction and the land that the parks were to potentially lose set back the Park Commission's long-term plans. For that reason, he argued the Commission should be given new land right away. In particular, the undeveloped land south of Currie Park interested him because it was available "at a reasonable price."¹⁰⁴ Meanwhile, the County Board allocated \$65,000 to the Parks Commission for additional land purchases: four acres on the west bank of the Milwaukee River between West Green Tree and Good Hope Roads, 36 acres along the Root River east of Highway 100 and north of West Coldspring Road, and several lots along Lincoln Creek.¹⁰⁵

Even with the additional funds for land acquisition, the Park Commission had reservations about expressway program's impact on the park system. After the County Board finalized the routes proposed in the General Plan, the Commission still lobbied to minimize losses. Bender disagreed with one of the Expressway Commission

West Expressway, now U.S. Hwy 45.

¹⁰³ "Least Possible Damage to Parks, Freeway Goal," 29 June 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19550629&id=eDEoAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=0CMEAAAIIBAJ&pg=7238,6504360>, accessed 4 December 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Letter from Bender to Parks Commission member Jerome Dretzka, 1 July 1955, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

¹⁰⁵ "\$6,850,000 Is Approved for First Freeway Work," 22 June 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=jvrRlaHg2sAC&dat=19550622&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 5 December 2014.

members, Robert Stevenson, who stated that some of the expressway routes were tentative and not to be constructed for a long time, thereby downplaying the need for immediate compensation to the Park Commission. Bender simply felt there should be a greater sense of urgency.¹⁰⁶ Later that year, the Park Commission formally asked the County Board to compensate the Park Commission in its planned budget for the expressway system and argued that the money should come from expressway funds.¹⁰⁷ After the Board approved the final routes, the Parks Commission maintained its position and assured the Board it did not want to obstruct expressway construction by delaying budget decisions. The Commission pledged not to bring modification requests directly to the Board as long as the Board did not foreclose on the Park Commission's ability to hold informal conferences with the Expressway Commission to discuss modifications, as the two commissions pledged to do at the time of the June 1955 hearings. In other words, the Park Commission wanted continued flexibility.¹⁰⁸

Continued Planning

After the June hearings, the State Highway Commission studied the recommendations made by the units of local government which had presented concerns about the General Plan and the freeway routes it proposed. Ultimately, it accepted the arguments against the 16th Street plan and recommended a freeway route along South 6th Street. County Supervisor Bert Busby objected to changes, as did Mayor Zeidler. However, Zeidler expressed a view that the County Board's Highways

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Bender to Parks Commission member Jerome Dretzka, 1 July 1955, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from the Milwaukee County Park Commission to the Milwaukee County Board, 24 October 1955, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from Bender to Milwaukee County Board, 23 January 1956, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

Committee should accept the changes as long as the right to amend was guaranteed through the Expressway Commission.

In the opinion of Corporation Counsel C. Stanley Perry, the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission actually did have authority to make minor changes to accommodate engineering problems but could not make large-scale changes or alter the selected routes independently. Major changes needed to originate with the Expressway Commission, but required County Board approval. Additionally, because the Milwaukee County Board had jurisdiction over funding the expressway system, it had final control of the construction program. The only route the County Board did not have jurisdiction to change, stated Perry, was the East-West Expressway, because its construction was already underway when the County assumed planning responsibility from the City of Milwaukee.¹⁰⁹

The State Highway Commission proposed a series of other modifications, and the County Board ultimately incorporated those modifications into its revised plan for the expressway system. The Board approved that plan unanimously on November 16, 1955. Even Supervisor Busby, who objected to shifting the 16th Street route of the North-South Expressway eastward because he feared doing so might hasten the need for constructing the 44th Street Expressway through his native Village of West Milwaukee, voted for the plan, stating his confidence that the State Expressway Commission would revisit the issue.¹¹⁰

As noted, one of the most significant changes was to the southern leg of the North-South Expressway. The Board did not fix the Expressway's exact alignment,

¹⁰⁹ "Vote New Delay on X-Way Plans," 28 October 1955, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19551028&id=4G1QAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=QBAAEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=4006,4132549>, accessed 15 November 2014

¹¹⁰ "County OK's Revised Path for Freeways," 16 November 1955, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=jvrRlaHg2sAC&dat=19551116&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 30 November 2014.

but in keeping with the State Highway Commission's recommendation, established its placement closer to South 6th Street, with the intention of hiring another consulting firm to determine a precise alignment. The Board's action did fix the other freeway routes. In western Milwaukee County, the Board extended the West Expressway in both directions. Under the revision, it would continue southward to West Beloit Road and north to an interchange in Granville, near the intersection of West Appleton Avenue and West Mill Road. On the South Side, the Board extended the Howard Avenue Expressway, as well.

In regard to funding, the State Highway Commission indicated that \$10 million more could be spent on expressway construction in 1956 and was to include an additional \$2 million in the county budget for right-of-way acquisition for routes to be built two to five years into the future. The rationale for making those purchases so far in advance was similar the Park Commissioners' reasoning for wanting immediate compensation for lost park land: vacant lots were relatively inexpensive, but after they were built on, acquiring land for a right-of-way would be much more expensive. The County was also to receive an increased share of federal funds.

The County Board made other decisions related to expressway construction at that time. One important decision was a significant increase in the number of expressway engineering and technical staff. The County already had ten expressway staff members, but the Board approved hiring an additional 16 individuals. In regard to funding, the Board approved a resolution to pay the City of Milwaukee \$241,143.25 as the first of ten equal installments payments to reimburse it for costs it incurred in expressway construction.

The decision to approve the revised expressway plan was very much a turning point in the construction of the County-wide system. By doing so, local government

positioned itself to undertake, in a far more comprehensive way and with the full support of state government, the massive infrastructure improvement project that the City of Milwaukee had begun to plan nearly a decade earlier. As County Supervisor Richard J. White Jr. observed, "I think the board has made history."¹¹¹ Expressway Commission Chairman Elliot Fitch also expressed relief that the action had been passed and indicated that he was happy about unanimous approval.

With the final routes established, the County could move forward with right-of-way acquisition, grading, and actual construction. In 1956, the U.S. Congress passed the Interstate Highway Act, involving the federal government in the construction of expressways between cities as well as within the cities which had already started their own construction projects. By 1957, Milwaukee's system began to be linked to that national program, particularly as federal highway aid increased. Within a few years, at the national level, public opinion also shifted, from a general enthusiasm toward the massive road building projects, to a skepticism and even opposition to them, especially in metropolitan areas. In Milwaukee, planners and elected officials were to face strong objections to several routes, including the North Avenue Expressway, and another route, along the lakefront, to be added to the expressway building program after the federal government became more involved.

Yet at the end of 1955, Milwaukee could boast that it had formulated a comprehensive plan for relieving congestion and linking far-flung areas of the metropolitan area. Government bodies, specifically, the City of Milwaukee, followed by Milwaukee County, consulted expert engineers and planners, sought public opinion, collaborated with suburban governmental bodies, and when they could not

¹¹¹ Ibid.

agree among themselves, followed the recommendations of the State Highway Commission. That process is important to understand.

The engineers who proposed the General Plan were private consultants, who had been retained by the County to make specific recommendations that the County was not prepared to make. When the City of Milwaukee, the Milwaukee County Park Commission, and several suburbs challenged their recommendations, the consultants defended their assertions, which were based on months of work. The Expressway Commission and several elected officials, notably Mayor Zeidler, also maintained that the County should follow their recommendations. One can raise several questions as to why. Did those elected officials simply believe the consultants made the correct recommendations, and those objecting lacked foresight, or a comprehensive understanding of the matter? Or did the objectors have only self-interest in mind, with less concern about the construction program as a whole? Certainly, officials and constituents in Glendale and West Milwaukee were very concerned about the impact of the expressway on their relatively small communities. The Mitchell Street Advancement Association was concerned about the North-South Expressway's impact on business. The Parks Commission was concerned about the effect of construction on properties within its jurisdiction, but those park properties served the general public, offering open space, recreational opportunities, and aesthetic value. All of those considerations, while disparate, were important, certainly in the minds of the substantial number of people expressing them. Even so, the Expressway Commission maintained that its consultants' recommendations were superior to the proposed alternatives, primarily in regard to the southern leg of the North-South Expressway, and to an extent, the extensions of the West Expressway in Wauwatosa and West Allis.

Such disparity of thought, between the Expressway Commission and its consulting engineers, and planning bodies such as the Milwaukee Board of Land Commissioners, was not uncommon at the time. As historian Mark Rose notes, there was general agreement in the business and political community in favor of urban renewal and traffic relief, and that expressway construction served that end. However, leaders were effectively divided into two camps: engineers and truck operators on one side, and urban planners on the other.¹¹² The engineers generally favored direct route placements, while planners wanted to use expressways to tie different areas together and serve as barriers between industrial, commercial, and residential districts. Those different lines of thought were especially evident in Milwaukee in the debate between the 6th and 16th Street routes. Rose argues that after 1950, engineers generally exerted greater influence on the policy makers, citing such factors as cost, efficiency, and traffic flow.¹¹³

In Milwaukee, though, that was not the case. The County Board, at the urging of the State Highway Commission, changed plans and factored in the concerns of the affected municipalities. Of course, the ability of those municipalities to react, even negatively, to the Expressway Commission's plans had been built into the process. At least through 1955, local governments had the opportunity to object to planned routes and have their objections heard.

After the hearings concluded and counter-proposals were evaluated, the County still moved forward with construction, for a relatively short time, under its own authority, and later with greater oversight from the state and federal

¹¹² Mark H. Rose, *Interstate: Express Highway Politics, 1941-1956* (Lawrence, KS: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), 56.

¹¹³ Rose, 56.

governments. After that happened, there was still significant debate and discussion. That narrative will be explored in the concluding chapter of this thesis.



Figure 4: A view toward downtown from a pedestrian bridge over I-43 at West Warnimont Avenue. Photo by Greg Dickenson, 2013.

Chapter 3

Referendum and Revolt: Anti-Freeway Sentiment, Route Completion, and an End to Expressway Construction in Milwaukee

The first two chapters of this thesis discussed the background of the expressway system in Milwaukee County, the Origin-Destination Survey and subsequent studies that recommended specific routes, and the planning of those routes. The thesis also discussed the views of Milwaukee's elected leaders, the perspectives of planning engineers, and concerns raised by local businesses and residents. The focus of those chapters has been on route selection and the reasons why those routes were selected.

The third and final chapter of this thesis will shift the discussion from route selection to the implications of those decisions and the impact on the community. It will consider the large-scale impact on the Milwaukee metropolitan area, such as the loss of homes in areas where new rights-of-way were created and the role expressway construction had on encouraging suburbanization and sprawl in southeast Wisconsin. This discussion will necessarily entail the effect the U.S. Interstate Highway Act had on planners' decision making, and how some routes were modified to gain federal highway funding. Of particular interest are the disproportionate impact of displacement due to right-of-way acquisition on the African American community and citizen opposition to several routes, notably the North Avenue Expressway¹ and a proposed extension of the harbor bridge that was to run north of the harbor along the shore of Lake Michigan.²

¹ Also known as the Park West Freeway, the land for this route was cleared but the actual project was abandoned.

² Patricia House offers a detailed study of displacement caused by expressway construction. See Patricia A. House, *Families Displaced by Expressway Development: A Geographical Study of Relocation in Milwaukee* (M.S. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1972).

Chapter Three also attempts to link together several other threads in the larger story of expressway construction in Milwaukee and nationwide. One of those threads is the "expressway revolts" that took place in numerous cities, including Milwaukee.³ In doing so, it places the Milwaukee freeway construction narrative alongside other cities with similar transportation history narratives. Another thread is the suburban sprawl encouraged by expressway construction in metropolitan areas. As noted in Chapter Two, historians such as Kathleen Tobin have linked expressway construction to suburbanization, but other factors including sustained population growth, abundant land, and the desegregation of public schools in 1954 brought enabled suburban growth even before expressway construction began in Milwaukee and elsewhere. This chapter seeks to place Milwaukee within that broader national context while highlighting factors that differentiated it from other cities.

Continued Planning

After the County Board approved the final routes, the Expressway Commission continued to tweak specific expressway locations at the behest of other governmental bodies and local residents. The Northwest Expressway received particular attention as both residents and the Milwaukee County Park Commission expressed objections to its trajectory. The Park Commission and Expressway Commission hit a particular point of concern in early 1956 over the Expressway's placement through Washington Park.

Plans to begin construction announced in the media drew the Park Commission's attention because the body worried about the loss of parkland and

³ Citizen opposition to large scale housing demolition in urban areas, forced relocation of residents, and environmental impact beginning in the late 1950s resulted in grassroots movements, and later, political and legal challenges, against constructing expressways through large cities. See Raymond Mohl, "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities," *Journal of Urban History* 30 (2004): 674-706.

wanted a definite statement of construction plans. Routing of the expressway called for taking the Milwaukee County Zoo's pump and well house,⁴ which the Expressway Commission considered more economical to replace than private property. The original Ammann & Whitney study actually took 20.5 acres of park property and over six acres of playground space, at a cost of \$3.5 million. Parks Commission Chairman Walter Bender preferred to protect as many acres of park land as possible. He argued Washington Park served a densely populated neighborhood, and even without plans for the Stadium Freeway/Northwest Expressway to be built through the park, the amount of public green space available in that area of Milwaukee's West Side was below generally accepted national standards.

Yet Bender's priority of protecting that land came conflict with the preferences of the Expressway Commission. Simply stated, the Expressway Commission preferred to use park acres for financial reasons. It generally followed the Ammann and Whitney proposal and intended to use North 47th Street west of the park as a feeder street. Their rationale was that by using park land, the Commission could save money by not purchasing houses west of the park, given that many of those houses were "very fine homes."⁵

Several alternative routes also existed to reduce the amount of park land used, but at least two of them increased costs measurably. One alternative was to eliminate the Vliet Street police station and route the expressway through its property and acquire a larger number of private homes, but cost estimates ranged from \$2-\$6.4 million, and the plan would still take three acres of the park. Another plan to go

⁴ The Milwaukee County Zoo was located in Washington Park at that time. As noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the County was in the process of relocating the Zoo to its present Far West Side location, near the intersection of West Blue Mound Road and Mayfair Road/Hwy 100.

⁵ Meeting Minutes of Milwaukee County Expressway Commission and Milwaukee County Park Commission, 16 February 1956, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

around the Vliet Street police station⁶ and outside the park brought the cost of construction to \$5.3 million.⁷

Despite those alternatives, the Expressway Commission and Milwaukee County Board routed the Northwest Expressway along the western edge of Washington Park.⁸ The Park Commission remained frustrated by the Expressway Commission throughout the remaining portion of the decade, as the Expressway Commission continuously declined to state the Park Commission's right to receive reimbursement for lost land taken for expressway construction.⁹ Even so, the Expressway Commission did promise in late 1959 it was making "a real effort" to compensate the Park Commission.¹⁰

The Expressway Commission did prove willing to adjust other sections of the Northwest Expressway as a cost saving measure. Residents and homeowners on Milwaukee's Northwest Side whose homes were in the general path of the route complained to their city- and county-level elected officials that because the definite location of the Expressway had not been decided, they were uncertain of the future of their properties. Many doubted whether they should make any home improvements, while others experienced difficulties selling their houses.¹¹

In October 1956, the Commission recommended shortening the Northwest Expressway by one mile, terminating the route at North 60th and West Burleigh

⁶ Located at North 47th Street and West Vliet Street.

⁷ Meeting Minutes of Milwaukee County Expressway Commission and Milwaukee County Park Commission, 16 February 1956, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

⁸ "Hearing on X-Way Shift Asked," 3 October 1956, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19561003&id=zktQAAAIAIAJ&sjid=fQ8EAAAIAIAJ&pg=5119,1089192>, accessed 25 January 2015.

⁹ Letter from Bender to Howard Gregg, 3 July 1957, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

¹⁰ Letter from Gregg to all members of the Park Commission, 5 November 1959, Box 5, Folder 8, Bender Papers.

¹¹ "Hearing on X-Way Shift Asked," 3 October 1956, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19561003&id=zktQAAAIAIAJ&sjid=fQ8EAAAIAIAJ&pg=5119,1089192>, accessed 25 January 2015.

Streets, rather than at Capitol Drive and Appleton Avenue. The Commission cited traffic studies showing a northward extension of the West Expressway through Wauwatosa and the former Town of Granville¹² and plans to improve West Fond du Lac Avenue provided sufficient traffic arteries for a number of years. By shortening the Northwest Expressway, the Commission addressed two other problems. First, it eliminated a route planned to run through a cemetery. Second, it prevented the razing of a number of new homes. County Board Chairman Lawrence Timmerman, who lived in the affected area, advocated a public hearing on the matter but supported the change.¹³ The City of Milwaukee, meanwhile, proposed ending the Northwest Expressway at Fond du Lac Avenue, which was being improved as part of a city-state project. In December 1956, after the hearing took place, the County Board voted 22-1 in favor of the shortened route and recommended the City approach the Expressway Commission directly about its own proposal.¹⁴

Planning and construction for other routes continued with minimal debate. By October 1956, the Board approved the route of the Northwest Expressway from the Stadium Interchange to West Lloyd Street, the North-South Expressway from West Keefe Avenue to West Lexington Boulevard in Glendale, and the East-West Expressway from North 16th Street to Hawley Road, and prepared to extend the East-West Expressway west to the Waukesha County line. The cost for the three approved projects totaled \$37.8 million, in 1950s figures.¹⁵ Milwaukee County also

¹² The Town of Granville consolidated into Milwaukee in 1956.

¹³ "Talks Okayed on Plans to Shorten Expressway," 3 October 1956, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19561003&id=IuJQAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=cCUEAAAIIBAJ&pg=7190,966510>, accessed 25 January 2015.

¹⁴ "OK Change for Freeway: County Board Acts," 21 December 1956, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19561221&id=8E41AAAAIIBAJ&sjid=ZH4EAAAIIBAJ&pg=7338,169801>, accessed 25 January 2015.

¹⁵ Lloyd Gladfelter, "Green Light Predicted for Expressway Work," 8 October 1956, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19561008&id=ox8aAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=cCUEAAAIIBAJ&pg=6752,4299843>, accessed 31 January 2015.

aggressively sought more funding for the construction projects, and attempted to get several of Milwaukee's expressways designated as interstate highways under the Interstate Highway Act in order to obtain that funding.

The County's push to include several routes in the Interstate System is notable. Only a few years earlier, Mayor Frank Zeidler supported turning the city's expressway system over to Milwaukee County partially to better facilitate regional planning, and in large part because of the enormous costs city government had to incur. Now, Milwaukee County wanted to involve not just the state, but the federal government, to obtain funding for the \$300 million-plus project.

The Interstate Highway Act

At this juncture, it is important to briefly discuss the Interstate Highway Act and some of its implications. Historians have attached passage of the Act to the administration of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and indeed, he championed its passage. Yet the bill came about after a half century of increasing federal involvement in highways. The concept, a national road network connecting major metropolitan areas, was not new. Federal involvement began around the turn of the century and accelerated during the 1920s and again in the postwar era. The bill was a culmination of federal initiatives designed to improve intercity and interstate commerce, facilitate freer movement of people and goods, and provide a network of superhighways that could be used for national defense purposes.

The evolution of federal highway involvement paralleled the growth in usage of the personal automobile. In Milwaukee, horses outnumbered cars until 1916. Ten years later, the number of cars exceeded 100,000. That figure equaled more than 20%

of all cars in Wisconsin.¹⁶ At the national level, the trend was the same. In 1895, there were only four registered automobiles in the entire United States. Five years later, there were still only 8,000. By 1910, there were 458,000.¹⁷ That figure increased to 1.25 registered passenger cars in 1913. During that same time frame, from the mid-1890s through first decade-and-a-half of the 20th century, several major auto manufacturers also organized. Ransom Olds developed a system of mass production that produced 1,500 Oldsmobiles in 1901. They cost about \$650 each, compared to a \$500 purchase price and \$180 in annual upkeep expenses for a horse and buggy. Henry Ford's efficiencies soon placed his company in the lead among automakers, with Model T sales reaching almost 15,000 in 1907. Buick and Cadillac also organized during that decade, in 1902.¹⁸

Such a great increase in the number of cars prompted a push for more and better maintained roads. However, the drive to improve public roads actually predated the automobile, as bicyclists lobbied for improvements. New York City first paved some of its streets with asphalt in the 1870s, and Portland cement was introduced in 1894.¹⁹ Even so, at the beginning of the 20th century, few roads in the United States were paved. Henry Moon places the number of paved roads in 1904 at 7%.²⁰ Part of the reason is that prior to the turn of the century, many American leaders did not see road construction or maintenance as falling within the purview of the federal government, thus leaving it to state and local government, and in some cases, the private sector.

¹⁶ John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 251.

¹⁷ Henry Moon, *The Interstate Highway System*, (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Geographers, 1994), 2.

¹⁸ Thomas L. Karnes, *Asphalt and Politics: A History of the American Highway System* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 11.

¹⁹ Karnes, 10.

²⁰ Moon 3.

During the colonial era, individual towns levied taxes to maintain their own streets and occasionally roads between towns. Regular mail service beginning in 1673 established a trail to become known as the Old Boston Post Road. Pennsylvania's Lancaster Turnpike, opened in 1794, was an early toll road designed and operated by a private entity. Officials in early America with a strict constructionist view of the Constitution believed federal expenditures for road building were unconstitutional, although in 1806 Thomas Jefferson authorized federal funding for an early national road in Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, called the Cumberland Road. By the time it reached Illinois in 1835, the federal government no longer provided funding. For most of the rest of the 19th century, the government placed a greater emphasis on railroads and clearing rocks and logs from waterways in western states.²¹

In the early 1900s, a "Good Roads" citizens' movement advocated for better highways. By 1915, 39 states had some kind of active "good roads" organization. Both major political parties also included better roads in their platforms. The cause drew particular support from Alabama Senator John Hollis Bankhead, who justified greater federal involvement in roadbuilding with the constitutional provision for postal roads. In 1916, Congress passed a version of one of his bills, known as the Federal Highway Act.²² Henry Moon cites the bill, officially called the Federal-Aid Road Act of 1916, as the beginning of congressional interest in a national highway network. The bill included a formula for providing matching federal funds for local and state highway projects. To generate funds to match the new federal aid, in 1919 Oregon became the first state to levy a gas tax. Most other states and the District of Columbia followed the precedent within ten years.

²¹ Karnes, 9.

²² Karnes, 15.

Amendments to the bill further expanded the role of the federal government. An amendment in 1921 required states to designate interstate and inter-county highways to be deemed eligible for federal aid. Another amendment in 1928 expended federal aid to improve the widest streets in urban areas with populations over 2,500. Subsequent legislation further increased federal involvement. The Emergency Relief and Recovery Act of 1932 funded rural-to-urban feeder roads, while the National Industrial Recovery Act funded highways actually passing through cities. The Transportation Act of 1940 established a federal transportation policy and funded federal transportation research. A federal report, prompted by a meeting in 1935 between President Franklin Roosevelt and Bureau of Public Roads²³ officials and published in 1939, called for a national highway network for both national defense and to meet peacetime traffic needs. However, World War II halted most public policy discussion on the issue for several years.²⁴ In Europe, major national highways had been underway for years; Italy began a road network in 1924, financed largely by the private sector. Adolf Hitler borrowed their concept of superhighways and began building the *Autobahn* in 1934.²⁵

The Interstate Highway Act had its origin in this context. Another highways report led to the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944. Bureau of Public Roads Commissioner Thomas MacDonald was a strong supporter.²⁶ The Act proposed a new network of controlled access highways connecting large cities and industrial centers but did not provide dedicated funding. Even so, several interest groups continued to push for highway construction. Among them were automobile manufacturers, oil companies, trucking companies, the Teamsters Union, highway engineers, and state

²³ Later called the Public Roads Administration.

²⁴ Moon, 7.

²⁵ Karnes, 82.

²⁶ Rose, 30.

highway departments. The Ford Motor Company went as far as publishing a book calling for citizen involvement in advocating better roads. Those efforts culminated in Congress passing the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 and the Highway Revenue Act.²⁷ President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed them on June 29, 1956. These two bills differed from previous legislation and amendments because they both authorized a program and provided funding. Under the legislation, the federal government undertook a 90-10 formula, with the federal government paying for 90% of costs rather than the traditional 50% and states paying 10%. Increased gas taxes provided the majority of that funding.²⁸

The bills' passage corresponded with the ever-growing use of cars in the postwar era. They also had a strong national defense component, as good highways would be needed for population dispersal in the event of an atomic attack during the Cold War.²⁹ Furthermore, President Eisenhower had been concerned about the inefficiency of American roads since his experience participating in an army convoy in 1919 and admired the German *Autobahn*.

Passage of legislation which obtained revenue from a source other than the general budget secured a significantly greater level of funding for state and local road projects. The Interstate Highway Act likewise established a set of design standards, such as mandatory lane widths, vehicle weight restrictions, and elimination of at-grade highway crossings. It regulated elevation, curvature, gradient, and sight distance requirements, set speed limits based on topography, and provided uniform route numbering. For construction in urban areas, the Act mandated public hearings so that after planners made their initial proposals, residents gained the opportunity to

²⁷ The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 is popularly known as the Interstate Highway Act.

²⁸ Moon, 9.

²⁹ Tobin, 7.

exchange ideas on route placements. Specific planning details fell to the Bureau of Public Roads and state highway departments.³⁰

Interstate Designations in Milwaukee

As construction got underway in Milwaukee, the County faced mounting costs for engineering work, right-of-way acquisition, bridge structures, and other expenses. Specifically, the county needed to acquire apartments and several business properties along the south side of West Clybourn Street for the East-West Expressway, as well as additional land for the North-South and West Expressways. The funding formula used at that time forced the County to spend heavily; it would underwrite the much of the initial cost and receive reimbursement in the form of state and federal aid later. As a result, Milwaukee County Auditor Robert E. Boos feared the County would reach its debt limit by 1958 or 1959. A \$26 million grant for 1957 helped offset a large portion of the County's costs, but County highway commissioner Eugene Howard hoped for \$34 million for 1957 and \$30-35 million annually. State and federal aid at that point varied from project to project and amounted to 85-90% of the cost in most cases, but in some, only accounted for 50%.³¹ Including the Zoo Interchange, the long-term cost breakdown included \$42.3 million for the East-West Expressway alone and another \$7.8 million for the Northwest Expressway from the Stadium Interchange to West Lloyd Street.³²

A partial solution was to get a number of expressway routes included in the

³⁰ Moon, 16.

³¹ "State and US to Help in the Financing of 26 Million Dollars of County Projects," 16 January 1957, *Milwaukee Journal*, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19570116&id=w_ApAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=AiYEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6707,2562250, accessed 31 January 2015.

³² Lloyd Gladfelter, "Green Light Predicted for Expressway Work," 8 October 1956, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19561008&id=ox8aAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=cCUEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6752,4299843>, accessed 31 January 2015.

Interstate Highway System. Inclusion meant 90% federal aid for that project. In January 1957, the state expressway commission recommended that 6.4 additional miles of the Milwaukee expressway commission be designated as interstates. Those routes were: the North-South Expressway between the North Avenue and East-Expressways, the North Avenue between the Northwest and North-South Expressways, and the Northwest Expressway between North Avenue and the East-West Expressway. Some of those routes were never built, but the effort by state expressway engineer E.G. Plautz and the commission reflect a recognition at the state and local level of the need for greater financial assistance. The North-South Expressway from Layton Avenue to the East-West Expressway, the Howard Avenue Expressway between the North-South and West Expressways, and the East-West Expressway from North 13th Street to the Waukesha County line were already included in the Interstate System.³³

By the end of the year, several of the expressway routes received their official designation as part of I-94. That designation is still in place as of this writing. Interstate 94, running along U.S. Highway 41 from the Illinois state border to the Milwaukee County line, included the North-South Expressway as far north as the East-West Expressway and the East-Expressway from Downtown to the Waukesha County line and Madison. The southern half of the West Expressway and all of the south expressway were also designated as interstates, but were numbered later. Two expressways elsewhere in Wisconsin also received numbered designations at the same time as I-94.³⁴

³³ "Federal Bureau Asked to Add Six Miles of County Freeways to Interstate System," 16 January 1957, *Milwaukee Journal*, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19570116&id=w_ApAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=AiYEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=6707,2562250, accessed 31 January 2015.

³⁴ "4-and-6-Lane Expressways Get Numbers," 31 October 1957, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19571031&id=zF9QAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=w8EAA>

Changing Times

As the 1950s drew to a close, so did two important eras in Milwaukee's history. Citing fatigue and a recommendation from his physician that he not seek re-election, Mayor Frank Zeidler announced on October 30, 1959 that he would not run for a fourth term. Physical ailments had afflicted him for throughout his tenure, as he endured lung surgery and more than one viral infection during his time in office. Zeidler also cited the heavy workload of the mayor's position as a contributing factor in his decision.³⁵ With that announcement, the era of Milwaukee's Socialist governance ended.

For 38 of the 50 years between 1910 and 1960, a Socialist occupied the mayor's office. During that time, Milwaukee's Socialists played a prominent role in the city's governance. They elected three mayors (of which Zeidler was the last), a number of aldermen, county board representatives, and judges, and the first Socialist congressman in American history, Victor Berger.³⁶ Zeidler himself had to deal with a Common Council which did not always support his positions, but he was still re-elected with a margin of almost 100,000 votes in 1952 and received approximately 55% of the vote when challenged for re-election by Common Council President Milton McGuire in 1956.³⁷

Zeidler's decision not to seek re-election prompted Congressman Henry Reuss to run again for the mayor's office.³⁸ His opponent in the general election, State

[AAIBAJ&pg=7196.4900895](#), accessed 31 January 2015.

³⁵ "Zeidler 'Won't Run Again' Surprises Friends, Foes," 31 October 1959, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19591031&id=-nVQAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=aBAEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5335_5122588, accessed 10 February 2015.

³⁶ Gurda, 216.

³⁷ "Zeidler 'Won't Run Again' Surprises Friends, Foes," 31 October 1959, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19591031&id=-nVQAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=aBAEAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5335_5122588, accessed 10 February 2015.

³⁸ Reuss was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1954 but had run against Frank Zeidler for

Senator Henry Maier, was a fellow Democrat.³⁹ Both represented North Side wards. Maier was generally considered the underdog, but he eventually won the 1960 mayoral race with 57% of the vote. In that election, Maier received some of his strongest support on the South Side, particularly in Bay View and on the southwest side. Maier only narrowly defeated Reuss in two majority-African American aldermanic districts, even though they were in his own State Senate district. His stated priorities included urban renewal, downtown revitalization, industrial development, and traffic and mass transit.⁴⁰

The other era to come to a close was the expressway planning era. This transition was not necessarily tied to Mayor Zeidler's decision to leave office. Instead, it was the natural progression of the expressway program. The main routes were established in the middle part of the decade, and as the 1960s began, actual construction was well underway. Several routes were completed by the early and mid-1960s, and while additional projects such as the harbor bridge, Lake Freeway, and an extension of the Stadium Freeway north well into Ozaukee County received substantial consideration, the foundation had already been laid. An expressway system was not only planned for Milwaukee, but was actually being built, and further extensions or modifications were only an outgrowth of that General Plan for Expressways.

The challenges that elected leaders and planners subsequently faced were not initial planning issues or questions about how best to address traffic congestions, although debates about route placement did take place. Instead, the Milwaukee

Mayor in 1948.

³⁹ The position was officially nonpartisan and remains so in 2015.

⁴⁰ John W. Kole, "Henry Maier Crushes Reuss by 34,000," 6 April 1960, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=jvrRlaHg2sAC&dat=19600406&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 11 February 2015.

County Board and Expressway Commission confronted several technical and construction-related problems. They also faced real social problems. In the 1960s, residents began to object to the loss of property taken for expressway construction. Thousands were displaced, and historic neighborhoods were damaged or obliterated by superhighways which may have linked distant parts of the metropolitan area, but divided the local communities through which they passed.

Construction Challenges

One of the technical challenges planners needed to address was excess earth. The North-South Expressway was depressed below street level, which required significant excavation. This generated a great deal of soil that needed to be transported and deposited elsewhere. In 1961, the County Board Finance Committee voted 5-0 to recommend that the Park Commission, Expressway Commission, and County Executive be asked to explore and report on placing that excess earth at the lakefront marina.⁴¹ Subsequently, the Park Commission submitted a report. The Board responded by passing a resolution that directed the Park Commission to negotiate with successful bidders who wanted to use the dumpsite.⁴²

In building the Northwest Expressway, the County had a different use for excavated dirt. Because that route had to be elevated over the Menomonee Valley, construction crews needed extra soil to achieve a 3% grade between West State and Vliet Streets. Three percent was the maximum grade allowed. The soil excavated from the depressed 250 foot-wide segment of the Northwest Expressway running through the

⁴¹ "Notes from budget hearing," County Board Finance Committee, 31 October 1961, Box 17, "Ground Fill from North-South Excavation to Marina Site. Project #61-136, 1961-64 Folder," John Doyne Collection, Anderson Research Library, Milwaukee County Historical Society, hereafter cited Doyne Collection.

⁴² Untitled clipping, County Board Proceeding, pages 56-57, 28 January 1964, Box 17, Folder File 63-358, Doyne Collection.

western section of Washington Park was used to elevate the bridges for that section of the Expressway.⁴³

One of the other issues of planning the North-South Expressway was blending its footprint into the surrounding neighborhoods while taking into consideration traffic patterns and the geographic characteristics of each particular area. Placement of freeway entrances and exits, for example, challenged planners, due to the fact that the on- and off-ramps had to link adequately to connecting streets and integrate into the local street grid, without disrupting local industries. An excellent example was the planned Oklahoma Avenue interchange. Originally intended as an entrance-exit interchange at West Oklahoma Avenue near Chase Avenue, the location proved inaccessible for freeway access, and its location was shifted south after significant deliberation among planners.

As planners mapped out the route of the North-South Expressway, they desired an entrance-exit interchange at or near Oklahoma Avenue.⁴⁴ However, ramp studies found the area north of Oklahoma Avenue impractical for such a project due in large part to the concentration of industry in the area. A railroad crossing existed between what were then the Nordberg and Perfex plants, and between the crossing and the Kinnickinnic River just to the north, the Northwestern Railway had a freight yard and roundhouse. Planners thus noted that no good space was available for "proper ramp geometry"⁴⁵ and constructing ramps north of Oklahoma would damage valuable industrial property. Therefore, they shifted their effort to planning an interchange south of Oklahoma, but the presence of several railroad lines and complications with

⁴³ "Ask 17 Acres for Freeway," 3 February 1958, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19580103&id=Gt5QAAAAIABAJ&sjid=ciUEAAAIABAJ&pg=7324,654432>, accessed 13 February 2015.

⁴⁴ "Preliminary Plan on North-South Expressway Project 7 at South 13th Street and West Oklahoma Avenue," report by Consoer, Townsend and Associates, 1960, retrieved from LRB.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, page 7.

the layout of local streets made planning at Morgan Avenue, four blocks south of Oklahoma Avenue, equally challenging. One such complication was that West Morgan Avenue was not constructed under the North Shore Railroad to reach South 6th Street.⁴⁶ Additionally, the Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul, & Pacific Railroad⁴⁷ crossed both Morgan Avenue and 6th Street at grade. An alternate plan suggested that the interchange be split into two parts, with Morgan Avenue serving to- and from-traffic east of the Expressway, and West Howard Avenue, four blocks further south, serving to- and from-traffic west of the Expressway. That plan was not practical, either. The heavier, eastbound traffic would have been concentrated on Morgan Avenue, and Howard Avenue between the Expressway route and South 13th Street required extensive improvement. It would have also necessitated grade separation at the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, & Pacific Railroad, and was ultimately rejected.⁴⁸

A second alternate plan called for closing Holt Avenue and developed Morgan Avenue from Chase Avenue under the Expressway to connect with 6th Street. The suggested modification passed under the North Shore Railroad, but required the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, & Pacific Railroad to be depressed so that Morgan Avenue could pass over it and meet its western section at South 8th Street.

Implementation of that plan therefore avoided any changes to Howard Avenue.

Ultimately, planners recommended a route involving entrances and exits at Howard and Holt Avenues but not Morgan Avenue. Under the recommended plan, Holt Avenue was to be reconstructed from Chase Avenue west to the expressway, and

⁴⁶ The now-vacant North Shore Railroad right-of-way paralleled 6th Street south of the Kinnickinnic River.

⁴⁷ Also referred to as the CMSP & P Railroad. Its right-of-way follows an approximate southwest-to-northeast route, running through St. Adalbert's Cemetery on the west side of South 6th Street and crossing 6th Street near Holt Avenue.

⁴⁸ "Preliminary Plan on North-South Expressway Proj. 7 at South 13th Street and West Oklahoma Avenue," page 11.

west of the expressway, curve slightly south, pass under both the North Shore Railroad and Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, & Pacific Railroad near 6th Street, and join Morgan Avenue at South 9th Place. This recommendation, which was the plan eventually implemented, also called for 6th Street to be depressed, from Warnimont Avenue to about 200 feet south of Ohio Avenue, and like Holt Avenue, to pass under the CMST&P Railroad.⁴⁹ The north-south trajectory of the expressway took it between South 4th and 5th Streets and over Holt Avenue to a point 200 feet north of Oklahoma Avenue, where it would curve slightly, while south of Howard, it would curve southwest. The grades of the ramps ranged from .05% - 4%, and utilized existing streets as collector-distributor roads. For the CMSP&P Railroad, grade crossings at Morgan and 6th Street were eliminated, while the total cost of the recommended plan was just under \$7 million.⁵⁰

The North-South Expressway was not the only route in which construction proved to be an issue. A different challenge presented itself when the first section of the East-West Expressway opened. William Norris predicted that when the Expressway opened, with its initial western terminus at 68th Street, it would create a major bottleneck. Most of the traffic, he argued, would travel north to Blue Mound Road, with the majority of it westbound. Such heavy traffic would only serve to burden 68th Street and the 68th & Blue Mound intersection. This, he stated, should prompt Wauwatosa to install traffic lights at that intersection.⁵¹

⁴⁹ "Preliminary Plan on North-South Expressway Proj. 7 at South 13th Street and West Oklahoma Avenue," page 11.

⁵⁰ "Preliminary Plan on North-South Expressway Proj. 7 at South 13th Street and West Oklahoma Avenue," page 18. Also, the \$7 million amount is in 1960 figures.

⁵¹ William Norris, "68th and Blue Mound: X-Way Bottleneck," 16 November 1961, *Milwaukee Sentinel*,

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19611116&id=GoZRAAAAIBAJ&sjid=8xAEEAAAIIBAJ&pg=7376,3172786>, accessed 12 February 2015.

Harbor Bridge

Despite those construction related challenges, availability of federal funds encouraged local officials to propose new freeway routes. In 1963, the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission recommended to the County Board construction of a new lakefront expressway, with a bridge over the harbor and a freeway running from the East-West Expressway to a connection with the north belt freeway. Citing a report by engineering consulting firm Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendoff, the Commission recommended the expressway to divert industrial traffic from overloaded north-south streets, encourage economic development in the southeastern section of the county, and provide future traffic relief for the North-South Expressway. At that time, the consultants projected traffic on the North-South Expressway between the East-West Expressway to exceed 100,000 vehicles per day by 1980. The Commission expected the route to be the least traveled leg of the downtown loop, but to still carry 33,000 cars per day and draw a significant amount of traffic from the North-South Expressway.

Uncertainty over the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad's possible abandonment of its lakefront right-of-way immediately raised the question of cost. The report stated the expressway was possible with or without acquisition of the property, but its acquisition yielded advantages such as reduced right-of-way costs, particularly given that right-of-way acquisition and utility relocation were among the main expenditures in highway construction. The City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County subsequently undertook an appraisal of the railroad.⁵²

Substantial local support existed for at least part of the proposal. Milwaukee

⁵² "Lake Front Freeway Urged by Commission," 19 March 1963, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=jvrRlaHg2sAC&dat=19630319&printsec=frontpage&hl=en>, accessed 13 February 2015.

aldermen also favored a harbor bridge, but plans the previous year had to be postponed due to lack of funds and a lack support from the state highway commission. The state highway commission indicated as its rationale that it had other highway priorities and limited funds. Alderman Erwin Zillman advocated pursuing federal funding as an alternative.⁵³

The idea of a harbor bridge was not new in 1963. City leaders entertained the idea of a north-south artery along Lake Michigan since before the Great Depression. The Harbor Commission actually led initial planning of a high bridge over the Port of Milwaukee, securing a right-of-way from the Sewer Commission in 1928.⁵⁴ In 1934, the Commission ordered its harbor manager to draft plans for a viaduct over the harbor which would link a proposed extension of Lincoln Memorial Drive southward. The U.S. War Department previously rejected a bascule bridge over the harbor on the grounds it would obstruct navigation around the port,⁵⁵ but later issued a permit to construct a 125-foot bridge slightly west of the site originally proposed.

Planners at that time supported a bridge or a similar artery, as well. The Board of Public Land Commissioners noted as early as March 1945 that plans for an extension of Lincoln Memorial Drive yielded an opportunity to develop it into a modern freeway. Board members further noted freeway design was a new field with changing design standards but presented advantages of higher speed, less travel time required for motorists, and less gasoline burned due to the reduction in the number of

⁵³ "Harbor Bridge Will Be Pushed," 23 October 1962, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19621023&id=PSkjAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=9SYEAAAIIBAJ&pg=7320,1976249>, accessed 2 February 2015.

⁵⁴ Report to Board of Public Land Commissioners: "The Location of Lincoln Memorial Drive and Connection to East and West Streets," by City Engineer J.P. Schwada, 3 March 1945, Box 6, Folder 10, Bender Papers.

⁵⁵ "Plans Ordered For High Level Harbor Bridge, 15 December 1934, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19341215&id=IbMVAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=0QwEAAAIIBAJ&pg=3400,2629723>, accessed 2 February 2015.

traffic stops.⁵⁶ The Park Commission, meanwhile, saw a southern extension of Lincoln Memorial Drive as essential to its parkway plan.⁵⁷ That plan included acquiring lakefront land in the South Shore area, north of Grant Park.⁵⁸

Local officials considered two alternatives to the harbor bridge. One option was a tunnel under the harbor. Eugene Howard, during the Depression era a planning engineer for the County, estimated construction costs for a tunnel at \$11,000,000 compared to \$3,000,000 for a bridge, although no financing was immediately available.⁵⁹ A study conducted in 1942 likewise determined a bridge was the superior option, in the interest of lower construction and maintenance costs and more flexible development of the lakefront and harbor area. At that time, the harbor area stretched from East Wisconsin Avenue to East Bay Street and included both Sewer Commission-owned property and 1,100 feet of lake frontage deeded to the U.S. government for a materials depot.⁶⁰

The other option officials considered was an inner harbor drive. A 1944 report by the county's regional planning department recommended building an elevated or at-grade drive west of the harbor's outer piers as part of a longer term proposal to develop an inner harbor on the west side of Jones Island.⁶¹ Unlike the proposed harbor tunnel, the inner harbor drive drew support from several local interests. Socialist parks

⁵⁶ Report to Board of Public Land Commissioners: "The Location of Lincoln Memorial Drive and Connection to East and West Streets," by City Engineer J.P. Schwada, 3 March 1945, Box 6, Folder 10, Bender Papers.

⁵⁷ Outline of Statement by Milwaukee County Parks Commission to Milwaukee Common Council, undated, Box 6, Folder 2, Bender Papers.

⁵⁸ Memo from Parks Commission Executive Secretary Jerome Dretzka to Parks Commission members, 26 October 1945, Box 6, Folder 2, Bender Papers.

⁵⁹ "Favor High Bridge Over Harbor Inlet," 16 September 1939, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19390916&id=B6xQAAAIAIAJ&sjid=UiIEAAIAIAJ&pg=1693,1012573>, accessed 14 February 2015.

⁶⁰ City Engineer J.P. Schwada, Report to Board of Public Land Commissioners: "The Location of Lincoln Memorial Drive and Connection to East and West Streets," 3 March 1945, Box 6, Folder 10, Bender Papers.

⁶¹ "Inner Harbor Plan Proposed," 23 April 1944, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19440423&id=o0scAAAIAIAJ&sjid=WH4EAAIAIAJ&pg=1521,3056082>, accessed 14 February 2015.

planner Charles Whitnall actually suggested such a drive years earlier, and both the *Milwaukee Journal* and National Avenue Business Association supported it in the 1940s. The *Journal* endorsed an inner harbor route cutting southwest from the lakefront across the Third Ward, beginning at Wisconsin Avenue, passing over Michigan Street, crossing the Milwaukee River southeast of the Broadway bridge and passing under the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad to a connection with a northern extension of Barclay Street. From there, the proposal linked the drive to East Bay Street and the southern lakeshore.⁶²

Parks Commission member Walter Bender argued that any decision to build an inner harbor drive or a high level bridge over the harbor did not exclude the other. He viewed a harbor bridge as a landing hazard to planes landing at Maitland Field⁶³ but stated the Park Commission did not see a small airport as the best use of lakefront property. An inner and outer drive served separate purposes, he said. He envisioned an inner drive to carry trucks and commercial vehicles, while reserving the outer drive for passenger vehicles and recreational purposes. Bender himself preferred to build both.

Thus, the bridge fit prominently into postwar plans for Lincoln Memorial Drive.⁶⁴ Proposals for the Drive called for its extension northward through Shorewood and Whitefish Bay into Fox Point, a southern connection to Bay View, and a possible future leg through the South Shore suburbs to the Racine County line. The Land Commission articulated a threefold vision for an extended Lincoln Memorial Drive:

⁶² "Milwaukee Lake Front and Related Development Plans," *Milwaukee Journal* (suggested by *Journal*), June 1945, Box 6, Folder 1, Bender Papers.

⁶³ Located on the site of the current Summerfest grounds, Maitland Field was a small lakefront airport primarily serving small, private planes.

⁶⁴ The Drive at that time ran from Mason Street to Kenwood Boulevard. As of this writing, it still follows the same route, but continues slightly farther south to Clybourn Street, where it terminates at the Lake Interchange.

provide a high speed traffic artery, create a truck route to serve the harbor, and establish a connecting link in the County Park System. Funding for such an extension did concern city government, though. The City was reluctant to accept federal money for the project out of fear the federal government might allow trucking along the Drive, something city government did not envision. The City Engineer preferred to allow trucking on the Drive only between Clybourn Street and Greenfield Avenue.

Numerous logistical and financial problems prevented immediate action on the harbor bridge, as planners in 1945 worried about how to connect the bridge to intersecting streets. A report by City Engineer Joseph P. Schwada deemed intersections with National Avenue or Mitchell Street to be impractical. Any ramp connecting Mitchell Street to a harbor bridge needed to begin at South 2nd or 3rd Street to provide a steep enough grade to reach the bridge, but piers to support such a ramp would have interfered with rail traffic below. A ramp crossing the Kinnickinnic River also reduced usable dock frontage. Schwada similarly ruled out a ramp connection at National Avenue, but considered a connection at Greenfield Avenue to be possible if car ferry activity at the Kinnickinnic River were relocated to Jones Island. He favored an initial southern terminus at East Conway Street in Bay View, with possible future extensions to Lincoln Avenue and possibly South Shore Park.⁶⁵ Schwada did not provide a cost estimate, stating that such an estimate required the city to first begin test borings for a foundation along the right-of-way. The *Milwaukee Journal* cited the earlier figure of nearly \$11 million, with expenditures reaching \$20 million with cross-street connections. As of 1945, a permanent improvement fund for lakefront development held \$1.5 million. Completion of the bridge also required

⁶⁵ City Engineer J.P. Schwada, Report to Board of Public Land Commissioners: "The Location of Lincoln Memorial Drive and Connection to East and West Streets," 3 March 1945, Box 6, Folder 10, Bender Papers.

cooperation between five different parties: the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, the Sewer Commission, the Harbor Commission, and the Northwestern Railroad.⁶⁶

By the time local officials revisited the harbor bridge nearly two decades later, cost estimates rose to \$43 million in 1960s figures for the bridge alone. That amount excluded the \$22 million anticipated spending on other expressway construction projects and a \$7 million bond issue to acquire the Northwestern Railroad right-of-way, which the Railroad did decide to abandon.⁶⁷ In May 1964, the Milwaukee Common Council passed a resolution asking the County Board, Park Commission, Expressway Commission, and private and civic organizations to petition federal officials to fund the bridge.⁶⁸ By September 1965 federal officials generally supported the harbor bridge, but the Bureau of Public Roads wanted adequate connections to it near its southern terminus. The Bureau favored a freeway-like connection to the bridge to handle traffic to and from the bridge in Bay View, deeming proposals to simply improve local streets as inadequate.⁶⁹ If the County did not construct the southern portion of the Lake Freeway, the federal funding level fell from 90% to 50% of the cost. City and county officials, the Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission,⁷⁰ and private consultants later recommended constructing a freeway

⁶⁶ "Survey Urged for Extending Lincoln Drive," 4 March 1945, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19450304&id=bbUWAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=JCMEA AAIAIBAJ&pg=6708,1111611>, accessed 19 February 2015.

⁶⁷ Ray Kenney, "Ask \$62 Million Projects," 16 May 1964, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19640516&id=LZIRAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=JREEAA AAIAIBAJ&pg=3023,74976>, accessed 21 February 2015.

⁶⁸ "Council Urges US Funds for Harbor Bridge," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19640516&id=LZIRAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=JREEAA AAIAIBAJ&pg=3023,74976>, accessed 21 February 2015.

⁶⁹ Milwaukee: Plans Spurred for Freeway Link to Harbor Bridge," *Milwaukee Journal*, 2 September 1965, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19650902&id=yv8pAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=rycEAAA AIBAJ&pg=3347,705185>, accessed 21 February 2015.

⁷⁰ The Southeast Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, or SEWRPC, came into existence in August 1960 when Governor Gaylord Nelson signed an executive order establishing a seven-county land use commission to advise counties and municipalities on land use issues. See Richard Cutler,

from East Lincoln Avenue to East Layton Avenue. The three-mile stretch was to be completed by 1973, and potentially link to a future freeway running through Cudahy, Oak Creek, and Racine and Kenosha Counties to a connection with a proposed freeway south of the Illinois state line. The plan drew support from a local Coast Guard commander, but area residents, the mayor of St. Francis, and the pastors of local Catholic and Lutheran congregations expressed concerns. Some residents even questioned the need for a freeway through the area.⁷¹

In February 1966, the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission approved preliminary plans for the Lake Freeway running under East Michigan Street and along the lakeshore's bluffs to a connection with the Park Freeway to be called the Juneau Interchange. Its proposed route brought it near the Juneau Park Lagoon along its east side as well as the Jewish Community Center at 1400 N. Prospect Avenue. The route further required demolition of the Layton School of Art at 1342 N. Prospect Avenue. However, expressway engineer Robert W. Brennan pledged to preserve as much of the lakefront as possible and cited late 1971 as an estimated completion date.⁷²

Freeway Revolt

The concerns cited by citizens objecting to the proposed Lake Freeway through Bay View and the South Shore suburbs echoed the concerns of residents elsewhere in the Milwaukee area and indeed, nationwide. By the mid- to late 1960s, residents of urban areas around the country were beginning to oppose construction in

Greater Milwaukee's Growing Pains, 1950-2000: An Insider's View (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 2001), pages 60-65.

⁷¹ "South Siders Argue Lake Freeway Need," 27 January 1967, *Milwaukee Journal* <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19670125&id=wHUfAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=ZCgEAAAIIBAJ&pg=7545,3431979>, accessed 21 February 2015.

⁷² "Lake Freeway Plan Gets Preliminary OK," 9 February 1966, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19660206&id=Lz0aAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=wScEAAAIIBAJ&pg=7315,4377358>, accessed 21 February 2015.

their cities. In Milwaukee's quiet and residential South Shore area, local residents expressed concerns mainly about the impact on their neighborhoods. At a hearing in January 1967, residents expressed apprehension that the proposed freeway divided the neighborhood in two and requested an adequate number of pedestrian bridges and tunnels. Speaking at the meeting for his constituents in Bay View and St. Francis, Milwaukee County Board representative Ted Wedemeyer commented "We don't want an east Bay View and a west Bay View, an east St. Francis and a west St. Francis."⁷³

St. Francis Mayor Herbert Kiehl, like West Milwaukee's Village President a decade earlier, expressed concerns about the loss of property in the small suburb. Depending on whether the freeway was located next to or on the existing rail line, the City of St. Francis stood to lose 90-210 properties with an assessed value of as much as \$1.2 million. Pastor Carl Klitzke of Messiah Lutheran Church on East Fernwood Avenue complained that his congregation constructed the church only five years earlier and at that time received assurances from local officials that they were not considering any expressway routes through the area. Father James Brady, pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Parish on Kinnickinnic Avenue in St. Francis expressed concern that the proposed freeway cut some parishioners off from the church and school.⁷⁴

The fears Father Brady and Pastor Klitzke expressed regarding the impact on their congregations came true along other freeway routes. On the North Side, construction of the North-South Expressway in the early 1960s cut St. John Lutheran Church at 8th and Vliet Streets off from the neighborhood west of it. After the freeway was constructed, street cars were no longer able to reach that section of West Vliet

⁷³ "South Siders Argue Lake Freeway Need," 27 January 1967, *Milwaukee Journal* <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19670125&id=wHUfAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=ZCgEAAAIIBAJ&pg=7545,3431979>, accessed 21 February 2015.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Street from North 12th Street. Members of the congregation living west of the expressway could not easily walk to church, prompting some members to join congregations west of I-43.⁷⁵ In West Allis, plans to construct the West Expressway necessitated a new school and parsonage for Good Shepherd Lutheran Church.⁷⁶ On the near South Side, the North-South Expressway created an isolated area along South 3rd and 4th Streets between the freeway and South Chase Avenue immediately south of Lincoln Avenue. Residents complained that the lack of a pedestrian bridge over the Expressway forced them to travel farther to reach schools and the 6th Street bus line, and prevented parishioners from walking to Mass and activities at St. Josephat's Basilica on 6th and Lincoln.⁷⁷

Other congregations lost their buildings altogether. Our Lady of Pompeii Catholic Church, an anchor of the local Italian community,⁷⁸ is one of the best known examples in Milwaukee.⁷⁹ The Milwaukee Landmarks Commission previously designated it as a landmark. Parishioners successfully resisted demolition during a 1950s-era urban renewal project in the Third Ward, but by the 1960s, construction of the East-West Expressway caused its demolition. The last Mass celebrated there took place in July 1967.⁸⁰ Freeway construction likewise forced the First Methodist Church to abandon

⁷⁵ Thomas E. Schroeder, "White Flight: The Response of WELS Churches in Central City Milwaukee to Major Cultural and Ethnic Change," (unpublished church history paper, WELS Essay File, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1994), page 19.

<http://www.wlssays.net/files/SchroederWELSResponsesCentralMilwaukee.pdf>

⁷⁶ "Churches Set Building Rites," 4 August 1956, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19560804&id=vA0oAAAIAIAJ&sjid=-SUEAAAIAIAJ&pg=5789,1241367>, accessed 21 February 2015.

⁷⁷ "'Gilligan's Island' Seeks Footbridge," 10 November 1966, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19661110&id=WqVRAAAAIAIAJ&sjid=zRAEA AAAIAIAJ&pg=5150,2810131&hl=en>, accessed 28 March 2015.

⁷⁸ This historic church on North Jackson Street served as the spiritual center of the Third Ward's Italian community from the church's construction in 1905 until its demolition for freeway construction. In addition to its role in the community, the building itself was significant. Erhard Brielmaier, the same architect who designed the landmark St. Josephat Basilica, designed Our Lady of Pompeii. The interior was also highly decorated. See John Gurda, *The Making of Milwaukee* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee County Historical Society, 1999), 176.

⁷⁹ Gurda, 335.

⁸⁰ "The Last Days of Pompeii Church," 19 July 1967, *Milwaukee Journal*,

its building at 1010 West Wisconsin Avenue in January 1966.⁸¹



Figure 5: I-794 in the Third Ward along East St. Paul Avenue at North Milwaukee Street, not far from the former site of Our Lady of Pompeii Catholic Church. Photo by Greg Dickenson, 2012.

The African American community similarly lost a historically significant church. St. Mark African Methodist Episcopal Church was the oldest African American congregation in Milwaukee and was known for its large choirs.⁸²

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19670719&id=ulA0AAAIAIBAJ&sjid=dH4EAAIAIBAJ&pg=7194,4665954>, accessed 22 February 2015.

⁸¹ James M. Johnston, "Methodists to Meet in Brewery Hall," 30 November 1965, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19651130&id=CJpRAAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=kxEEAAIAIBAJ&pg=2125,5751875>, accessed 25 February 2015.

⁸² Geenan, 27.

Expressway construction forced the congregation to relocate after demolition of its building. Two other African American congregations, Mount Calvary Holy Church of America and the Church of the Living God, also had to relocate due to the expressway.⁸³

The cumulative impact of these and other disruptions to Milwaukee neighborhoods prompted widespread objection to expressway construction in Milwaukee. In some cases, residents and local leaders were content to re-route proposed freeways to more suitable locations. In other cases, the routes themselves were challenged. Some of those routes were eventually constructed anyway, others were cancelled or only partially completed.

Part of the impetus for anti-expressway sentiment was the suggestion of several new routes in the 1960s. The routes were proposed by Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendoff as part of the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission's comprehensive regional land use and transportation plan.⁸⁴ SEWRPC's role at this time was separate from that of the Expressway Commission. While the Expressway Commission retained its oversight over designing, planning, and construction the expressway system, after SEWRPC's inception in 1960, it undertook an advisory planning role for the superhighway network and other regional transportation and land use issues. Commission member Richard Cutler called its 1965 plan the "high point" in Milwaukee's freeway planning.⁸⁵

Those new routes included a seven and a half mile Bay Freeway running

⁸³ "New Churches Rise in Core," 9 March 1968, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19680309&id=YVgaAAAIAAJ&sjid=FygEAAIAAJ&pg=7327,4439238>, accessed 20 February 2015.

⁸⁴ "Freeway Plans Spark Protests," 17 April 1969, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19690417&id=A3ZQAAAIAAJ&sjid=5RAEAAAIAAJ&pg=3548,3481532>, accessed 21 February 2015.

⁸⁵ Cutler, 70.

roughly parallel to West Hampton Avenue from the North-South Expressway west into Waukesha County and a 12.5 mile extension of the Stadium Freeway northward from its connection from the planned Park Freeway/North Avenue Expressway to Ozaukee County. The proposed new routes could displace as many as 10,000 residents if built, claimed County Supervisor William E. Meaux. He noted more than 500 angry constituents wrote him letters objecting to expansion because of its negative effect on property values; Supervisor Clinton Rose expressed a similar concern about property values in his district along the Milwaukee-Glendale border.⁸⁶ SEWRPC also recommended a controversial Belt Freeway through Milwaukee's outer suburbs. That route ran from the southern extension of the Lake Freeway through Oak Creek and Franklin parallel to Puetz Road and into Muskego, where it curved north and ran through eastern Waukesha County in New Berlin, Brookfield, and Menomonee Falls to a connection with Highway 41 in Germantown. Planners expected a significant but unspecified amount of funding to come from the federal government. Jurisdiction over the Waukesha County freeway fell to the State Highway Commission.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ "Freeway Plans Spark Protests," 17 April 1969, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19690417&id=A3ZQAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=5RAEA AAAIIBAJ&pg=3548,3481532>, accessed 21 February 2015.

⁸⁷ Paul O. Hayes, "Suburbs Rally to Fight Belt Freeway Route," 21 October 1969, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19691021&id=HgQqAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=NigEAA AAIBAJ&pg=6994,103403>, accessed 27 February 2015.

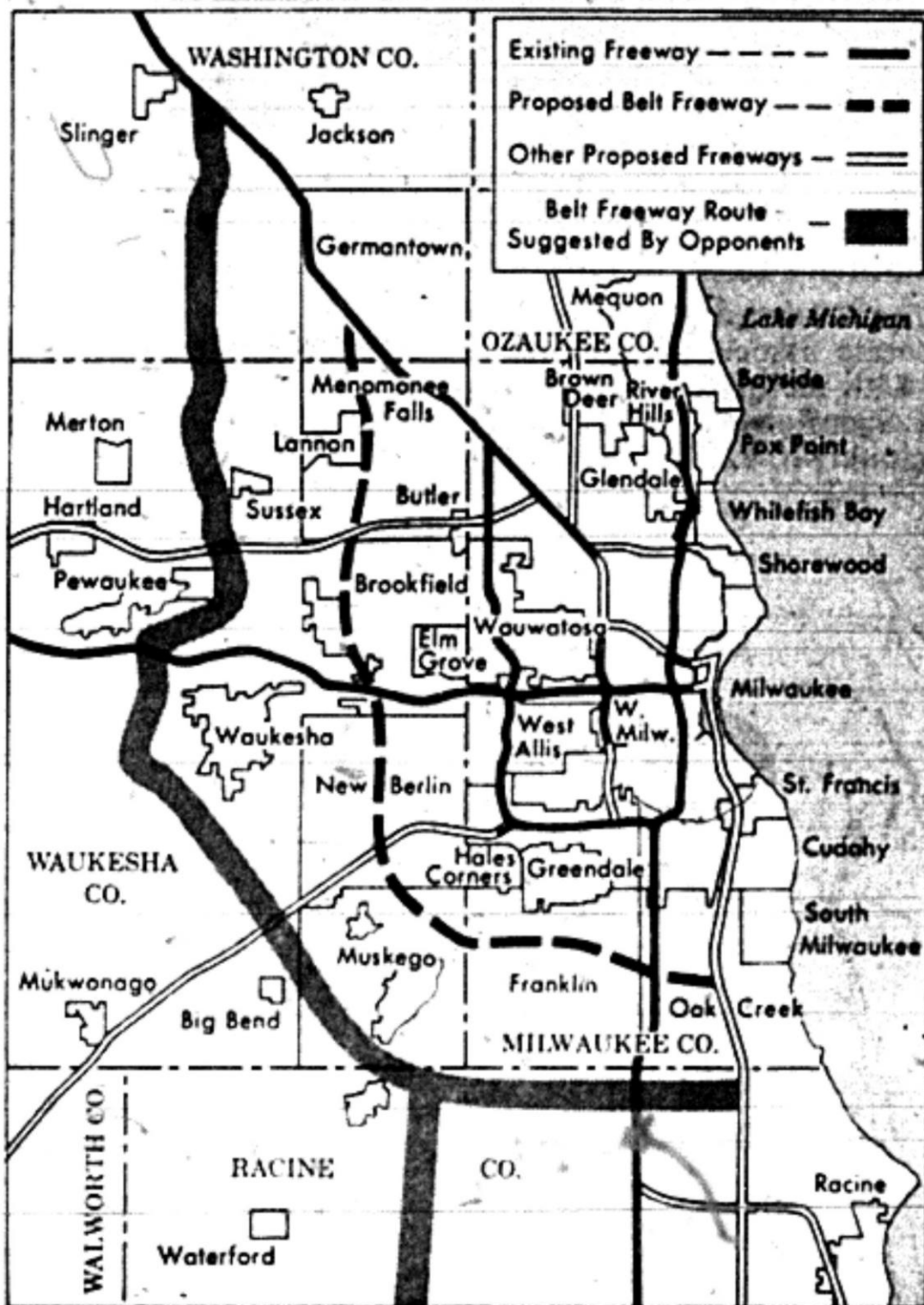


Figure 6: A map of the additional freeways proposed for the Milwaukee area in the 1960s.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Map originally published by the *Milwaukee Journal*. See Paul O. Hayes, "Suburbs Rally to Fight Belt Freeway Route," 21 October 1969, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19691021&id=HgQqAAAAIBAJ&sjid=NigEAA-AIIBAJ&pg=6994,103403>, accessed 27 February 2015.

The letters Supervisor Meaux's constituents wrote him were only a representation of public sentiment in Milwaukee and nationwide. Other cities, too, saw protests and citizen advocacy. A number of scholars have extensively documented what historian Raymond Mohl termed the "expressway revolt" movement.⁹⁰ Mohl's narrative of the anti-freeway movement aptly describes Milwaukee's experience.

The freeway revolts Mohl describes began as grassroots movements which involved neighborhood groups and homeowners. They varied from city to city, but followed a general pattern of bottom-up fighting against seemingly inflexible highway engineers and state highway bureaucrats. Their tactics included litigation, interracial and cross-class alliances, and involvement of newspapers and local politicians. In many cases, their success in stopping construction was only achieved with a court order or shut-down decision from a top highway official or state governor.⁹¹ He cites as the first success of the freeway revolt movement a decision by San Francisco officials in 1959 to withdraw support for any new freeway construction.⁹²

In the late 1950s, residents of cities whose parks, neighborhoods, and historic districts the freeways had penetrated began to object strenuously to further construction. Previous construction resulted in large scale housing demolition, relocation problems, loss of communities, and environmental damage. Prior to the mid-1950s, urban real estate and business leaders, mayors, urban planners, and civil engineers widely supported building urban expressways to save declining central business districts.⁹³ As already noted in this chapter, a movement to create a national highway network already existed before Congress passed the Interstate Highway Act

⁹⁰ Raymond Mohl, "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities," *Journal of Urban History* 30 (2004): 674.

⁹¹ Mohl, 676.

⁹² Mohl, 679.

⁹³ Mohl, 676.

in 1956. Bureau of Public Roads commissioner Thomas MacDonald, his assistant Herbert Fairbank, and other officials envisioned superhighways connecting cities while speeding traffic within them. MacDonald and New York public works official Robert Moses also saw the new traffic arteries as an opportunity for urban renewal; slums could be cleared away and the inner cores of many cities rebuilt.⁹⁴ In Milwaukee, that very concept received support from within Mayor Zeidler's administration. As one member of his administration wrote, construction of an expressway interchange and 8th and Brown Streets on the North Side would eliminate a "substantial" amount of slum housing that urban renewal might not reach for a good many years.⁹⁵

Other cities' officials and expressway planners had a similar attitude toward slum clearance and highway construction. In Columbus, OH, engineers working with the local chamber of commerce largely eliminated what one engineer described as that state's largest slum.⁹⁶ Detroit and Charlotte, NC also saw historic African American neighborhoods and business districts demolished for freeway construction and urban renewal.⁹⁷ Neither the Milwaukee urban renewal official nor the engineer in Ohio directly expressed views on slum clearance and race, although the 8th and Brown neighborhood in Milwaukee was largely African-American. Such was not the case in Miami. A decision by the Florida Road Department to shift a proposed expressway through the city westward into the Overtown business district devastated the heart of Miami's black community. City officials there wanted to create a new housing

⁹⁴ Mohl, 677.

⁹⁵ Memo from Urban Renewal Coordinator Sol Ackerman to Mayor Zeidler, 22 October 1958, Box 164, Folder 5, Zeidler Papers.

⁹⁶ Mark H. Rose and Bruce Seely, "Getting the Interstate System Built: Road Engineers and the Implementation of Public Policy, 1955-1985," *Journal of Policy History* 2 (1990): 37.

⁹⁷ Niles Niemuth, "Urban Renewal and the Development of Milwaukee's African American Community, 1960-1980," (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2014), 46.

development primarily for African-Americans well outside the central business district, while a local planner there specifically stated a goal of slum clearance and removal of every African-American from city limits. Despite ample public notice, the African-American community did not organize any significant opposition. Several black organizations did exist in Miami at that time, but they generally supported the expressway route as part of the city's progress. Both the Greater Miami Urban League and the city's black newspaper issued statements in 1957 supporting the proposed expressways, although they did advocate relocation housing, prompting Florida's road chairman to acknowledge the need. However, he argued housing was not the responsibility of the highway department.⁹⁸

In the 1950s and early 1960s, Mohl asserts, Miami was still a very southern city. White political dominance was still the norm, and interracial cooperation frequently proved problematic. For example, officials did not hold any public hearings in black neighborhoods, prompting complaints years later. Even within the white community, there was little opposition to expressway construction, except for a few people who worried that displaced African-Americans might move into mostly white areas. Miami's mayor and a number of white residents initially opposed freeway construction so close to the city's downtown area, but after 1957, with the exception of one activist, there was little opposition⁹⁹

In contrast, San Francisco was more cosmopolitan and had a stronger network of neighborhood groups.¹⁰⁰ There, after the aesthetically unappealing Embarcadero Freeway was constructed on the waterfront, city residents began to resist more expressways. They were particularly offended at proposals to construct a route

⁹⁸ Mohl, 685.

⁹⁹ Mohl, 686.

¹⁰⁰ Mohl, 685.

through Golden Gate Park and the Haight neighborhood, a progressive, working class, racially integrated area African-American, Chinese, and Filipino residents, which also had measurable a population of students and gay residents. Consequently, a neighborhood association formed in 1959 against the freeway, and opposition continued into the 1960s, when city officials voted down a route called the Panhandle Freeway.¹⁰¹

Successful anti-freeway movements subsequently delayed or blocked construction in other cities. Protests in San Antonio delayed one route for years; it was only completed after being re-engineered. In Kansas City, MO, a local Polish citizens group campaigned to save a historic neighborhood, while block by block opposition in Cleveland stalled construction.¹⁰²

Milwaukee saw a mix of concerted opposition to some routes and apathy toward others. The timeline of strong public support shifting toward opposition follows the national narrative. Hints of dissent began in the late 1950s, but it was not until the mid-1960s that widespread opposition organized. Concerns about dislocated residents in poorer neighborhoods did come to the attention of Expressway Commission members, elected officials, and other leaders in the late 1960s, but little discussion of the direct impact on Milwaukee's African American neighborhoods took place either within or outside of the black community. Much of the opposition evolved out of objections to the lakefront freeway which did not run through a black neighborhood. In comparison, San Francisco residents objected to the proposed loss of an integrated neighborhood brought about by freeway construction, while Washington, D.C. and other cities saw the impact on the African-American

¹⁰¹ Joseph Rodriguez, *City against Suburb: The Culture Wars in an American Metropolis* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 40.

¹⁰² Rose and Seely, 37.

community prompt black militancy.¹⁰³ Thus, Milwaukee actually differed from several other major cities with regard to expressways and race relations.

Milwaukee's Bronzeville

Home to 40,000 residents in 1960 and a number of nightclubs and music venues, Miami's Overland business district was called the "Harlem of the South."¹⁰⁴ Bronzeville in Milwaukee likewise served as the heart of Milwaukee's African American community. But like Overland, it saw substantial housing demolition after construction of the North-South Expressway in the 1960s.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Milwaukee had an African-American population of only 862. Five decades later, it grew to 21,772, but still accounted for only 3.42% of the city's population. By 1960, the city's African-American population reached over 62,000 but still only equaled 8.4% of the city's population.¹⁰⁵ Residential segregation kept African-American housing confined to a specific area known as Bronzeville. Paul Geenan defines the borders of that neighborhood in 1930 as running between North 3rd and 12th Streets, north of West Highland Boulevard and south of West Walnut Street. Within a few years, the neighborhood expanded to Juneau Avenue, Keefe Avenue, North 23rd Street, and the Milwaukee River.¹⁰⁶ Ivory Abena Black describes very similar borders as of 1930: North 3rd to North 12th Street, and West Juneau Avenue to West Brown Street. Later the community's borders reached North Avenue and State Street. In time, it became known as Bronzeville.¹⁰⁷ As a term, Bronzeville refers to an area of any city in which the majority of residents are African

¹⁰³ Mohl, 679.

¹⁰⁴ Mohl, 683.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Geenan, *Milwaukee's Bronzeville: 1900-1950* (Charleston, SC: Acadia, 2006), 7.

¹⁰⁶ Geenan, 7.

¹⁰⁷ Ivory Abena Black, *Bronzeville: A Milwaukee Lifestyle*, (Milwaukee: The Publisher's Group, 2005), 10.

American or of African descent. In Milwaukee's Bronzeville, African Americans initially shared the neighborhood with Germans, Italians, Eastern Europeans, and Jewish residents until most of those groups moved northward. After their migration out of the central city, Bronzeville remained overwhelmingly African American.¹⁰⁸ During the 1930s and 1940s West Walnut Street between 3rd and 12th Streets developed into the central business district for Bronzeville. Numerous black-owned businesses located or opened there, including a number of hotels, night clubs, restaurants, and barber shops. Such noted musicians as Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, and Louis Armstrong performed at some of the night clubs and restaurants.¹⁰⁹ The Walnut Street area thereby grew to serve as the center of African American life in Milwaukee.¹¹⁰ As a result, when the North-South Expressway caused widespread demolition of homes through the heart of Bronzeville, it devastated the historic area.

The purpose of this thesis has been to trace the route selection of Milwaukee County's expressway system and examine why their final locations were chosen. Placement the North-South Expressway followed a clearly defined traffic pattern identified by the 1946 Origin-Destination Survey. After substantial community input and a recommendation from the State Highway Commission, Milwaukee County shifted the South Side leg of that route approximately 10 blocks east. Now, it is important to understand the implications of expressway construction on the North Side.

One of the studies commissioned to recommend a route placement, DeLeuw & Cather's 1949 report, recommended a route passing through a low density area along

¹⁰⁸ Black, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Black, 15.

¹¹⁰ Niemuth, 44.

the west bank of the Milwaukee River. Subsequent studies placed the expressway along North 7th & 8th Streets and resulted in the displacement of thousands of African American residents at a time when most African Americans could not easily relocate to other neighborhoods. The rationale for that decision might be attributed to traffic counts, cost, or other factors. Slum clearance, though, was indeed a major reason.

Niles Niemuth asserts local leaders were more concerned with urban renewal than minimizing any negative social or economic impact expressway construction played. Citing a quote by Mayor Zeidler, he argues highway planners deliberately routed the North-South Expressway through African American neighborhoods to reduce or eliminate blight.¹¹¹ He goes on to state city leaders say African Americans as a nuisance before, after, and during highway construction and proverbially attempted to pave over the problem. A 1970s study found direct discrimination by housing and relocation officials toward African Americans. Most of those African American residents only moved a few blocks after losing their houses or apartments. In addition, fear that African American residents might move in fueled white residents' opposition to additional public housing in other neighborhoods.¹¹²

Benjamin Barbera cautions against tying race alone to explanations of what areas of the city were targeted for slum clearance and urban renewal.¹¹³ He cites a study from 1964 projecting 47.1% of white city residents lived in housing valued at less than \$15,000 and 76% of whites to be relocated from 1963-1972 fell into this category. About 86.4% of nonwhite residents in the city but 90.8% of dislocated nonwhites lived in units valued under \$15,000. A similar proportion of lower income white residents were displaced. About 38% of white Milwaukee residents at that time

¹¹¹ Niemuth, 50.

¹¹² Niemuth, 54.

¹¹³ Benjamin Barbera, "An Improvised World: Jazz and Community in Milwaukee, 1950-1970," (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2012), 106.

earned under \$6,000 annually but 55% of dislocatees had annual earnings under that figure. The percentage of nonwhite dislocates earning less than \$6,000 per year jumped to 71.6% compared to a citywide percentage of 61.5% nonwhite residents with incomes below \$6,000. Barbera uses these statistics to support the argument that race *and* class accounted for decisions on redevelopment project placements. Even so, he concedes that race played a larger role in rehousing and compensation issues given that 16% of nonwhite city residents were displaced compared to only 1.9% of white residents at a time when housing covenants still restricted nonwhites.¹¹⁴

Between 1962-1968 expressway construction eliminated 8,535 housing units and dislocated over 13,000 people. A severe housing shortage resulted as construction of just under 1,200 housing units during that did not adequately replace the units lost. The African American community felt the loss particularly acutely because areas in which African Americans were allowed to live did not see a substantial replacement of housing stock.¹¹⁵ In some cases the housing stock that was available to replace lost homes was unsanitary or uninhabitable.¹¹⁶ Additionally, no one in local government took responsibility for relocating displaced African Americans. Mayor Henry Maier vocalized general concern for the issue, but did not advocate open housing or public housing elsewhere in the city, nor did he allocate any city funds to reduce hardships caused by displacement. Expressway Commission member Leonard Zubrensky did articulate a position that highway construction might need to be delayed until displaced persons found adequate new housing, but by the time he raised those concerns in 1968, a great many people already lost their homes.¹¹⁷

While freeway revolts took place in other cities and delayed or prevented

¹¹⁴ Barbera, 106.

¹¹⁵ Niemuth, 54.

¹¹⁶ Cutler, 78.

¹¹⁷ Niemuth, 52-54.

expressway construction even in other Milwaukee neighborhoods, there was no organized objection in the African American community. Several factors account for this. One is a lack of political clout. Its relatively small size made it difficult for its members to resist the freeway that cut Bronzeville in two.¹¹⁸ African Americans accounted for only 8.4% of Milwaukee's population in 1960. That percentage was actually deceptive because nearly 50% of African American residents were under the legal voting age and registration of eligible voters only ranged from 52-54%.¹¹⁹ In comparison, Chicago's African American population in 1960 reached 22.9% while Cleveland and Detroit had black populations of 28.6% and 28.9%, respectively.¹²⁰

They also did not have Mayor Maier's ear. His base was among blue collar white residents, especially in the South Side Polish community. Maier polled poorly in black wards during the 1960, 1964, and 1968 elections. Bill Dahlk's observation that Maier only won 7% of the black vote in 1968 and that a 1965 *Milwaukee Journal* profile of the mayor said little about his relationship with African American residents and voters suggests he had little to gain electorally by reaching out to them or prioritizing their concerns.¹²¹ This supports Niemuth's argument that the African American community was marginalized during his administration.

A second explanation for a lack of outcry is a lack of proper notice prior to the construction projects. Just as in Miami, ample notice of proposed routes was published well in advance of actual highway building in Milwaukee. Local newspapers clearly indicated the general locations of recommended routes. However, officials did not disclose center line locations or right-of-way widths until they held

¹¹⁸ Niemuth, 55-56.

¹¹⁹ Bill Dahlk, *Against the Wind: African Americans & the Schools in Milwaukee, 1963-2002* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2010), 23.

¹²⁰ Barbera, 61.

¹²¹ Dahlk, 23.

public hearings.¹²² In African American neighborhoods many residents were unaware of plans until bulldozers and construction equipment appeared on their streets.¹²³ All of this took place against the larger backdrop of a Civil Rights Movement in which leaders and organizers in Milwaukee's African American community focused on open housing and school desegregation. Although issues of open housing and urban renewal were intertwined, leaders prioritized other issues.¹²⁴

Protests and Route Cancellations

Whatever the cause of the lack of protests in the African American community, freeway plans sparked outrage in other parts of Milwaukee. Protests, public hearings, and anti-expressway campaigns in Milwaukee delayed or halted several routes. Suburban residents' objections to proposed freeways through their communities also led to cancellation of routes in Ozaukee and Waukesha Counties.

Like the nationwide freeway revolt movement, anti-expressway sentiment in Milwaukee dates to the late 1950s. In early 1959, the West North Avenue Advancement Association sponsored a public meeting to protest the North Avenue Expressway planned to run about half a block north of the street. Over 100 residents attended. The Association opposed the expressway route and its president complained that 472 homes housing 3,100 families were to be lost if the expressway were built. Such a loss reduced the buying power of the local customer base the business association served.¹²⁵

City government recognized the issue of displacement and the need for

¹²² Cutler, 79.

¹²³ Black, 20.

¹²⁴ Barbera, 110.

¹²⁵ "100 Protest North Av. Expressway Plans," 7 January 1959, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19590107&id=vnBRAAAAIBAJ&sjid=OBAEA AAAIBAJ&pg=6241,3280690>, accessed 23 February 2015.

adequate relocation efforts two years before that. A 1957 study by the Expressway Commission estimated the number of residents to be displaced by the North-South Expressway to be 20,000 persons in 6,000 families. Mayor Zeidler expressed concern for the situation at that time as he expected impending expressway construction south of Keefe Avenue and predicted an acute housing situation. Common Council President Martin Schreiber and Council members Vel Phillips and Fred P. Meyers likewise expressed concerns about expressway construction and recommended the North Avenue Expressway be relocated to a route south of North Avenue to reduce the impact on the North Avenue business district. Yet County expressway engineer Henry Wildschut downplayed the severity of the looming situation. He stated the Expressway Commission did not have a specific policy on relocation housing but he did not believe a problem existed. According to Wildschut, every family that had sold property to the Expressway Commission up to that point was able to find new housing.¹²⁶

Five years later, the situation had not improved. Approximately 1,100 families had already lost their homes to the expressways, another 25,000 individuals in 7,000 families faced dislocation before 1970, and with the exception of some federal aid, only limited financial assistance was available to families required to move. County expressway engineer Herbert Goetsch acknowledged that the Expressway Commission had some responsibility toward the displaced, but not to the point that it assisted displaced households in finding new homes. Instead, it referred those families to the city redevelopment authority. Redevelopment authority officials responded by stating they lacked the staff to assist such a large number of dislocated

¹²⁶ "Survey Urged on Relocation," 29 March 1957, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19570329&id=zgQkAAAIBAJ&sjid=tyUEAAAIBAJ&pg=7232,4611596>, accessed 23 February 2015.

individuals and that their agency did not actually have legal authority to do so. The Milwaukee Common Council's position at the time was that the City and County should share responsibility.¹²⁷ As late as 1968, renters without a long-term lease did not receive compensation for moving costs.¹²⁸ Meanwhile, several majority-African American churches forced to relocate and construct new buildings due to expressway construction experienced difficulties in obtaining new loans as financial institutions perceived risks in lending to central city congregations.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Richard Sovonier, "Freeways Rate First in Displacing People," 5 April 1962, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19620405&id=XIEaAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=9yYEAAAIBAJ&pg=6763,3248122>, accessed 27 February 2015.

¹²⁸ Letter from Expressway Commission Chairman Robert Johnson to Mayor Maier, 1 August 1968, Box 79, Folder 34, Records of Mayor Henry W. Maier Administration, Golda Meir Library Archives, UW-Milwaukee.

¹²⁹ "New Churches Rise in Core," 9 March 1968, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19680309&id=YVgaAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=FygEAAAIBAJ&pg=7327,4439238>, accessed 20 February 2015.



Figure 7: A concrete sound barrier separates I-43 from a residential neighborhood near South 5th Street and West Warnimont Avenue. Photo by Greg Dickenson, 2013.

In response to the proposed Park Freeway running through the East Side to connect the North-South Expressway to the northern Lake Freeway, a Layton School of Art board member launched a public campaign against the route. Attorney Malcolm Whyte engaged in a letter-writing campaign to numerous officials and boards in 1966 to protest the route. The campaign drew the attention of both the Expressway Commission, which invited him to speak at a hearing, and County Executive John Doyne, who endorsed the route. Commission member Leonard Zubrensky expressed a view that the matter was best decided by the County Board, while County Park Commission General Manager Howard Gregg stated he preferred the freeway loop to go elsewhere but conceded an inland route required going through residential

neighborhoods with highly valued homes.¹³⁰

A citizens group, the Lakefront Preservation Committee, subsequently organized to resist the Park and Lake Freeway loop. Their opposition in 1967 marked the beginning of organized opposition to expressway construction in Milwaukee.¹³¹ The organized, ongoing, and widely publicized protest, accompanied by Milwaukee residents' objections to other routes, was an excellent example of the freeway revolt in Milwaukee County.

The Committee successfully lobbied for a citywide referendum on the issue. The specific referendum question asked whether the City of Milwaukee should cooperate with Milwaukee County in street improvements or adjustments such as traffic signals, sewer and water lines, and street lights to accommodate the loop. The referendum also contained a clause specifically recognizing specific land with lake frontage as park land. The Expressway Commission, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, Greater Milwaukee Committee, and Milwaukee Common Council all supported the route. The Expressway Commission's position argued the loop was needed to relieve traffic at the central interchange (now called the Marquette Interchange) and no other suitable routes were available, but the Lakefront Preservation Committee argued the freeway diminished the peace and charm of a prime lakefront area. Over 48,000 city residents signed the petition to place the referendum on the April 4, 1967 ballot.¹³²

Voters defeated the referendum by a substantial margin. Approximately 66%

¹³⁰ "Two Hearings Set on Whyte's Park Freeway Protest," 21 April 1966, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19660421&id=2YtRAAAAIBA&sjid=hAEAAABA&pg=6882,4089321>, accessed 20 February 2015.

¹³¹ "The Case for Re-Evaluation of the 'Lakefront' Freeway System," jointly presented to the Bureau of Public Roads, Federal Highway Administration, and U.S. DoT by the East Side Community Council, Milwaukee River Corridor Committee, and South Side Citizens Committee, 10 September 1970, LRB.

¹³² Ralph Dannheisser, "X-Way Debate Gains Few," 25 March 1967, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19670325&id=6GAqAAAAIBA&sjid=1U4EAAAABA&pg=7277,4907666>, accessed 27 February 2015.

or 69,971 of 105,799 voters supported expressway construction. The strongest opposition came from voting wards through which the Lake and Park Expressways passed. Strong support came from the Near South Side and the far northwest and southwest sides. After the referendum, Bureau of Public Roads director wrote that the federal government required adequate connections to the high level bridge such as through the proposed routes but was willing to consider alternatives.¹³³

Despite freeway advocates' overwhelming success in the 1967 referendum, public support for further construction diminished during the late 1960s. Opening of the primary freeway system with its high level bridge over the Menomonee Valley and the Marquette Interchange in 1968 allowed widespread movement east-west and north-south. Its completion and the construction of the I-894 bypass around the South Side led many residents to question the need for additional freeways. The *Milwaukee Journal's* publication of the Bay and Stadium Freeway routes also prompted residents in those corridors to react.¹³⁴ Displacement of residents of freeway corridors and a lack of good relocation housing further cooled public enthusiasm and prompted other community activists such as Ted Seaver to organize coalition groups against additional construction.¹³⁵

¹³³ James W. McCulla, "Lakefront Freeways Given Huge Vote of Confidence," 5 April 1967, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://www.jsonline.com/historicarchive/search/?searchBy=word&searchText=expressway+moratorium&dat=&fromDate=&nid=jvrRlaHg2sAC&s.x=0&s.y=0>, accessed 27 February 2015.

¹³⁴ "The Case for Re-Evaluation of the 'Lakefront' Freeway System," jointly presented to the Bureau of Public Roads, Federal Highway Administration, and U.S. DoT by the East Side Community Council, Milwaukee River Corridor Committee, and South Side Citizens Committee, 10 September 1970, LRB.

¹³⁵ Cutler, 83



Figure 8: This is a view along West St. Paul Avenue under the Marquette Interchange. Photo by Greg Dickenson, 2012.

Diminished public support brought several anti-freeway candidates to elected office in the early 1970s. State legislators John Norquist, Mordecai Lee, and Mike Elconin, and County Supervisor Dan Cupertino were all elected to their respective posts in part because of their opposition to expressways. Those candidates viewed freeways as negative additions to an urban area and believed they ruined neighborhoods by dividing them.¹³⁶ Mayor Henry Maier and Aldermen Fred Schallert and John Kalwitz further expressed opposition, with Mayor Maier lamenting the lack of relocation housing.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ Cutler, 81.

¹³⁷ "Freeway Plans Spark Protests," 17 April 1969, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19690417&id=A3ZQAAAIBAJ&sjid=5RAEA>

Suburban leaders joined the opposition. SEWRPC conceded the Belt Freeway was not needed until 1980 or 1990 but justified purchasing land in advance for its right-of-way on the grounds that doing so in advance saved money and reduced hardship. For example, the leg of the 34-mile route running through Franklin required relocation of 86-129 houses, six commercial buildings, and 28 farm buildings, at an average of four houses per mile. The cost equaled \$300,000 per mile. In contrast, projections indicated the route closing the gap between the Fond du Lac Avenue and Stadium Freeways eliminated 400 homes per mile at a cost of \$3.9 million per mile. Even so, the Belt Freeway generated opposition in several communities. The proposed route through Franklin took as many as 61 homes in a subdivision near South 76th Street and West Puetz Road and cut through environmentally sensitive areas: a woodland area in Franklin, a tamarack grove in Brookfield, and part of the nearby Fox River flood plain. Residents also asserted that the route was not needed by local residents but by truckers and Illinois residents seeking to bypass Milwaukee. SEWRPC's projections indicated a 54% majority of users would be local residents. Concern about route placement through a residential area in Brookfield caused a citizen's group to advocate a more westerly placement of the Belt Freeway. Under that group's proposal, the Freeway was to run west of Brookfield but east of Waukesha.¹³⁸ The Brookfield Common Council rejected any route through its borders and suggested a route west of Waukesha. However, like in Milwaukee County, highway officials did not take citizen objections in Waukesha County seriously. Brookfield's Common Council had initially supported the plan, but along with Mayor Franklin Wirth later opposed it. A state highway planning official simply dismissed the change

[AAAIBAJ&pg=3548,3481532](#), accessed 21 February 2015.

¹³⁸ Paul O. Hayes, "Suburbs Rally to Fight Belt Freeway Route," 21 October 1969, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19691021&id=HgQqAAAAIBAJ&sjid=NigEAAIAIBAJ&pg=6994,103403>, accessed 27 February 2015.

as "just hearsay."¹³⁹

In the northern suburbs, opposition mirrored the concerns of Brookfield and Franklin residents. Highway planners strongly supported an extension of the Stadium Freeway through the growing Northwest Side to relieve local streets, while business interests believed the route necessary to improve commerce. They also wanted to link the Fond du Lac Avenue and Stadium Freeways to improve access to and from Downtown and better enable travel to Germantown and southern Ozaukee County. Like the Belt Freeway, the cost of the 15-mile leg into Ozaukee County was also fairly low: less than \$1 million per mile compared to \$11.4 million per mile through the Northwest Side. The Ozaukee County leg ran through western Mequon and Cedarburg to a northeasterly curve near Saukville, where it then intersected with I-43. Mequon's city council voted in favor of the Stadium Freeway extension, but both Milwaukee aldermen and the Cedarburg town board objected. Leaders in the Cedarburg area cited environmental concerns, fearing pollution and damage to the Cedarburg Bog, Cedar Creek, and Covered Bridge Park. Milwaukee officials objected to the loss of \$21 million worth of housing. More than 20,000 city residents signed a petition calling for halt to new expressways. Citizens groups further advocated additional mass transit options.¹⁴⁰

By the early 1970s, local officials in Milwaukee began to consider a moratorium on further expressway construction. Concerns over displacements, lack of relocation housing, the impact on neighborhoods, and environmental issues all played

¹³⁹ Paul Feyrer, "Suburbs Harden Opposition to Belt Freeway Route," 8 September 1969, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19690908&id=9XZQAAAIBAJ&sjid=OREEA AAAIBAJ&pg=6624,1933700>, accessed 27 February 2015.

¹⁴⁰ Steve Tatarsky, "X-Way Link to Cost \$11 Million a Mile," 9 July 1970, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=wZJMF1LD7PcC&dat=19700709&printsec=frontpage&hl=en0>, accessed 14 February 2015.

a role. The Milwaukee County Expressway Commission dropped the Bay Freeway along Hampton Avenue from its plans in 1969. U.S. District Judge John Reynolds issued an order restraining contracts for the Park West Freeway along North Avenue in 1972, citing the lack of an environmental impact statement. The U.S. Department of Transportation ultimately rejected an environmental impact statement in January 1977, delaying plans for that route years after the right-of-way had been cleared.

As for a lakefront route, only a portion was built. In April 1972, circuit judge William R. Moser issued an order barring construction through Juneau Park. His order cited a deed from 1936, in which the city gave Milwaukee County land for Juneau Park and other park land. After his order, expressway construction on the site required either a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling or an action by the City of Milwaukee involving a two-thirds majority of the Milwaukee Common Council and the mayor's signature. The Common Council did pass a resolution in favor of the Lake Freeway, but Mayor Maier vetoed it and only four aldermen voted to override his veto.¹⁴¹ In November 1977, the harbor bridge Milwaukee's leaders dreamed of since before the Great Depression finally opened. Running from South Car ferry Street to East Clybourn Street at Lincoln Memorial Drive and connecting to the East-West Expressway at its north end, the high level bridge linked Bay View with downtown but did not contain the northern and southern extensions the federal government required. A plaque affixed to the bridge named it in honor of former Mayor Daniel Webster Hoan.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Michael O. Zahn, "Lake X-Way Route in Park Prohibited," 28 April 1972, *Milwaukee Journal*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19720428&id=jzgdAAAIAIAJ&sjid=zCgEAAAIAIAJ&pg=7363,4829125>, accessed 28 February 2015.

¹⁴² "Bridge to Open Saturday," 31 October 1977, *Milwaukee Sentinel*, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19771031&id=I45QAAAIAIAJ&sjid=7BEEAAAIAIAJ&pg=6843,5750691>, accessed 28 February 2015.



Figure 9: The Lake Interchange and I-794, facing south.
Photo by Greg Dickenson, 2013.

In 1974 the Expressway Commission cancelled the extended Stadium North Freeway, although County Executive Doyle continued to support closing the gap between the Fond du Lac Avenue and Stadium Freeways. Eighteen anti-freeway legislators including future Mayor John O. Norquist also campaigned against more freeways, circulating a letter asking the governor to support their position. In January 1977, Governor Patrick Lucey ordered a halt the Stadium South Freeway.¹⁴³

Richard Cutler referred to 1977 as the climax of the anti-freeway movement in Milwaukee. In December of that year SEWRPC voted 10-7 to drop the Park West Freeway and Fond du Lac-Stadium Freeway "gap closure," and subject other

¹⁴³ Cutler, 90.

incomplete projects to a 10-year referendum. Their action essentially ended expressway construction in Milwaukee County. With the exception of the short Airport Spur linking Mitchell International Airport to the North-South Expressway in 1978, no other freeways were built until 1999.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Cutler, 89-90, 94.

Conclusion

Over two decades after completion of the Hoan Bridge, a southern leg of the Lake Freeway opened to traffic. Called the John R. Plewa Memorial Lake Parkway in honor of the late State Senator John R. Plewa,¹ the route opened in September 1999 at a cost of \$130 million.² The Wisconsin Department of Transportation oversaw construction, which began in 1991. The DOT located the route along the former Chicago and North Western railway, which by the late 1990s was owned by the Union Pacific Railroad and shared the right-of-way with the expressway. The new Lake Parkway differed from other Milwaukee-area expressways in that it was landscaped with trees and shrubs and had a speed limit of only 40 miles per hour at the time it opened. It was similar to other expressways, though, in that it was still a divided highway with access controlled by entrance and exit ramps. The new route ran from the southern terminus of the Hoan Bridge at Carferry Drive to Milwaukee's municipal border with Cudahy at Layton Avenue.³ An extension completed in 2005 linked the Lake Parkway to Edgerton Avenue, just east of Mitchell International Airport. The same year, a major reconstruction of the 37 year-old Marquette Interchange got underway.⁴

In December 2012, SEWRPC approved including another extension to its

¹ Larry Sandler, "Already, Highway Has a New Name: Plewa Memorial Lake Parkway," 8 December 1999, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1683&dat=19991208&id=jqcaAAAIBAJ&sjid=Yy8EAA-AAIBAJ&pg=2402,4756034&hl=en>, accessed 31 March 2015.

² "Lake Parkway Opens," 30 September 1999, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1683&dat=19991208&id=jqcaAAAIBAJ&sjid=Yy8EAA-AAIBAJ&pg=2402,4756034&hl=en>, accessed 31 March 2015.

³ Larry Sandler, "Lake Parkway South-Side Link Fulfills a Long-Held Dream," 21 June 1999, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1683&dat=19990621&id=TKgaAAAIBAJ&sjid=Ri8EAA-AAIBAJ&pg=1533,6452&hl=en>, accessed 31 March 2015.

⁴ Larry Sandler, "A Glance in the Mirror, a Look Ahead," 2 January 2006, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1683&dat=20060102&id=5CIqAAAIBAJ&sjid=MEUEA-AAIBAJ&pg=5386,1416631&hl=en>, accessed 31 March 2015.

long-term regional transportation plan. Including it in its long-term plan was an important step in qualifying for federal highway money. The proposed route continues from the Lake Parkway's terminus at Edgerton Avenue and runs to a point slightly south of Ryan Road in the City of Oak Creek. County Board member Patricia Jursik hailed the move as important in promoting development around the Port of Milwaukee, Mitchell Airport, and the South Shore suburbs.⁵

As of this writing, a lack of funding constrains possible construction of a Lake Parkway extension south of Edgerton Avenue. No other new expressways are under consideration in Milwaukee County.⁶ Also as of this writing, the intersection of the East-West and West Expressways (now called the Zoo Interchange) requires reconstruction. That reconstruction is now underway, prompting temporary closure of several ramps.⁷

The new construction and expressway rebuilding projects represent a vision for continued transportation planning in Milwaukee and its immediate suburbs that focuses on repair and reconstruction of existing expressway routes. An extension of a long-planned route through southeastern Milwaukee County and the rebuilding of two important interchanges indicate that expressways are still a major component of transportation planning in Milwaukee. Yet new freeways are not the only transportation goal of Milwaukee's leaders.

In February 2015, the Milwaukee Common Council approved by a 9-6 vote a new streetcar route proposed for downtown Milwaukee. The streetcar received strong

⁵ Sean Ryan, "Regional Planners Approve Lake Parkway Extension," 6 December 2012, *Milwaukee Business Journal*, <http://www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee/news/2012/12/06/regional-planners-approve-lake-parkway.html>, accessed 31 March 2015.

⁶ "Interim Review and Update of the Year 2015 Regional Transportation System Plan," SEWRPC, May 2014, <http://www.sewrpc.org/SEWRPCFiles/Transportation/Files/RTSP/2014-Update/2014RTSPPlanUpdate-Newsletter.PDF>, accessed 31 March 2015.

⁷ Lee Bergquist, "Traffic Disrupted by Long-Term Ramp Closures in Zoo Interchange," 8 March 2015, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, <http://www.jsonline.com/news/traffic/zoo-interchange-ramps-set-for-long-term-closures-b99458064z1-295545801.html>, accessed 31 March 2015.

support from Mayor Tom Barrett and will be financed in part by a federal grant. Its opponents have questioned the city's ability to fund the project long-term, but advocates have argued the new line will promote economic development in the downtown area.⁸

Transportation planning in Milwaukee has also shifted toward elimination of some freeway segments and continued opposition to any new routes. Citing possible loss of tax base, Cudahy, Oak Creek, and Racine County officials resisted efforts to build the southern Lake Freeway through their borders in 1993.⁹ In 2001, SEWRPC undertook a study of a bypass running between the North-South Expressway (I-43) and the West Expressway (Highway 45), similar to the Good Hope Road route considered but dropped by the original Ammann & Whitney study in the 1950s, and formally proposed by SEWRPC in 1965. Possible locations for such a route were anywhere from Capitol Drive in Milwaukee to Pioneer Road in Ozaukee County.¹⁰ Officials in Germantown and Menomonee Falls expressed support for the plan, but it drew sharp criticism from the mayors of Mequon and Cedarburg, Democratic and Republican state legislators representing Milwaukee's northwest side and North Shore suburbs, and the chairman of the state assembly's transportation committee.¹¹

In 2003, Mayor John O. Norquist shepherded demolition of the Park East Freeway, the only completed portion of the Park Freeway downtown loop debated in the 1960s and 1970s. It was not replaced with another expressway but instead opened

⁸ Crocker Stephenson, "Milwaukee Common Council OKs Streetcar Plan," 10 February 2015, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, <http://www.jsonline.com/news/milwaukee/milwaukee-council-set-to-vote-on-approve-streecar-plan-b99441994z1-291390051.html>, accessed 31 March 2015.

⁹ "Council Opposes Freeway Extension," 4 August 1993, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1368&dat=19930804&id=tqFQAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=ARMEA AAAIIBAJ&pg=2531.442596&hl=en>, accessed 31 March 2015.

¹⁰ Dan Benson, Larry Sandler, and Jeff Cole, "Northern Freeway Bypass Is Road to Ruin, Officials Say," 4 July 2001, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1683&dat=20010703&id=wacaAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=oTAEAA AAAIIBAJ&pg=6832.3105269&hl=en>, accessed 31 March 2015.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

land at the edge of downtown for new development. Seattle, San Francisco, Oakland, Oklahoma City, Providence, Boston, and other cities have likewise initiated or completed expressway demolitions.¹³

That movement to remove freeways in or near city centers and replace them with large boulevards or other major streets, Raymond Mohl argues, grew out of the freeway revolts of the late 1960s and 1970s. He places its beginning in Portland, OR, around 1974 but notes that it has spread to numerous cities in other states, including Milwaukee. In Boston and Seattle, tunnels under the city replaced the freeways; in San Francisco, a streetcar replaced what remained of the Embarcadero Freeway.¹⁴ Thus, just as Milwaukee fit into Mohl's model of locally-initiated expressway construction which enjoyed citizen support but was followed by a backlash or freeway revolt, Milwaukee fits into the expressway teardown movement.

Milwaukee's expressway construction narrative is indeed that of an ongoing project, completed bit by bit, with significant deliberation. Elected officials initiated traffic engineering studies in the 1940s to plan highways to relieve congestion and revitalize the downtown area. The freeways they proposed received public support at first, but later drew so much opposition that continued planning and construction largely ended. In many cases, officials and planners sought to stimulate industry and protect existing industrial areas in their route selections but often demolished homes. Because the new expressways so often ran through densely populated neighborhoods, many residents saw them as concrete ribbons dividing communities and promoting suburbanization.

Even the engineers and highway officials who planned them drew reproach. In

¹³ Raymond A. Mohl, "The Expressway Teardown Movement in American Cities: Rethinking Postwar Highway Policy in the Post-Interstate Era," *Journal of Planning History* 11 (2012): 92-93.

¹⁴ Mohl, "The Expressway Teardown Movement in American Cities: Rethinking Postwar Highway Policy in the Post-Interstate Era," 93-94.

response to criticism at public hearings, Expressway Commission member Robert Brennan predicted in 1969 that the public would challenge civil engineers in the years ahead. He recommended his colleagues become more involved in more nontechnical issues, even to the point of running for office.¹⁵ Criticism of engineers in regard to expressway planning was not unique to Milwaukee. Highway engineers based their recommendations on traffic flow, savings for motorists, and soil conditions and those concerns generally informed highway policy for years. However, the engineers' professional training did not prepare them to respond to visions of highway policy based on social issues or economics. During the 1960s, the number of interests wanting a say in highway planning increased, and by the early 1970s political pressure led governors and state legislators to reduce the road builders' autonomy.¹⁶ In Milwaukee, a coalition including Mayor Henry Maier, numerous aldermen and County Board members, and several prominent legislators blocked several of the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission's proposed and planned routes.

Today, as the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission and the metropolitan area's elected leaders consider long-term regional transportation and land use planning, the narrative of expressway construction in Milwaukee both answers and raises questions about future transportation planning. The freeways were built along their eventual routes as a result of traffic planning studies, the availability of funding, and political debate and compromise. Yet a lack of both funding and political consensus delays additional construction, while leaders disagree on mass transit issues such as the downtown streetcar.

¹⁵ Paul G. Hayes, "Civil Engineers Attacked for Social Ills," 22 December 1969, *Milwaukee Journal*, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1499&dat=19691222&id=KQMqAAAIBAJ&sjid=PCgEAAAIBAJ&pg=7335,1174918&hl=en>, accessed 31 March 2015.

¹⁶ Mark H. Rose and Bruce Seely, "Getting the Interstate System Built: Road Engineers and the Implementation of Public Policy, 1955-1985," *Journal of Policy History* 2 (1990): 41.

This thesis has traced the story of Milwaukee's expressway system since its inception in 1946 through the end of the freeway construction era in 1977. It has tied Milwaukee into a national narrative and offered an insight into the thinking of road builders, civil engineers, urban planners, and elected officials. Perhaps that story and the background to regional transportation planning it offers will be used to inform future research.



Figure 10: A bridge spanning the harbor finally opened in 1977, nearly five decades after Milwaukee's leaders dreamed of linking downtown to Bay View and the South Shore.

Photo by Greg Dickenson, 2012.

Appendix

Names of Key Individuals Involved with Expressway Planning

Charles J. Becker - West Milwaukee Village President

Edward A. Bielefeld - City right-of-way acquisition agent

John Bohn - Milwaukee Mayor, 1942-1948

Walter Bender - Park Commission chairman

Alfred Boerner - Park Commission chairman

Robert W. Brennan - Expressway Engineer

John Doyne - Milwaukee County Executive

Patrick Fass - Milwaukee Alderman

Elliot Fitch - Expressway Commission Chairman

Raleigh W. Gamble - City expressway director

Howard Gregg - Parks Commission General Manager

Daniel Webster Hoan - Milwaukee Mayor, 1916-1940

Eugene Howard – County Highway Commissioner

Virgil Hurless - City Comptroller

Howard Ilgner - City traffic engineer

Michael Jendusa - Milwaukee Alderman

Robert Johnson - Expressway Commission member

Gerald J. Kenehan - Glendale Mayor

Arnold Klentz - West Allis Mayor

William B. Knuese - Wauwatosa Mayor

Elmer Krieger - Land Commissioner

Henry Maier - Milwaukee Mayor, 1960-1988

C. Stanley Perry - Milwaukee County Corporation Consul

Joseph P. Schwada - Milwaukee City Engineer

Clyde Sheets - Milwaukee Assistant City Attorney

Robert Stevenson - Expressway Commission member

Walter Swietlik – City Public Works Commissioner

Henry Wildschut - Milwaukee County Expressway Engineer

Frank Zeidler - Milwaukee Mayor, 1948-1960

Erwin Zillman - Milwaukee Alderman