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NEWS

Zoo Interchange study nears completion



The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is reaching the final phase of the Zoo Interchange Corridor study. We appreciate the community input we've received to help develop and refine alternatives that meet the needs and expectations of the community and the traveling public. The study team has worked to create plans and designs to safely manage traffic from 124th Street on the west to 70th Street on the east, and from Lincoln Avenue on the south to Burleigh Street on the north.

The Zoo Interchange is the hub of commerce and travel for the southeastern Wisconsin freeway system. It is the oldest and busiest system interchange in the state. The Zoo Interchange carries significantly more traffic than planners and engineers envisioned in the early 1960s when they designed the existing interchange. In 1963, when it opened to traffic, the engineers envisioned a future where 115,000 vehicles per day would use the interchange. Today, more than 350,000 vehicles use the interchange each day.

During the past decade, numerous state and regional plans have concluded that the Zoo Interchange needs to be rebuilt. The aging, outdated infrastructure can no longer handle the volume of traffic that exists today, much less the traffic that is forecasted to use this corridor for years into the future.

In this newsletter you will find:

- An overview of alternatives and schedule information to be presented at the hearing
- A summary of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), and where it can be reviewed
- Information about utilities in the corridor
- What to expect at the public hearings
- Contact information

We recognize that we are developing these plans in complicated economic times, but we must continue responsible planning for the safe future of the state's transportation system.

Public hearing scheduled

The public hearing is an important time to voice your opinion on the study. You are invited to attend either of two open-house hearings on the DEIS:

- **Tuesday, June 23, 2009, 2 to 7 p.m.**
- **Wednesday, June 24, 2009, 4 to 8 p.m.**

Both events are at the Tommy Thompson Youth Center at State Fair Park Gate #5, 640 S. 84th St. in West Allis.

Alternatives

No Build

The “No Build” alternative is a maintenance alternative which would leave the Zoo Interchange in place. Regular maintenance would continue to be provided on the freeway. This alternative is not cost effective, as the aging infrastructure will need more and more improvements over time.

Build

There have been three basic design concepts developed and evaluated for the future of the Zoo Interchange.

- **Replace-In-Kind** – Under this alternative, existing freeway is reconstructed in the current configuration. Operationally, it is the same as a “No Build” alternative.
- **Spot Improvements** – The goal of these design concepts is to reconstruct certain locations to improve operations and safety. Right of way acquisition will be greater than Replace-In-Kind, but less than Modernization. The Replace-In-Kind and Spot Improvements

all maintain the current lane numbers and ramp locations within the core of the interchange.

- **Modernization** – All Modernization alternatives feature a multi-level system interchange with right side exits and entrances. These designs reduce weaving maneuvers, provide safer operations and include options for both a six-lane or eight-lane freeway.

Note: All of the current alternatives for redesigning the interchange are Modernization alternatives; the Spot Improvement alternatives are no longer being considered. In previous newsletters or presentations, you may have seen them referred to as M1 or M3. In this newsletter, we’re referring to them by leg. For example, W3 is the third west leg modernization alternative that was developed and refined, formerly M3.

The alternatives have been screened, and for some legs (south and west) a recommended alternative has been identified. For the DEIS, the east and north legs do not have a recommended alternative design,

nor is there a recommendation on whether six lanes or eight lanes should be built. WisDOT will make those recommendations based on additional community input. For the Final EIS, a preferred alternative design and number of lanes will be identified.

Core of Interchange

Under the recommended alternative, the average driver will view the redesign of the core of the Zoo Interchange to be similar to the redesign of the Marquette Interchange core. The left-hand exit and entrance ramps will be moved to the right side and updated design standards will be implemented, curves will be less sharp, and some ramps will have two lanes rather than one.

Should a modernization alternative be built, the profile (height) of the core section will be about 30 feet to 40 feet higher than the current design. Relocations may include a Milwaukee County Zoo maintenance facility, the Zoofari Center, one commercial building and five residential units on the south side of I-94, west of I-894.

South Leg of Interchange – S2

For the south leg of the study area, the primary difference between what exists today and what is being considered for redesign is the northbound entrance ramp onto I-894 from Greenfield Avenue. Under the redesign, all drivers heading east or west on Greenfield will use a loop ramp to enter northbound I-894 which provides more acceleration distance. This will allow drivers heading north on I-894 to proceed north on US 45 or east-west on I-94. This alternative may require the acquisition of two commercial properties. In addition, six residential units and one commercial building on the south side of I-94 and west of I-894 may be relocated, depending on whether a connection is provided to Greenfield Avenue from I-94 west of the core.



Alternatives, continued

West Leg of Interchange – W3

For the west leg of the study area, there is one redesign alternative with the primary difference from today's operations found in the location of the ramps for the Highway 100 (WIS 100) interchange. Under alternative W3, there is a "fly-over ramp" with all traffic on Highway 100 (WIS 100) entering eastbound or westbound I-94 from the north side of I-94. The alternative may require one commercial building relocation.

North Leg of Interchange – northern half (Swan Boulevard to Burleigh)

For the North Avenue interchange, there are two redesign alternatives being considered. The first is a double loop ramp system (similar to the current design) with loop ramps in the northeast and southwest quadrants. The northeast quadrant loop ramp may include constructing a stem which would allow turning east onto North Avenue. The second alternative includes a loop ramp in the northeast quadrant for northbound traffic and a traditional diamond interchange exit for southbound traffic. Northbound Mayfair Road (WIS 100) will be rebuilt.

North Leg of Interchange – N1 and N3 southern half (Core to Swan Boulevard)

For the southern half of the north leg of the study area, there are two redesign alternatives with the primary differences in the section from Bluemound Road to Watertown Plank Road. Under both alternatives, one residential unit, one commercial building and one public building may be acquired.

For a full list of impacts, to download exhibits or to view the DEIS online, check our Web site:
www.seffreeways.org

Under the N1 alternative, a driver can use frontage roads to enter and exit I-894 south of Bluemound Road and US 45 north of Watertown Plank Road. The frontage roads also provide access to Bluemound Road, Wisconsin Avenue and a new roadway crossing US 45 between Wisconsin Avenue and Watertown Plank Road.

Under the N3 alternative a driver can use frontage roads (and "Texas U-Turns" at Bluemound Road, Wisconsin Avenue and Watertown Plank Road) to enter and exit I-894 south of Bluemound Road and US 45 north of Watertown Plank Road. The N3 frontage roads also provide access to Watertown Plank Road in addition to Bluemound Road and Wisconsin Avenue.

- **Watertown Plank Road Interchange:** Both the N1 and N3 alternatives provide a full diamond interchange similar to what exists today. Under both alternatives, traffic between US 45 and Swan Boulevard will have dedicated ramps to and from the south so the traffic won't intersect with Watertown Plank Road traffic. Both alternatives improve traffic flow significantly.
- **Bluemound Road Interchange:** At Bluemound Road, under both N1 and N3, you'll be able to enter and exit I-894 and US 45 (via frontage roads for N3) but you cannot make connections to east/west I-94 from Bluemound Road due to the close proximity to the core of the interchange. Also, from eastbound and westbound I-94 there will not be an option of exiting at Bluemound Road.

East Leg of Interchange – E1 and E1/E3 hybrid

For the east leg of the study area, there are two redesign alternatives. Under either alternative, O'Connor Street could be built either as a service drive or a local road. The primary difference between the design alternatives is for eastbound drivers exiting at the 84th Street exit and westbound drivers entering at 84th Street.

Under the E1 alternative, the drivers exiting at 84th Street from the west will utilize a one-way service drive and a "Texas U-Turn" that will operate as follows: exit from the west beyond 84th Street and drive down a service drive past the Pettit Ice Center and make a U-turn across the 76th Street bridge (not stopping for any lights) and then drive back to 84th Street on a service drive on the north side of the highway parallel to O'Connor Street. The E1 alternative does not require any relocations, but does impact the parking at the Pettit Center and State Fair Park.

Under the E1/E3 hybrid alternative, there will be a half-diamond interchange at 84th Street. The traffic heading east on I-94 will exit at 84th Street similar to how it functions today. The traffic entering the freeway heading west at 84th Street would utilize a Texas U-turn similar to E1 westbound operation. The E1/E3 hybrid alternative may require the acquisition of 19 to 20 residential units and one commercial building along Adler Street west of 84th Street. The hybrid alternative will have fewer impacts to State Fair Park and the Pettit Center.



Utilities and railroads

One challenge within the Zoo Interchange corridor is the presence of utility facilities. The transportation corridor is also a significant power corridor and contains two railroad lines.

WisDOT is working closely with the following:

- American Transmission Company regarding the potential impacts to their towers
- WE Energies regarding their overhead lines and substations
- Union Pacific and Canadian Pacific railroads
- Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
- Other utilities and operators

What happens next

The schedule for Zoo Interchange study activities after the public hearings on June 23 and 24 is as follows:

- **May 29 - July 13** – Public hearing comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).
- **July 13 - Fall 2009** – The study team reviews and evaluates public hearing testimony and comments on the DEIS, and then it will prepare the Final EIS.
- **Fall 2009** – The Final EIS becomes available. This will identify the final preferred alternatives and summarize

input received from the public hearing and comments on the DEIS.

- **Early 2010: Anticipated Record of Decision (ROD) from the Federal Highway Administration** – The ROD is the final environmental approval that is needed before proceeding to final design and construction.

Funding for the Zoo Interchange is a state and federal decision. As the state budget becomes finalized, information will be shared on the timing of engineering and construction.



What to expect at the public hearings on June 23 and 24

Please join the Zoo Interchange study team at either of two open-house public hearings. The information will be the same on both nights.

During the hearings, attendees can review exhibits and discuss the project with the team. A presentation will run continuously throughout the meeting. After reviewing the information, you can submit testimony for the public record in several ways. Court reporters will be on hand throughout the hearing to record spoken testimony. You

may also submit written testimony by using the pre-addressed comment sheet at the hearing, or mailing your comments to the address on the back page. Comments must be postmarked no later than July 13, 2009, to be part of the public record of the hearing. You can also e-mail comments to dotdtsdzoo@dot.wi.gov, or fax them to (262) 548-5662 by July 13, 2009.

Testimony

Your testimony, either written or spoken,

will be reviewed by WisDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as part of the decision making process. Your input is important to ensure that all voices are heard and that the Zoo Interchange plans meet the needs and expectations of the community. In the course of the Zoo Interchange Corridor Study, changes have been made to alternatives based on feedback from the public. We continue to seek your input to improve the plans for the corridor.



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ZOO Interchange Public Hearing YOU'RE INVITED

TUESDAY, JUNE 23
from 2 to 7 p.m.
and
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24
from 4 to 8 p.m.

State Fair Park
Tommy Thompson Youth Center
Gate #5
640 S 84th St., West Allis
MCTS Route 67

Review Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS)

Copies available at these locations
or on www.sefreeways.org:

WisDOT SE Region
141 NW Barstow Street (Waukesha)

Wauwatosa Public Library
7635 W. North Avenue

West Allis Public Library
7421 W. National Avenue

Milwaukee Public Library – Capitol Drive
3969 N. 74th Street

Milwaukee Public Library – downtown
814 W. Wisconsin Avenue

WisDOT Bureau of Equity and Environmental Services
4802 Sheboygan Avenue, Room 451, Madison

Study information:

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www.sefreeways.org

For the hearing impaired, please contact WisDOT via the Wisconsin Telecommunications Relay system, 1-800-WI-RELAY at least one week prior to the meeting to request an interpreter.