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NEWS

Engineering, environmental analysis continue

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is making steady progress on the Zoo Interchange Corridor Study. The interchange must be rebuilt; the question we are addressing in this study is *how* the interchange will be rebuilt: will it be rebuilt exactly as it looks today, will we incorporate some isolated improvements, or will we fully modernize the interchange?

We shared initial design concepts with the public at public information meetings on May 21 and 29. For a more detailed look at these initial design concepts, please check our Web site at www.seffreeways.org.

This newsletter will bring you up to date with where we are in the study process and what to expect in the coming months. You will find out:

- What traffic and safety problems the study is addressing;
- What alternatives were analyzed and are no longer being considered; and
- What additional work needs to be completed to finish the study.

We welcome comments to help us address the issues that matter to you. Attend the public meetings or call or e-mail the project contacts listed on page 5. We look forward to hearing from you soon; thanks for your continued participation.

Public information meetings scheduled

Please join the project team at either of two open-house public information meetings: Monday, Oct. 27, from 2 to 7 p.m. at the Tommy Thompson Youth Center at State Fair Park; or Thursday, Oct. 30, from 4 to 8 p.m. at Wauwatosa West High School. View refined alternatives and provide input on study progress. See back panel for more information.



Zoo Interchange study limits ▶

East – I-94 at 70th Street; **west** – I-94 at 124th Street;
south – I-894 at Lincoln Avenue; **north** – US 45 at Burleigh Street.

Project progress

During the past 10 years, WisDOT and the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) have completed a number of studies and analyses that consistently concluded that improvements to the Zoo Interchange are necessary.

Recently WisDOT has collected and analyzed data to show current and future traffic scenarios. Future traffic volumes and travel patterns are based on future population, job growth and land development data.

Based on the initial results of the traffic analysis and the input received at the January 2008 open house workshops, the Zoo Interchange Team developed seven design concepts for public review and comments. Seven concepts, including the “no build” or “replace in kind” alternative, were presented at public information meetings in May.

Results of the alternatives analysis

Nearly 500 people attended the May public information meetings and provided valuable input and ideas on the alternatives. The seven alternatives were further evaluated for traffic operations and impacts to local and environmental features.

Result

The traffic analysis concluded that spot improvements alone would not adequately address congestion and safety issues in the Zoo Interchange corridor. The spot improvement alternatives also did not address the outdated design issues including left hand exit and entrance ramps.

The Zoo Interchange study team determined that the “spot improvement alternatives” would be screened out from further study and the “modernization alternatives” should be analyzed further.

The “modernization alternatives” feature a multi-level system interchange with right side exits and entrances. This design reduces weaving maneuvers and provides safer operations.

After evaluating comments received at the May public meetings and reviewing the engineering data:

- The three “spot improvement” alternatives were screened out because they did not address the traffic and safety problems in the Zoo Interchange corridor.
- A more detailed alternatives analysis is continuing on the remaining three “modernization” concepts.
- It is likely that some modernization alternatives will be eliminated before the public meeting. The remaining modernization alternatives will be modified and evaluated in detail.
- The refined modernization alternatives may include alternatives with and without additional capacity (lanes).

Alternatives no longer under consideration

“Spot improvements” - the goal of these design concepts was to provide localized reconstruction for operational and safety improvements. Right of way acquisition would have been greater than “replacement-in-kind,” but less than “modernization.”

The “spot improvement” alternatives each would have maintained the current number of lanes and ramp locations within the core of the interchange.

“Spot improvement” alternatives:

- Did not adequately address safety.
- Did not adequately address congestion.
- Did not address outdated design.
- Did not address the purpose of the study and the needs identified in the study.

Alternatives to be presented at the October public meetings

The study team will present alternatives for each leg (north, south, east, west) of the project. The alternatives for each leg can be mixed and matched to fit the preferences and needs of the community. The alternatives presented will include the “replace-in-kind” alternative.

The maps and displays will show increased detail of where the new right of way lines may be located. Also, there will be artistic drawings to show how the freeway may look and a computerized “fly over” to illustrate how traffic will flow with the different interchange designs.

Remaining study and analysis

The study now proceeds to more detailed impact analysis of the remaining alternatives. Among the many impacts WisDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) will assess: wetland, air quality, noise, stormwater and historic resource impacts.

Engineering efforts will focus on the freeway alignments and interchange improvements. More detailed plans are being prepared for agency and public review. WisDOT is sensitive to environmental constraints, with impacts being avoided or kept to a minimum. Traffic studies are also continuing.

The most frequent public comment to date is to fix the congestion on the north leg of the project. The study team is focusing on reducing congestion through improved operations and interchanges.



Future study newsletters

- Alternative refinement
- Traffic engineering reports
- Community sensitive design
- Pre-construction planning

What happens next?

The preliminary results of the environmental and engineering analysis will be presented by study team members at the public information meetings scheduled for Oct. 27 and 30 (see back page).

The next step will be the completion of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in 2009. The DEIS may indicate WisDOT's preferred alternative. The DEIS will be available

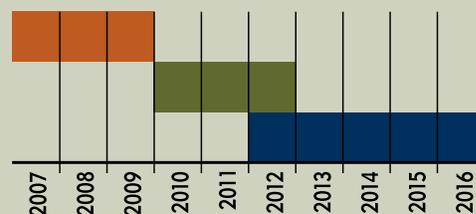
for public review and comment, and WisDOT will hold a public hearing.

After reviewing public and government agency comments, WisDOT and FHWA will confirm or select the preferred alternative and prepare a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Once the FEIS is completed, and a Record of Decision is approved by WisDOT and FHWA, the project will proceed to final design, right of way acquisition and construction.

Project timeline

The following timeline shows the schedule for the Zoo Interchange environmental and engineering study as well as the anticipated timeline for design and construction.



2007-09 – conduct environmental and engineering analysis

2010-12 – conduct final design; begin addressing real estate/utility issues

2012-16 – reconstruct the interchange

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

From public meetings, block meetings, emails and calls, these are the questions most frequently asked by neighbors and businesses in the area.

Can something be done about noise levels, dust and dirt?

WisDOT understands that the Zoo Interchange Corridor affects the quality of life in the communities that surround it. Some residents and businesses are concerned about the effects of pollutants and noise from the freeway. Through careful design and planning, WisDOT will ensure that the corridor reconstruction project meets all state and federal standards for clean air and acceptable noise levels.

As part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), WisDOT will study the current and future air quality in the corridor. Designs that help alleviate congestion also help reduce emissions of most pollutants from vehicles. Also, newer, cleaner-burning, fuel-efficient vehicles will replace older vehicles and help reduce air pollution. As a result, WisDOT expects air quality to improve over time.

Also as part of the EIS, WisDOT will study existing and future noise levels along the freeway. Where the noise will likely exceed state-defined limits for acceptable noise levels, WisDOT might implement a sound barrier program. If sound barriers meet the reasonable and feasible criteria for installment, communities will decide whether to install the barriers.

More information about air quality is available at www.epa.gov. Residents can learn more about sound barriers by visiting www.legis.state.wi.us and searching for “Trans 405.”

Will transit be included in the Zoo Interchange project?

While transit is a critical component of the regional transportation system, the purpose of this project is to address the age and design of the Zoo Interchange along with the number of crashes and the growing congestion levels within the study limits.

The reconstruction of the Zoo Interchange is included in the *SEWRPC Regional Transportation System Plan For Southeastern Wisconsin: 2035*, as are recommended transit improvements for the region. It is important to note, however, that the traffic volume projections for the Zoo Interchange study reflect the inclusion of several transit-related factors that are part of the regional transportation plan:

- A doubling of transit ridership.
- The implementation of the KRM (Kenosha, Racine, Milwaukee commuter rail extension) corridor.
- Improvements to bus service and connections.

All of this means that the traffic projections are lower than they would be if transit were not a significant part of the complete regional transportation picture.

Although WisDOT provides a large part of local transit operating funding, state statutes do not allow WisDOT to own or manage transit systems, or to fund transit system capital improvements. It is legislatively required that local units of government, including counties and municipalities, along with a

Regional Transit Authority, take the lead on studying and implementing new transit systems and infrastructure.

The reconstruction of the Zoo Interchange will not preclude any other parallel and/or intersecting corridors for mass transit including Wisconsin Avenue or other streets or vacant corridors. As a part of the traffic mitigation plan for the construction phase of the project, transit will be considered to reduce traffic in and around the interchange during construction. The longer-term potential for these mitigation efforts to remain in place as permanent transit options is a question that can only be answered by local units of government.



Frequently asked questions, continued

How will WisDOT pay for the Zoo Interchange project?

WisDOT projects are funded through the biennial state budget process. Interstate improvements are funded by state and federal governments, and bond funds are often used. As with other state projects, WisDOT, the Wisconsin Legislature and the state's congressional delegation will work together to obtain funds.

What will you do to address congestion on local arterials in the area?

WisDOT is currently completing a traffic impact analysis (TIA) in the area around the Milwaukee Regional Medical Center and Milwaukee County Research Park that includes evaluation of the local roadway system. The study team is also preparing an evaluation of other major local roads not included in the TIA. The initial results of these analyses will be incorporated and coordinated with the Zoo Interchange project, with more detailed proposals for the local roads at the upcoming public information meeting.

How will WisDOT handle construction?

It is still early in the planning phase of this study, but we understand that construction creates disruption and stress on businesses, residents and commuters. Every effort will be made to maintain two lanes of traffic (north, south, east, west lanes) at peak times on the freeway and to not significantly or seriously disrupt access to neighborhoods, businesses, recreational destinations or the medical facilities.



Similar to the Marquette Interchange, there will be a comprehensive public information effort to both inform the community and seek its assistance in building a workable and successful traffic management strategy.

Construction on the I-94 North South Corridor will be underway starting in 2009. The Mitchell Interchange will be reconstructed and open to traffic before freeway traffic construction impacts will begin on the Zoo Interchange.

How many houses or businesses will you acquire as part of this project?

A goal is to minimize the real estate needed to build a workable and environmentally acceptable interchange. All homeowners and businesses that may be impacted under any of the preliminary design concepts were contacted by WisDOT.

As we move forward with refined alternatives, we will know more about

the potential impact to properties. When the seven alternatives were introduced in May, a range of property impacts was discussed.

Depending on the chosen alternative, entire properties may be acquired or perhaps WisDOT will purchase an easement or a strip of land. At this point in the analysis, depending on the alternative chosen, the estimate range of properties that may be impacted has not changed from the early estimates. A considerable percentage of the property acquired, either property acquired in whole or strips of land, will come from utilities and government owners. Until a firm decision has been made on a preferred alternative, we do not have definitive determinations of specific property impacts. As the study team refines the alternatives we will continue to meet one-on-one with any home owner or business that may be impacted.



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ZOO Interchange Public Information Meetings YOU'RE INVITED

Gather information on refined alternatives through:

- Presentations and visual imagery
- Individual Q&A
- Data and analysis

Provide comments on study progress and alternatives.

<p>OCT 27 from 2 to 7 p.m. State Fair Park Tommy Thompson Youth Center Gate #5 640 S 84th St., West Allis MCTS Route 67</p>	<p>OCT 30 from 4 to 8 p.m. Wauwatosa West High School Cafeteria 11400 W. Center St., Wauwatosa MCTS Route 85</p>
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