



Frequently Asked Questions

Why is this study being done?

In 2004, Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) completed a Needs Assessment that showed there are existing geometric deficiencies as well as problems with safety, congestion, and bike and pedestrian connectivity in the US 51 corridor. These problems will worsen as additional jobs and residences come to the area. WisDOT decided to conduct an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) to determine how travel needs can be met in the future.

What are the alternatives under consideration?

When the study of conceptual alternatives began, the study team realized that improvements to roads other than US 51 may be feasible options for accomplishing the goal of handling traffic demand in the area. This broad consideration of alternatives meets the expectations of the environmental process. The concepts presented at the Public Information Meetings in May 2006 have been refined and are presented as alternatives at the May 2009 public meetings.

The alternatives are described briefly as follows:

No build – No improvements would be provided other than routine maintenance.

Alternative A – Low build. No additional capacity (new travel lanes) would be provided. Efforts would be focused on improving safety at intersections along US 51. Passing lanes may be warranted.

Alternative B – Four lanes on US 51 from Stoughton to McFarland with north-south interchange at County B East.

Alternative B1 – Four lanes on US 51 from Stoughton to McFarland with east-west interchange at County B East.

Alternative C – Four lanes on WIS 138 between Stoughton and Oregon.

Alternative D – Four lanes on County N between Stoughton and I-39/90.

Alternatives B, B1, C and D include a 4-lane expansion of County B East, Skaalen Road and Pleasant Hill Road on the north and east sides of Stoughton. Alternative B, C and D include a four-lane section on US 51 between WIS 138 and County B East. Alternative B1 does not expand that section of US 51. Alternatives C and D include safety improvements on US 51.

The table below gives an idea of how changes to various roads affect travel patterns in the region by briefly describing the effects of each of these alternatives. The traffic volume effects noted in Alternatives B through D are compared to the No Build scenario for projected traffic volumes in 2035.

No Build and Alternative A Low build	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volumes south of the Beltline above typical four-lane roadway capacity • Volumes in McFarland and Stoughton too high for existing facilities • Peak hour volumes cause significant congestion and queuing, addressed via intersection improvements at key locations in Alternative A
Alternative B and B1 Four lanes on US 51	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US 51 draws traffic from major parallel routes • Volumes south of the Beltline above typical four-lane roadway capacity • Volumes in McFarland too high for existing facility • Volumes between McFarland and Stoughton well into four-lane range
Alternative C Four lanes on WIS 138	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor reductions in daily traffic on US 51 north of Stoughton • Minor increase in traffic through downtown Stoughton • Minor reductions in traffic on adjacent parallel routes • Minimal impact on Beltline traffic • Volumes on WIS 138 increase by about 30%
Alternative D Four lanes on County N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor reductions in volumes on US 14 and WIS 138 • Negligible changes on Beltline between US 51 and I-39 • Volumes on County N increase by about 40%

Traffic modeling indicates that the stretch of US 51 between I-39/90 and Stoughton will not have traffic congestion problems that require additional lanes. Safety improvements for this area will be considered.

When will an alternative be selected?

After comments received on the alternatives as a result of the May 2009 public information meetings are reviewed, the study team may refine the alternatives further. It is possible that a new alternative will emerge, or one or more alternatives could be dropped from further consideration. The alternatives to go forward in the study will be developed more fully and brought to the public again at a public hearing. Eventually a preferred alternative will be selected and identified in the final environmental document. The current schedule calls for completing a final EIS with a preferred alternative within the next three years.

What is the role of transit in handling travel needs in this corridor?

The study includes extensive computer modeling to determine how the existing roadway and proposed alternatives will handle the demand for travel in the corridor in the future. The future conditions regional traffic model assumes that "Locally Preferred Alternative" selected by the Transport 2020 study is constructed and operational. This alternative assumes a commuter rail system in the Madison area, with express bus service to outlying communities such as Stoughton. Even with a high level of transit service in the region, the problems identified in the Needs Assessment will remain.

How will the alternatives handle the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians?

All the alternatives consider bicycle and pedestrian facilities along and across the corridor. On-street bike accommodations and sidewalks are provided in the urban areas. Bikes are accommodated on the paved shoulder in rural segments.

When will the public have opportunities to comment?

Comments will be taken throughout the study until it is completed. The May 2009 public information meetings will be followed in 2010 with a round of public hearings. There will also be meetings with business groups and neighborhoods throughout the process.

What about environmental impacts?

Environmental impacts will be an important part of the comparison of alternatives. Detailed analysis of impacts will be done when alternatives are further refined following the public meetings in May 2009. Environmental impacts will affect the selection of a preferred alternative.

Who has to approve the preferred alternative that is selected for the Final EIS?

WisDOT and the Federal Highway Administration approve the preferred alternative and seek the concurrence of the federal resource agencies, such as the US Environmental Protection Agency. These approvals are sufficient for approval of the final EIS. Before a project is built in the Madison area using federal funds, the Transportation Planning Board must approve the project.

When would the selected alternative be built?

Funds have not yet been committed for a project. Depending upon the alternative selected, improvements may be staged to occur as traffic volumes increase.

Why is WisDOT going through all this planning work when funds have not been allocated?

The goal is to have a plan so that as lands develop and redevelop in the corridor, the possible changes to the roadway can be taken into consideration. The best solution may become too expensive to accomplish if it would require removing new buildings and businesses. It is best for all to have a long-term plan developed. Funds cannot be allocated until the environmental impacts of a project are assessed.

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Project Web site: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/projects/d1/us51study/index.htm>