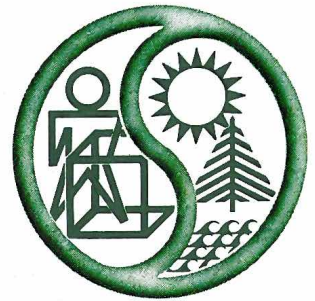


Ecology CENTER of ANN ARBOR

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Testimony Before City Council of Ann Arbor Regarding I-94/Platt Road Interchange

The Ecology Center urges City Council to reconsider its endorsement of the proposed I-94/Platt Road Interchange. The Center is opposed to its construction for a number of reasons, but our principal objections are environmentally based. We realize that the issue is not a simple matter of good versus bad planning. On balance, however, we think that there is a strong case to be made against this project, especially in light of both the changing world energy picture and a new community awareness of the need to limit growth.

Everywhere, responsible government leaders at all levels are beginning to rethink the issues and values inherent in rapid development of the urban fringe. There are new imperatives which constrain certain types of growth. The availability of energy supplies, water and air quality concerns, the need to preserve open spaces and wildlife habitat and the inexorable depletion of land resources are all increasingly significant factors that must be evaluated.

Viewed against these major concerns, it is hard to justify the proposed interchange. It is not a development which reflects a rational understanding of impending energy shortages. Instead it is designed to promote use of the automobile, to promote medium density subdivisions well removed from job and activity centers. It does not lend itself to increased reliance on an expanded mass transit system as envisioned in the AATA's 1990 Plan for this area. In fact, to make things easier for automobile traffic with this type of road construction is to encourage and subsidize private use of the auto at a time when public policies should be emphasizing the reverse of that approach.

With a new interchange there would be an inevitable increase in the pace and variety of growth south of I-94. Pittsfield Township and Washtenaw County Land Use Plans envision light industry and rural residential developments in this area. The attendant use of autos will further reduce air quality in the area. Paving of new roads and commercial parking lots can only add to problems of pollution from storm-water runoff. This interchange would not enhance the prospects for

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retaining or creating a so called "Greenbelt" around the city of Ann Arbor. Seemingly it would do just the opposite.

Although the completed project would perhaps only reduce the affected wetland by less than 10%, the construction process itself could cause long term damage. The Michigan Department of Transportation Final Negative Declaration for the proposed I-94/Platt Road Interchange admits that "Construction...results in the removal and disruption of vegetative and wildlife communities..." in the wetland. There is no promise or projected recovery from these negative impacts.

The Center's final concern lies with the regional impact of this highway proposal. Again, the Final Negative Declaration concedes that "...it could accelerate planned development and changes in land use committing even greater amounts of rural land to urbanization." We feel that it is time that the city and its neighbors begin to move away from this kind of land use conversion. Loss of open space, wood lots and agricultural land is a problem of great urgency. Developmental pressures are currently intensifying in eastern Washtenaw County. Instead of contributing to the problem, the City should act to minimize this type of growth wherever possible.