



GREATER MADISON
CHAMBER *of* COMMERCE

October 9, 2015

Dear Senator Fitzgerald and Speaker Vos:

On behalf of the Greater Madison Chamber of Commerce, and our more than 1,300 business members located throughout the Madison region, I write with great concern for the new delays to critical infrastructure roadway projects – specifically, the Verona Road interchange and I-39/90 expansion – and ask that you pursue immediate legislative action to keep these projects on schedule. For business, economic, mobility and safety reasons, we find additional multi-year delays unacceptable.

As you know, our economy relies on a robust, reliable, safe and interconnected transportation system. Maintaining that infrastructure is critical to accommodate our continued growth in population and commerce. Greater Madison's economy is fortunate to be entering a new Golden Era, led by a growing workforce of young, diverse talent serving industries in key innovation sectors including biotechnology, information technology and knowledge creation. Some of our largest employers – including Dane County's largest and still rapidly-growing private sector employer – are directly impacted by delays to the Verona Road interchange. As the private sector voice for economic development in Dane County, we are deeply concerned about the impact these delays could have on existing business operations and our ability to facilitate the recruitment and expansion of other businesses.

Road construction projects can create significant challenges for businesses, including financial hardship. A 2009 survey of our membership revealed that 68 percent of business respondents experienced declining revenues during a road construction project and 54 percent of the same respondents indicated their business did not return to prior levels after completion of construction. For projects of the magnitude of Verona Road interchange – the longest and largest urban road construction project in the state – a multi-year delay could be the difference between a business surviving or closing.

Keeping these projects on schedule will also have an immediate, positive economic impact statewide. According to a recent report by the Transportation Development Association, the I-39/90 and Verona Road interchange projects are expected to contribute more than \$2.1 billion to Wisconsin's economy and almost 2,800 jobs during the remaining construction of the projects. After completion of the project, businesses and regional economies will benefit by more than \$129 million annually as a result of the increased accessibility and improved road quality.

Significant delays also pose serious risks to public safety. As the Department of Transportation has stated, the Verona Road corridor is operating at unacceptable levels of service with crashes occurring more often than on comparable highways across the state. Without corrective action, crashes and other traffic events will routinely result in extensive backups and excessive delays.

These realities are alarming to our business community. We acknowledge that the funding solution is not as clear. Ideally, we would like to see long-term transportation finance reform that provides sustainable revenue sources to support transportation projects. Our businesses welcome that conversation and the difficult decisions associated with it. In the short-term, however, we hope you will consider immediate options, such as utilizing the budgeted contingency bonding, to lessen the impact on these critical projects.

Thank you for your consideration and your service. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or to discuss this matter further.

With high regard,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Zach Brandon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Zach Brandon
President

Cc: Governor Scott Walker
Verona Road Business Coalition
Rep. Jim Steineke
Sen. Jennifer Shilling
Rep. Peter Barca