



City of
BELOIT, Wisconsin

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March 13, 2009

The Honorable Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin
United States House of Representatives
2446 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Baldwin:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the City of Beloit to request federal funding for the rehabilitation of the Henry Avenue Bridge located at the north end of the city's river district. This is a tremendous opportunity for us to improve the infrastructure of the road system, proclaim the importance of the future of non petroleum powered transportation, and to beautify a naturally appealing green space with an esthetically pleasing structure.

Our current studies and actual observations have indicated the need to increase the traffic lanes of the Henry Avenue Bridge. The existing two lane bridge is inadequate for the current traffic demand, let alone near future demand of the newly constructed library located right across from the eastern end of the bridge. This new library now doubles the size of the current library, has cutting edge technological amenities for public use, and room for future expansion for the growing population. This exciting new facility will place an immediate increase of demand on the bridge as the facility opens in April 2009. This bridge also sees increased traffic during Riverfest, as it is at the northern border of the festival grounds.

The current vision for the improved bridge includes a 10' wide bike path with a barrier on the south side, as well as a 6' sidewalk on the north. While the additional vehicle traffic lanes are the driving force of this project, the city also wants to encourage environmentally friendly activities in support of the eco municipality resolutions that the City of Beloit has passed in the last few years, and serve as a leader in the ways of urban areas to embrace the environmental stewardship mantle. By incorporating a safe bicycle and pedestrian corridor on the bridge, we are further strengthening our commitment to these ideals. Beloit has already provided bike paths in the river area that are removed from high risk automotive interfaces, and the bike lane with barrier on the Henry Avenue bridge will provide a connection between both banks of the Rock River on the northern side of the city. Sadly, with the current economic challenges that we and the rest of the nation are facing, the city would need to eliminate the bike lane if additional funding cannot be secured. WDOT is able to match funds for the vehicular portion of the bridge,

but the bike lane would not be included. With federal funding, we can reinforce the importance of utilizing other modes of transportation besides that of the all too common automobile.

Bridges have always been a focal point of displaying community character for obvious reasons. By rehabilitating the Henry Avenue Bridge, the city will be taking a merely utilitarian bridge that was located on the edge of the community at the time that it was built, and transforming it into a vibrant and pleasing boundary to the park district. We have plans for pedestrian overlooks, historically themed lighting, and landscaping to provide continuity to the bridge to the newly revitalized urban and residential centers, as well as the Riverside Park area. These amenities would be visually enjoyed by pedestrian, bicycle, boating, and automotive travelers. These features are designed to be appealing, yet cost effective, similar to the bridges located further south along the river. As with the aforementioned bicycle lane, funding from the federal government would be instrumental in the ability to realize the full effect of the proposed plans.

In summary, the widening of the bridge deck is necessary based on the demands of the community. With assistance from the federal government, a greater impact can be made by facilitating bicycle traffic and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the bridge, for the benefit of all those in or visiting the community.

Sincerely,



Larry N. Arft
City Manager

C: Senator Herb Kohl
Senator Russell Feingold
James Van De Bogart, City Council President
Beloit City Councilors
David Botts, Public Works Director
Mike Flesch, City Engineer
Helen Forbeck, Legislative Representative