Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 1990, two studies were completed which raised questions and concerns about the extent to which the adopted regional land use plan was being implemented. The first was a study completed by the Governor’s Metro 2020 Policy Board, a group of public and private leaders from throughout southeastern Wisconsin appointed by the Governor to develop support for the construction of needed major transportation system improvements in southeastern Wisconsin.¹ The second was a study completed by the Regional Transportation Authority Study Committee, a group created by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) at the request of the County and City of Milwaukee to examine the feasibility of creating a regional transportation authority for southeastern Wisconsin.²

In examining the transportation needs of the seven-county Southeastern Wisconsin Region as set forth in the adopted regional transportation system plan, both the Metro 2020 Policy Board and the Regional Transportation Authority Study Committee concluded that since the regional transportation system plan was based upon the regional land use plan, urban development at variance with the land use plan could significantly and adversely affect the development and operation of the regional transportation system. Accordingly, both groups concluded that a review of the implementation status of the adopted regional land use plan was warranted. The Metro 2020 Policy Board further recommended to the Governor that the State of Wisconsin fund two land use-related studies, one a state-level study by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation of land use-transportation interrelationships and the other a study by the SEWRPC of the status of implementation of the adopted regional land use plan and of the means by which implementation of that plan could be strengthened.

In 1991, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation sought legislative authorization to follow up on the recommendations of the Metro 2020 Policy Board, including the proposed SEWRPC land use plan implementation study. As a part of that initiative, the Department requested that the Regional Planning Commission include the land use plan implementation study in its work program for 1992. On December 4, 1991, the Commission approved the request of the Department, endorsing a 1992 work program that included a study relating to implementation of the adopted regional land use plan. This report is intended to document the findings and recommendations of that study.

STUDY PURPOSE

The basic purpose of the regional land use plan implementation study is to examine the extent to which development in the Region has occurred in conformance with, or at variance to, the adopted regional land use plan and, as may be found necessary or desirable, to recommend means by which plan implementation might be strengthened. More specifically, the study is to:

1. Describe briefly the adopted regional land use plan.

2. Quantify, to the extent possible, the status of plan implementation, identifying the extent to which the Region has developed in accordance with, or at variance to, the plan recommendations.

3. Describe the tools and techniques that are available to federal and state agencies and county and local units of government to promote regional land use plan implementation.


²See SEWRPC Memorandum Report No. 38, A Regional Transportation Authority Feasibility Study for Southeastern Wisconsin, November 1990, and the minutes of Advisory Committee meeting of May 2, 1991, on file in SEWRPC offices.
If the study concludes that there is a significant amount of development occurring at variance with the adopted regional land use plan, then it is intended that potential actions be identified which would strengthen plan implementation.

STUDY ORGANIZATION

In authorizing the undertaking of this regional land use plan implementation study, the Regional Planning Commission, following its historic practice, created an Advisory Committee to guide the conduct of the study. The Commission appointed Mr. Richard W. Cutler, an Attorney and former Regional Planning Commissioner from Milwaukee County, as Committee Chairman. The Commission also directly appointed to the Committee eight representatives of the following interests: land development, economic development, environmental preservation, public works, municipal law, local government finance, and central cities. The Commission also asked that each county in the Region appoint two individuals to the Committee, suggesting that they be either county or local elected or appointed officials with substantial experience in the fields of agriculture, land use development, public service and infrastructure development, or public finance. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation was also represented on the Advisory Committee by its Southeastern District Director. The Executive Director of the Regional Planning Commission served as the ex-officio, nonvoting Secretary of the Committee. The membership roster is reproduced on the inside front cover of this report.

The Commission directed that the land use plan implementation study be carried out by its own staff. In accordance with the Metro 2020 Policy Board recommendation, the study was funded entirely by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

RELATIONSHIP TO CONCURRENT STATE LEVEL LAND USE STUDY

As already noted, the Metro 2020 Policy Board also recommended that the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) establish a Statewide Land Use Task Force to address transportation-related land use and urban design issues. More specifically, the Metro 2020 Policy Board was interested in having the WisDOT identify land use development strategies that might tend to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. In this respect, the Board expressed concern over the adverse impacts of land use decentralization on those objectives. The Board was also interested in identifying procedures whereby the transportation impacts of major land development projects could be determined and made known prior to land use development project approval.

The Governor and the Wisconsin Legislature specifically directed that the WisDOT proceed with the establishment of a Statewide Land Use Task Force and the conduct of the land use policy study envisioned by the Metro 2020 Policy Board. This state-level study was to be undertaken concurrently with the SEWRPC regional land use plan implementation study, with recognition on the part of all parties concerned of the need to coordinate the two studies. An initial meeting of the chairmen and staffs of the two committees to effect coordination of the two studies was held on March 3, 1992. It was agreed at that meeting that the SEWRPC study would have as its focus the seven-county Region and the regional land use plan; the WisDOT study would have a statewide geographic focus and concentrate on specific land use-transportation policies and problems. It was agreed that the two studies would be coordinated through periodic meetings between the chairmen and staffs of the two committees, and perhaps through overlapping committee membership. Subsequent events resulted in Waukesha County Executive Daniel M. Finley being appointed to both the Statewide Land Use Task Force and the SEWRPC Advisory Committee. Given these measures then, it should be possible to coordinate the two studies, and to achieve mutually consistent and reinforcing findings and recommendations.

REPORT ORGANIZATION

Following this introductory chapter, the results of the regional land use plan implementation study are presented in seven additional chapters. Chapter II provides a brief description of the adopted regional land use plan. Chapter III identifies and, to the extent possible, quantifies the status of regional land use plan implementation. Chapter IV describes the tools and techniques that are currently available at the federal, state, county, and local governmental levels to bring about plan implementation.
Drawing upon the conclusions reached in Chapters III and IV, Chapter V sets forth a series of interrelated preliminary recommendations designed to bring about actions that would help strengthen regional land use plan implementation in southeastern Wisconsin. Chapter VI summarizes the study findings, conclusions, and preliminary recommendations made by the Advisory Committee. Finally, Chapter VII sets forth the Advisory Committee’s final recommendations, such recommendations reflecting reactions to the preliminary recommendations derived primarily through an extensive series of meetings with key State agencies.