



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Petitions, letters, the Redline Coalition progress on Highway 12

Whitewater, Wis.—July 11, 2017—The Redline Coalition is made up of the Greater Whitewater Committee, Inc., Walworth County, the City of Whitewater, Township of La Grange, City of Elkhorn, Lauderdale Lake and Pleasant Lake Management Districts and Walworth County Economic and Development Alliance (WCEDA).

The mission is three-fold: one, Governor Walker and legislators direct the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) to complete the U.S. Highway (USH) 12 Environmental Impact Study (EIS); two, look for a long-term solution to sustainable transportation funding; and three, ask the Federal Highway Administration to work with the state to loosen the regulatory restraints that cause expenses to the tier one EIS.

To accomplish this goal, the Redline Coalition circulated a petition to send to Governor Walker and state legislators. The petition is located online at <https://www.gopetition.com/petitions/highway-12-eis-petition.html>.

In less than a month signatures on the petition has reached 1,199 and will stay open for continued support. In addition to the signatures there were 88 comments made (samples of comments found below). The signatures and comments include residents, property owners and business owners.

The Redline Coalition has hand delivered letters asking for support from Governor Walker; Co-Chairs of the Joint Finance Committee, Senator Darling and Representative Nygren; Assembly Speaker Vos; Senate Majority Leader Fitzgerald; Representatives August, Horlacher, Loudenbeck, Vruwink; and Senators Nass and Ringhand.

“The Walworth County Board has passed and sent to our legislators and the Governor two resolution supporting the EIS completion,” Walworth County Board Chair Nancy Russell said. “Its completion is essential to maintain and grow our economy sectors of manufacturing, tourism and agriculture.”

Russell also said the Walworth County Highway Jurisdictional Committee, comprised of all towns, cities and villages in Walworth County, earlier voted to support the redline route of USH 12. Russell went on to say the Pleasant Lake District, Lauderdale Lake District, City of Whitewater and the Town of LaGrange have unanimously adopted the same resolution supporting the USH 12 EIS completion.

On May 19, 2017 at 8 a.m. the Redline Coalition conducted the Highway 12 Transportation Forum.

The forum was an organized event for community members in the surrounding USH 12 area to come together and speak their minds on the USH 12 EIS the WisDOT canceled. The redline extended an invite to WisDOT Secretary David Ross and/or any of their staff. Also, in attendance was Representatives Cody Horlacher, Amy Loudenbeck and Don Vruwink.



“The citizens of Elkhorn need a four-lane highway and I support the Redline Coalition’s goals,” Elkhorn Mayor Howie Reynolds said. “The forum held in May was successful in learning everyone’s thoughts on the situation and I look forward to the continuation of everyone’s efforts.”

The USH 12 purposed route to the West of Lauderdale Lakes between Elkhorn and Whitewater was officially mapped out by the WisDOT in 1967 according to the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC). However, no progress has been made on the purposed route.

The preparation of the EIS was included in the 2013-15 Wisconsin biennial budget and approved by legislators and the Governor. After a purpose and needs evaluation the USH 12 EIS was put to a halt by the WisDOT.

According to SEWRPC, in 2016 the average annual daily traffic (AADT) volumes between the end of the four-lane segment to Highway 12 and County Trunk Highway (CTH) ES have historically exceeded the 14,000 capacity.

“It was clearly approved in the budget years ago,” Greater Whitewater Committee President/CEO Jeffery Knight said. “Our hope is for the Governor and legislators will direct the DOT to complete the EIS.”

Traffic continues to grow annually and causes congestion on the current USH 12 route, this creates trouble for travelers. Walworth County is the sixth largest tourist county in Wisconsin, and growth in congestion can lead to increased accidents on USH 12.

Between 2011 and 2015 there were 404 crashes on USH 12 between Elkhorn and Whitewater. Fifty-nine of the 404 crashes were fatalities, and 60 percent of the two-lane USH 12 exceeds the average state crash fatality rate. These numbers will only increase as the tourism industry in Walworth County continues to grow.

“Residents living on the current two-lane Highway 12 route have waited 50 years for answers about some sort of expansion,” LaGrange Town Board Supervisor Marcia Sahag said. “Everyone on Highway 12 and people living on the 1967 purposed route deserves answers from the DOT.”

A two-lane USH 12 will not suffice, it cannot accommodate the large number of travelers during the summer months. The Redline Coalition is looking to finish the USH 12 EIS and if funding became available the Redline Coalition would like to move forward with the proposed “redline” route.

“The delay in the study keeps those affected by the highway project in a continued state of uncertainty about the future of their properties, businesses and lives,” Common Council President Patrick Singer said. “The uncertainty hinders the future development of possible jobs, businesses and any other developments.”

For more information on the progress of the USH 12 EIS and petition please contact Jeffery Knight at 829.728.0662 or at jpk@knightpublicaffairs.com.



Comments:

Do not widen and destroy the lake community or the businesses along the existing 2 Lane Route 12 Elkhorn to Whitewater. Let's finish the Redline 4 Lane Highway! **—Christi Adams; Elkhorn**

US 12 is a two-lane road that was meant to connect local towns and businesses. The problem now is that since the limited access road extension to the four-lane highway was never completed, there is no alternative limited access road, Highway 12 has traffic that is extensive --large number of semi-trucks and more car traffic. Many local business and housing developments would be impacted with widening of current Highway 12. Piecemeal fixes to current HWY12 to help the situation are just band-aids that will not fix the situation.

Finish what was started and extend the 4-lane road where is now ends. **—Jean Bateman; Elkhorn**

This project is urgently needed for the safety of the thousands of motorists using this highway every day. **—Richard Costa, Whitewater**

I am a victim of a crash on Hwy 12. The amount of traffic since my accident has increased drastically. I am constantly in fear of being rear ended again. Speed limits are too high in the stretch between Hwy A and Lauderdale Lakes area on Hwy 12. It's a residential area with several entrances leading in and out of sub divisions and businesses. Something must be done. People take dangerous chances trying to get onto Hwy 12 because the traffic is out of control. **—Deborah Kessel, Elkhorn**

Highway 12 expansion is critical to economic development as well as highway safety in the Whitewater area. Please support timely completion of the EIS. Thank you. **—Lynn Binnie; Whitewater**

This has been long overdue. The ability for people to transit along routes that are not the interstate are key to growth. Smack dab in the center of the golden triangle of Madison, Milwaukee and Chicago, Walworth County is key to providing high quality services to the regional industries IF it has quality roads. **—Mark Rhodes; Lake Geneva**