

A PROPOSAL TO CONDUCT LONG-TERM PLANNING OF THE I-94 INNOVATION DISTRICT

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1 Q: Why think about this? What difference does it make?

A: We can save hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure, give communities what they want and still add tens of thousands of jobs. We can save hundreds of millions in capital and operating costs by using the untapped capacity of existing roads, utilities, and public services. We can keep the low densities desired by suburbs and increase the densities desired by city centers. We can give a wide array of employees access to jobs in every neighborhood in the region. The alternative is burdening taxpayers with infrastructure costs over many decades, adding unwanted traffic and density to suburbs and making our cities less attractive to new employees.

2 Q: What assumptions can we make about long-term planning along I-94?

A: We see several key assumptions that must be acknowledged:

- Foxconn development represents a much larger pattern of new development (beyond supply chains) which will continue along the I-94 corridor and the larger megalopolis for generations.
- New I-94 lanes and related road improvements, currently underway, must occur. This infrastructure is necessary. While Foxconn and DOT must focus on the immediate site, roads and infrastructure, we must also focus, in detail, beyond “day-one”.
- Transit for employees must occur along with, not instead of, personal automobile use. The use of both transit and personal vehicles should be balanced. At the same time, we must retain our low, attractive commuting times.
- Residential revitalization must occur. New housing near I-94 provides a necessary, but only partial, solution. We also need revitalized urban neighborhoods.
- Training for new employees must occur. Current training programs should be modified to accommodate new needs and address new opportunities effectively.

3 Q: Where should new employees live? How should they get to work?

A: They should live where infrastructure has capacity, and many should commute primarily from transit centers. Our region has a unique opportunity to create a strong, on-the-ground action agenda for the long term success of the I-94 “Wiscon Innovation District:”

- Many of these future employees for Foxconn (and others) already live here and have access to limited transit. We will need some new housing, roads, and transit. But just how much of each? Where? When?
- “New” housing and infrastructure incur more front-end and life-cycle costs. Such expenditures also limit resources needed for existing roads, facilities, and housing. Several single-purpose solutions are on the table: new subdivisions, new roads, new training programs. Such “one-shot” answers seem necessary but they are not enough. “Day one” planning for Foxconn must dominate, but not occupy our whole field of vision.
- We need to address multiple issues now, rather than wait until “day two”. Many voices have proposed new housing options, but the real need is for a distribution of housing solutions that fit each community. No single city, county, suburb, town, or village can accommodate all the needs.
- If there are multiple locations needed, what is the best distribution? Different types of housing solutions will be needed for different age groups, lifestyles, and values. Each housing type should be located in a way that maximizes the economic effectiveness of existing infrastructure capacity and minimizes unneeded expansions and long-term maintenance costs for surplus infrastructure capacity.

4 Q: What about housing in suburbs and rural areas without much infrastructure?

A: There is no “one best” solution to housing and infrastructure. We need to grow strong cities, suburbs and rural communities. To do this we need to consider housing opportunities in every community, with or without infrastructure capacity. We should, for example, develop some areas for more expensive house lots without municipal water or sanitary sewers. We also may need some new village centers in rural areas. Many of these concepts are already embodied in the plans of each County and local municipalities.

5 Q: Given these issues, how can we plan for “day two” as Wisconsin’s new innovation district begins?

A: Create transit-based residential nodes using existing capacity. Our region has a unique opportunity to create a strong, on-the-ground action agenda for the long term success of the I-94 “Wiscon Innovation District”. To do this, we must:

- Learn from other national innovation districts, but revise concepts to fit our region’s unique context. For example, we should avoid the cookie-cutter TODs (transit-oriented-developments) that fill Lake County, and instead customize redevelopment to the unique features of local Wisconsin communities.
- Evaluate ideas on the basis of increasing regional per capita revenue while reducing regional per capita costs (for both the private and public sectors of our economy).
- Use cost-effective capacity by expanding existing services and opportunities. Our region has roads, utilities, transit and many development-ready sites. We need new and existing infrastructure. We should not squander gains from new growth and incur more debt. Can we avoid this pitfall?
- Take full advantage of our unique short commuting times (much better than comparable regions). In under 30 minutes you can work at Foxconn, live near Lake Michigan, and play in between.
- Make sure that the short-term flow of construction capital is distributed throughout the economy (e.g. for new roads as well as road repair/maintenance; for new housing as well as building renovations).

6 Q: How will this fit into major public policy initiatives?

A: This plan should fit many options for better public policies addressing tax burdens, revenues and infrastructure costs. The magnitude of this effort provides a unique opportunity to find solutions to many of the vexing problems and controversies regarding jobs, community development, and local values. A map showing our first hypothetical concepts is found at the end of this narrative.

7 Q: Who is accountable for planning where employees live and how they get to work?

A: This must be a collective, collaborative process that starts now. This plan must augment and support the work of other agencies. It should not become an “alternative” plan, or even a “master” plan, but simply a planning “resource” to be used by multiple groups and agencies trying to coordinate their work. No single agency can do this. We must find a way to work together effectively and quickly, including the actions and recommendations of:

- State and regional agencies: DOT, DOA, DNR, WHEDA, WEDC, and SEWRPC
- Private sector leadership groups: M7, MMAC, WMC, WPF
- Local governments in Racine, Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Waukesha
- Major education and training institutions in both private and public sectors

8 Q: How will this fit into local plans?

A: All Counties and municipalities in southeastern Wisconsin have plans compatible with new development on the I-94 corridor – it is not a new phenomenon. These plans anticipate new housing, jobs and infrastructure. The key underlying question is how to use these plans effectively. For example, Racine County, where Foxconn is to be located, includes plans for denser urban development in the city of Racine, suburban residential development in Mt. Pleasant and potential village centers in places like Union Grove. The challenge is not finding

opportunities, but making sure that the benefits are well distributed within existing opportunity areas, while the costs are minimized. In addition, there are key transit agencies in Racine, Kenosha, Milwaukee, and Waukesha Counties, all of which can make development cost-effective.

9 Q: Is this a “backdoor” to start a regional transit system or regional tax?

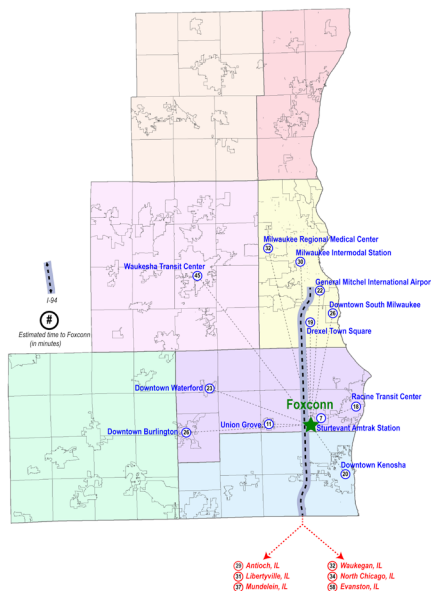
A: No. This concept is not intended to create a centralized system of transit control or more centralized taxing authority. Each County and municipality should decide those issues on their own. This plan is intended to augment and support the work of other agencies. The point of this plan is to show how voluntary community “coordination” is much better than community “competition.” This plan is about using what we have effectively and keeping our resources intact.

10 Q: What is the immediate next step?

A: Conduct a quick action planning process that gets us focused. We propose that over the next few months GRAEF, in collaboration with other organizations, prepare an achievable two-year action plan that will:

- Specify two-year investment-based action steps for initiating the physical on-the-ground foundation for long term infrastructure and community development.
- Confirm that these action steps are consistent with, and supportive of, the initiatives of the key State, Regional, County and local municipal plans.
- Document and incorporate recommendations from currently approved public plans that provide long-term sites for more than 20,000 new employees, expand education/ training centers, and create transit based nodes that can supply employees to the entire I-94 district.
- Recommend key locations for multi-modal transportation/residential nodes that provide highly visible, accessible demonstrations of success and provable economic benefits.
- Propose organizational structures for implementing and monitoring multi-modal infrastructure nodes.
- Support a combination of private sector funding and matching in-kind staff time to produce this plan. This proposed plan will cost approximately \$50,000(?). To complete this work in a timely manner will require funding for organizations that can make this feasible, fast, and effective.

Transit Based Residential Nodes
Southeastern Wisconsin



Note: This draft concept is a work in progress and is updated by GRAEF as we receive more information.