



Study Update

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Zoo Interchange Study and Design

Since the June 2009 public hearing on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the Zoo Interchange study team has been working on refining plans to better meet the expectations of the public. At the hearing, over 400 written and oral comments were received. The comments will be detailed in the final EIS.

Many people commented on various specifics of the alternatives: impacts to local roads, changes in access on north and east legs, concerns about construction and questions about individual properties. Comments were received regarding potential impacts to the environment; in particular butterfly habitat, potential sites for stormwater retention, and loss of greenspace for wildlife habitat. A number of people commented on transit planning and the importance of an integrated regional transportation plan.

The comments have made a difference in the refinement of alternatives. The corridor team continues to refine the alternatives and is balancing safety, design, and environmental impacts to meet stakeholder expectations.

What happens next?

2010 - 2011 - Refinement and evaluation of alternatives based on feedback received from the public and coordinating agencies.

2011 - The Final EIS document will be available. The final document will identify the final preferred alternatives and will summarize input received from the public hearing and comments on the Draft EIS. A Record of Decision (ROD) from the Federal Highway Administration will follow. The ROD identifies the preferred alternative, mitigation measures that will be taken, and is the final environmental approval that is needed before an action analyzed in the EIS may proceed to design and later to construction.

2012 and beyond - Final design and engineering, real estate acquisition and utility relocations, and reconstruction of the interchange will follow the ROD.

Emergency bridge replacement

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has been closely monitoring the aging Zoo Interchange structures. Thorough bridge investigations were conducted from August through November 2009 and the results have prompted WisDOT to move forward immediately with plans to rebuild the following three structures in the interchange:

- Northbound I-894/US 45 through the interchange to north US 45
- Southbound US 45 to the eastbound I-94 connector ramp
- Northbound I-894/US 45 to the westbound I-94 ramp

All major construction work on the three structures is expected to be completed by Memorial Day weekend in 2010, with some remaining work continuing through mid June 2010.

The new bridges will be built parallel to the existing structures and will use an accelerated form of traditional bridge-building methods.

It is anticipated that ramp closures or lane restrictions will only take place during the nighttime hours or on weekends in order to minimize disruption to the traveling public. When the new bridges are complete, traffic will be switched onto the new lanes and the existing bridges will be demolished.

WisDOT has imposed weight restrictions on the three existing ramps. These ramps will continue to safely handle traffic in the busy interchange. By restricting heavy loads, there will be a decrease in wear and tear on the bridges and will preserve the integrity of the structures until they can be replaced this spring.

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The Wisconsin Department of Transportation has begun an emergency repair project on three bridges in the core of the Zoo Interchange. Work is on-going and expected to be completed this spring. These bridges are an interim solution. The Zoo Interchange corridor study will recommend a long-term fix to the traffic, safety and deteriorating infrastructure problems.