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Statement: State budget will harm Wisconsinites

Legislature's proposed budget is bad for the environment, climate, and justice

This week, the legislature passed a state budget largely along partisan lines. The proposed budget includes a 50% cut to Madison and Milwaukee's public transit systems (\$41.3m combined) as well as the greenlighting of the harmful I-94 E/W highway expansion project in Milwaukee, along with \$40m in funding. Water protections, support for clean energy and energy efficiency, environmental justice initiatives and funding for public lands were also stripped from the budget.

Elizabeth Ward, Chapter Director of the Sierra Club - Wisconsin Chapter, issued the following statement:

"Governor Evers' proposed budget was one of the strongest budgets we have seen, with programs to remove harmful pollutants from water, to replace lead pipes, to fund stewardship of our lands, to expand environmental justice initiatives, and to take bold action on climate change, something that can't wait. It is disappointing to again see the legislature strip out programs that are not just beneficial but necessary for the health and wellbeing of Wisconsinites.

The majority of this budget maintains the status quo, which means lead in drinking water, public lands strapped for funding, air pollution, barriers to clean energy and energy efficiency, and a transportation system that is not working for Wisconsin residents.

However, the budget does even more damage than inaction. The transportation budget in particular is adding insult to injury. Taking \$41 million from Madison and Milwaukee transit systems and then turning around and spending \$40m on the I-94 E/W in Milwaukee is atrocious. Public transportation is critical for stopping a climate catastrophe and is an essential form of transportation, especially for people with disabilities and older adults who cannot drive, people who cannot afford to drive, and people who do not want to drive. Transit is essential for our economy and provides access to jobs, and it is beneficial for the climate, for public health, and for increasing racial and economic justice."

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest, largest, and most influential grassroots environmental organization. The Sierra Club's mission is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth. The Sierra Club – Wisconsin is made up of 18,000 members and supporters from throughout Wisconsin working to promote clean energy and protect land and water resources.