

**Final Environmental Impact Statement
Re-evaluation
USH 14/61 Westby to Viroqua
Vernon County, Wisconsin
Environmental Assessment (EA)
WisDOT Project ID 1646-07-01**



August 2008



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FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
RE-EVALUATION

FHWA - Wisconsin Division Office

FOR

UNITED STATES HIGHWAY (US) 14/61
(WESTBY TO VIROQUA)
VERNON COUNTY, WISCONSIN
Project I.D. 1646-07-01

Phase I - County BB to Locust Street Segment
Vernon County
Construction I.D. 1646-07-74

STATE OF WISCONSIN
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

2/1/08

Date

[Redacted Signature]

5/13/08

Date

[Redacted Signature]

Director, Bureau of Equity and Environment

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Wisconsin Division

8/22/2008

Date

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Division Administrator

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I. PURPOSE

This re-evaluation has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) rules for the implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA); U.S. DOT Order 5610.1C; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Executive Order 12898 – Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Population; Federal Highway Administration Rules and Regulations set forth in 23 CFR 771.129(a); the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act; and the policy of WisDOT to evaluate the status of a project’s environmental documentation prior to authorization of each major project development step.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) was approved by FHWA on March 29, 2002. Since that approval, there have been new requirements and changes in emphasis regarding previous requirements. Therefore, the Final EIS was reviewed in detail along with the applicability of current requirements to determine whether supplemental environmental documentation would need to be prepared and circulated for review and comment. Elements considered in the re-evaluation were:

1. Whether the consideration of alternatives, impacts, existing environmental, and mitigation measures as set forth in the FEIS remain applicable, accurate and valid;
2. Whether there have been any significant changes in these factors or the regulations associated with them; and
3. Whether design refinements might result in identification of new impacts or require further study of environmental factors prior to construction authorization.

II. SPECIFIC RE-EVALUATION ISSUES

Phased Approach

The re-evaluation process has been divided into a phased approach to address the appropriate timing of improvements as described in the recommended alternative (Appendix A) from the original FEIS document. The two phases include:

- Phase I – Mainline US 14/61/WIS 27 corridor located between County BB (City of Viroqua) and Locust Street (City of Westby), a distance of approximately five miles. The Proposed Action for this phase includes construction of a four-lane divided roadway with extensions on either end to accommodate a taper from four to two lanes in the City of Westby and a connection to the existing four-lane facility in the City of Viroqua. The

intersections of US 14/61/WIS 27 with Tri State, Smith, Three Chimney, and Springville Roads would be modified to current design standards removing the skewed intersection angles. A 10-foot multi-use path running along the west side of US 14/61/WIS 27 between County BB and Locust Street is also included in the Proposed Action (see Appendix B).

- Phase II – This phase includes further study of the preferred bypass corridors as described in the FEIS for the City of Westby and the City of Viroqua. The Viroqua bypass corridor extends from just south of County T to Springville Road and the Westby bypass corridor extends from Tri-State Road to Cut A Cross Road. Phase II analysis would more clearly define the facility type and function, and update traffic forecasts to determine construction timing. Re-evaluating the bypass corridors also provides an opportunity to consider safety improvements that were outlined in a Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) report that was released in 2006. In the report, FHWA officials made suggestions on how WisDOT could improve bypass safety after a review of newly opened bypasses across the state. Safety improvements could include incorporating interchanges, grade separations, and local road enhancements into the bypass plan.

This re-evaluation document (Phase I) is focused on that portion of the Proposed Action comprised of the US 14/61/WIS 27 highway segment located between County BB (City of Viroqua) and Locust Street (City of Westby). This segment is included in build alternatives C-4 and C-5 from the FEIS. This segment has independent utility because it:

1. Has logical termini including the City of Viroqua at the southern end, and the City of Westby at the northern end; and
2. Serves immediate local traffic needs between the two cities in addition to regional traffic destined to locations outside of Vernon County.

In addition, this re-evaluation includes transition areas near County BB and Locust Street to tie in the new four-lane highway section with the existing facilities. A multi-use path along the west side of the entire segment is also included in the Proposed Action.

The re-evaluation for the bypass segment of Viroqua and the bypass segment of Westby as described in the Proposed Action of the FEIS would be conducted in future phases when more detail is needed to proceed.

Changes to Guidance for Environmental Documentation

New proposed guidance for the environmental review process has been issued as part of the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). All transportation projects analyzed in an EIS

for which the Notice of Intent (NOI) was published after August 10, 2005 must follow SAFETEA-LU's requirements. The FEIS for USH 14/61 was completed prior to this date and is exempt from the new requirements. In addition, this re-evaluation has determined that a supplemental EIS is likely not needed for the segment of the Proposed Action located between the City of Westby and the City of Viroqua. This determination is made because the existing environment has not changed significantly since 2002, changes to the Proposed Action are minor, and changes to impacts from those indicated in the FEIS are minimal in nature. These issues are further supported in the following sections of this document.

Since the completion of the FEIS, new regulation from the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) pertaining to the definition and evaluation of indirect effects and cumulative impacts has been initiated. The guidance further defines each and also changes the method of analysis for determining impacts. The re-evaluation has determined that a supplemental EIS is likely not needed, and therefore, more detailed analysis of indirect effects and cumulative impacts would not be required.

A. Project Concept

The purpose of the Proposed Action under re-evaluation remains identical to the purpose from the FEIS and includes:

"The purpose of the proposed USH 14/61 improvements include the following regional and local objectives:

- *Address future traffic demand and growth in the region, and improve local and through traffic access to regional destinations outside the study area, as well as to community resources and services in Viroqua and Westby;*
- *Improve overall operational efficiency commensurate with the US 14/61 corridor's designation as a Corridor's 2020 Connector, National Highway System route, and federal/state long truck route;*
- *Improve safety for the traveling public by increasing traffic capacity, reducing conflicts between through and local traffic in Viroqua and Westby, and providing a roadway that meets current design standards;"*

The following two items from the FEIS purpose statement are not addressed or significantly altered as a result of the Phase I re-evaluation; these items are relevant for Phase II:

- *"Improve traffic flow, pedestrian and school bus safety, and emergency service in Viroqua and Westby by removing through truck traffic from downtown Main Street in these communities; and*
- *Enhance local efforts to revitalize downtown Viroqua and Westby as pedestrian-friendly, tourist-oriented communities by reducing heavy truck traffic in the downtown areas."*

The following needs for the build alternatives were determined as part of the FEIS process and include:

- Existing and future traffic
- Safety
- System linkage and route importance
- Existing highway characteristics
- Local issues

These items have been re-evaluated to determine if significant changes for the need of the project have occurred.

Existing and future traffic:

According to the FEIS, 1999 traffic on US 14/61/WIS 27 between the cities of Viroqua and Westby was roughly 10,900 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT), exceeding the 8,200 AADT threshold for rural two-lane highways in effect at the time. Traffic volumes were forecasted to reach 15,800 AADT by 2025 (45% increase).

The same segment of US 14/61/WIS 27 was operating at a Level of Service (LOS) C/D in 1999 which was at/over the design capacity for the highway. Under the traffic forecasts conducted as part of the FEIS, the corridor was anticipated to operate at a LOS D/E (approaching/at maximum capacity) by 2025 under the No Action Alternative.

Traffic forecasts were conducted in 2006 as part of the EIS re-evaluation and compared to the earlier estimates. Current traffic volumes (year 2004) between the two cities is currently 9,700 AADT and is forecasted to reach 12,400 AADT by 2032 (28% increase) under current growth trends.

The difference between the traffic projections calculated as part of the original FEIS and those using the 2006 traffic data is the result of lower than forecasted traffic growth between 1999 and 2006. The actual 2006 traffic count data were lower than the forecasts initially predicted. New forecasts were adjusted using the 2006 data to consider current conditions and provide a more reliable forecast than the original data.

Highway capacity thresholds triggering capacity improvements were changed by WisDOT in early 2005 to allow greater flexibility depending on the regional context of the facility. Under the new policy (WisDOT Facility Development Manual (FDM) Procedure 11-15-1), the capacity for this type of 2-lane facility is 8,700. This segment of US 14/61/WIS 27 is considered a rural principal arterial on level terrain and a Corridors 2020 connector route for purposes of determining the capacity threshold.

This segment of US 14/61/WIS 27 is currently operating at a LOS D, indicating that it is currently operating near maximum capacity. The current volume of 9,700 AADT on the segment also exceeds the capacity threshold of 8,700 AADT for a two-lane facility. Acceptable LOS was also changed by WisDOT in 2005 (WisDOT FDM Procedure 11-5-3) allowing for higher levels of congestion than in the previous policy. Under the new policy, the desired LOS for rural highways that are principle arterials and Corridors 2020 connector routes is LOS C, with the trigger for capacity improvements occurring when operations reach LOS D.

Based on traffic forecasts for the segment of US 14/61/WIS 27 between the cities of Viroqua and Westby, the corridor is expected to operate at LOS E by 2032. This exceeds the level deemed appropriate for principal arterials that are Corridors 2020 routes.

Safety:

A crash analysis was completed for years 1995 to 1998 as part of the FEIS. In the analysis, crash rates along the segment of US 14/61/WIS 27 between Viroqua and Westby exceeded state wide averages for three of the four years studied.

Crashes were re-evaluated for the years 2002 to 2005 to determine the extent that safety issues along the corridor may or may not have changed in comparison to previous years. The average yearly total crash rate for the corridor was roughly 161 crashes per 100 Million Vehicle Miles (MVM), higher than the statewide average of 133 per 100 MVM over the same time period.

Crash information for the study area was derived from WisDOT data for the 4-year period from 2002 and 2005. A total of 235 crashes (excluding deer collisions) occurred during this period, and are summarized as follows:

- 85 crashes occurred outside the cities of Viroqua and Westby (36 percent of the total)
- 111 crashes occurred in the City of Viroqua (47 percent of the total).
- 41 crashes occurred in the City of Westby (17 percent of the total).
- 158 crashes involved property damage only (67 percent of the total).
- 76 crashes involved personal injury (32 percent of the total).
- 1 fatality occurred.
- Within the two cities, most crashes occurred at intersections and involved rear-end collisions, angle, and side-swipe collisions. In rural areas, most crashes involved only a single vehicle traveling off of the roadway.

WisDOT maintains an annual database on crashes that have occurred on the State Trunk Highway (STH) system, and uses this information to develop statewide average crash rates for urban and rural highways. Crash rates are expressed as the number of crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. The

comparison between study area crash rates and statewide rates are summarized in Table 1. Locations where study area crash rates exceeded the statewide average rates in 2002, 2003, 2004, or 2005 are shown in bold and parentheses.

Table 1 – Study Area Crash Rate Comparison to Statewide Averages

Roadway Segment	2002		2003		2004		2005	
	Study Area Rate	Statewide Rate	Study Area Rate	Statewide Rate	Study Area Rate	Statewide Rate	Study Area Rate	Statewide Rate
WIS 27/82 to Viroqua (rural segment)	0	106	87	117	(122)	121	35	115
Washington Street to Decker Street in Viroqua (urban segment)	239	274	221	253	(276)	237	221	243
County BB to County Y (rural segment)	(173)	106	115	117	(154)	121	77	115
County Y to Tri-State Road (rural segment)	88	106	106	117	88	121	106	115
Tri-State Road to WIS 27 (suburban/urban segment)	195	274	106	253	213	237	177	243

Note: Numbers that are bolded and in parentheses indicate that study area crash rates exceeded the statewide average rate.

The 1999 Main Street reconstruction project in Viroqua has not significantly affected crash trends in that community as a whole. As traffic volumes increase in the study area, the number and severity of crashes, particularly those at intersections, can be expected to increase.

System linkage and route importance:

As stated in the FEIS, this segment of US 14/61/WIS 27 is part of a system of major regional highways including US 14, US 61, and WIS 27 providing connections between La Crosse, Madison, and Dubuque (IA). This segment is also part of the National Highway System and WisDOT’s Corridors 2020 plan which places a higher priority on the highway for its economic importance. In addition, both US 14 and 61 are designated as federal/state “long truck routes” allowing longer trucks (up 65 feet) to travel on them. These conditions still apply to this segment of US 14/61/WIS 27 today.

Existing highway characteristics:

As indicated in the FEIS, the existing right-of-way varies between 80 and 260 feet with a posted speed limit of 55 mph. At the time, the existing profile and horizontal alignment met the design standards for a 55 mph design speed.

Under current WisDOT design standards for rural state highways the current facility as it exists today is similar to what it was when the FEIS was released in 2002. The existing profile meets the design standards for a 60 mph design speed.

This segment of US 14/61/WIS 27 is a controlled access highway under Wis. Stats. 84.25 and is identified in the 1999 Access Management System Plan. Changes in access to private property and public roads abutting and/or with access to the state highway requires a permit. This includes changes to the number and the type of access provided.

Local issues:

Local issues identified in the FEIS include minimizing impacts to residential and agricultural operations, using the existing right-of-way to the fullest extent possible, and preserving the rural character, open space, and natural resources within the study area.

An evaluation of the design for the US 14/61/WIS 27 corridor determined that the Proposed Action meets these requirements to the fullest extent possible.

Based on the evaluation of the project purpose and need from the FEIS, it is determined that the purpose and need for the Proposed Action for this segment of US 14/61/WIS 27 still applies and does not require major modification. The corridor is currently operating at/near maximum capacity and is anticipated to deteriorate below acceptable LOS. Even though a crash analysis did not reveal a current safety issue, historically crashes have fluctuated over time. Increases in traffic volumes on the existing facility would likely reduce the number and length of gaps for traffic to access and/or cross the facility. A lack of gaps in the future could result in a higher rate of crashes.

During the re-evaluation process, meetings were held with local officials and the general public. These meetings occurred during the start of the re-evaluation process and identified a local desire to provide multi-modal accommodations between the communities of Westby and Viroqua. WisDOT ultimately determined that a multi-use path was consistent with WisDOT goals of providing multi-modal accommodations when feasible.

Additional meetings relating to a multi-use path were held in December 2006 and January 2007 to determine local support and jurisdictional responsibilities for implementation and maintenance. A formal Public Informational Meeting (PIM) was held in March 2007 to determine general support for the multi-use path and gather input. The outcome of the meetings determined general community support of a multi-use path between the cities of Westby and Viroqua, with notable objections from property owners along the existing US 14/61/WIS 27 corridor. Local officials from the two cities and Vernon County established a local

sub-committee that would further explain local funding match, maintenance jurisdiction and funding, signage, tying into the local street system, and addressing safety issues related to farm traffic. The cities of Westby and Viroqua both agreed to support the trail. The Vernon County Board originally voted 15-14 against the path in late September 2007. After several private contributors came forward to help to defray the costs of construction and maintenance the County Board voted to support the trail on November 6, 2007 by a vote of 17-11 (Appendix C).

The Proposed Action was modified during the re-evaluation process to address the multi-use path and changes to intersection geometry at skewed intersections. Modifications to the Proposed Action are not considered to create significant environmental impacts beyond those already identified in the FEIS.

Description of selected alternative:

The limits of the re-evaluation include the on-alignment portions of the build alternatives C-4 and C-5 from the FEIS. The approximate limits of the re-evaluation would also extend south to the County BB intersection. This would accommodate a transition from the existing corridor in the City of Viroqua to a new four-lane segment located between the two communities.

The Proposed Action includes the construction of a four-lane divided highway along the existing alignment of US 14/61/WIS 27 between County BB and Locust Street. Project plans are included in Appendix B. The northbound traffic would use the existing corridor with new lanes constructed for the southbound traffic located west of the existing corridor. The new facility would have a typical median width of 60 feet and be constructed to a design speed of 60 mph. Intersections with existing public roads would be constructed as at-grade access at current design standards. Some intersections would experience greater modification to remove intersection skew. Private access would remain if located a safe distance from the intersections (intersection functional area). Alternate access and/or access to a side road would be provided in locations where existing access would be located too close to intersections such as the NE quadrant of US 14/61 and County Y.

The Proposed Action includes a 10 foot dedicated multi-use path between County BB and Locust Street. The path would require WisDOT to acquire additional right-of-way from property owners along the west side of the corridor.

The Proposed Action would also require a change in the alignment of the Viroqua Municipal Airport (Y51) runway 02/20 further west (approximately 120 feet) to accommodate the new facility. Runway 02/20 is a 2,500 foot long, 90 foot wide grass turf runway that is normally closed November through April. The airport's primary runway (11/29) would not be affected by the Proposed Action.

In addition, the Proposed Action could include the use of purchased access control through Wis. Stats. 84.09 in locations where access changes would result in loss of access to the property.

The Proposed Action also requires relocation of seven residential, three associated with farming operations, three commercial buildings and one operational dairy barn along the corridor. Two of the farming operations are dairy. Utility impacts could include approximately 350 feet of electrical and 200 feet of water service lines.

1. Major actions to advance the project since EIS approval

Major actions include the early acquisition of four residences and one vacant business along the project corridor.

2. Work completed to date

Functional plan sheets were completed including preliminary drainage analysis. Preliminary utility information was also collected but not included on the plan sheets. Approximately 350 feet of electric line and 200 feet of water line could be impacted by the Proposed Action.

Preliminary right-of-way real estate acquisitions were determined for strip takings along the corridor.

Five properties including four residences and one vacant business were acquired as part of an early acquisition process. In addition, a partial acquisition of an unimproved property has also occurred.

3. Current section to be let to contract

The section of US 14/61/WIS 27 located between County BB in the City of Viroqua and Locust Street in the City of Westby, a distance of approximately five miles.

B. Changes in the Affected Environment

This section describes changes in the social and environmental conditions surrounding the proposed four-lane corridor since the completion of the FEIS in March 2002.

1. Socioeconomic characteristics

Socioeconomic changes include, but are not limited to, changes in population trends and demographics, changes to employment characteristics, and land

use and development changes that have occurred since completion of the FEIS.

a. Population

Population levels remain stable exhibiting similar growth rates to those analyzed for the FEIS as can be seen in the following table.

Table 2 – Study area Population Trends

Community	1990 Population	2000 Population	2005 population (estimated)
Vernon County	25,617	28,056	29,189
City of Viroqua	3,922	4,335	4,394
City of Westby	1,866	2,045	2,133
Town of Viroqua	1,499	1,560	1,652

Minority populations within the study area represent approximately one percent of the total population, only slightly higher than conditions that existed in the 1990's.

Table 3 – Study area Demographics

Community	2000 Minority Population	% of Population	Race	% of Race
Vernon County	333	1.1	Hispanic Origin	0.7
			Asian or Pacific Islander	0.2
			American Indian or Alaska Native	0.1
			African American	0.1
City of Viroqua	55	1.5	Hispanic Origin	0.7
			Asian or Pacific Islander	0.5
			American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2
			African American	0.1
City of Westby			Hispanic Origin	0.9
			Asian or Pacific Islander	0.1
			American Indian or Alaska Native	0.2
Town of Viroqua	16	0.7	Hispanic Origin	0.3
			Asian or Pacific Islander	0.3
			American Indian or Alaska Native	0.1

b. Employment

Income and labor conditions have remained similar to conditions in 1990 with the Town of Viroqua still having the highest median household income, and the City of Viroqua with the lowest. All of the communities in the study area remain below the state median household income of 43,791 in year 2000.

Table 4 – Study area Income

Community	Median Household Income (2000)	Per Capita Income (2000)
Vernon County	33,178	15,859
City of Viroqua	28,804	17,172
City of Westby	32,340	16,839
Town of Viroqua	42,583	16,246

Education and services, manufacturing, and retail trade continue to be the top three industries for the county and the cities of Viroqua and Westby. This is similar to the economic environment that existed during the development of the FEIS.

Table 5 – Study Area Economic Environment

Industry	City of Viroqua (2000)		City of Westby (2000)		Vernon County (2000)	
	Employees	% of Work Force	Employees	% of Work Force	Employees	% of Work Force
Agriculture and mining	29	1.5	49	5.1	1,526	11.6
Construction	96	5.0	60	6.2	910	6.9
Manufacturing	309	16.2	132	13.7	2,229	17.0
Wholesale trade	38	2.0	41	4.3	470	3.6
Retail trade	299	15.6	82	8.5	1,534	11.7
Transportation and utilities	54	2.8	49	5.1	645	4.9
Information	35	1.8	20	2.1	152	1.2
Finance and real estate	79	4.1	39	4.0	477	3.6
Professional and administrative	57	3.0	47	4.9	554	4.2
Educational and social services	583	30.5	296	30.7	2,872	21.9
Arts	142	7.4	59	6.1	742	5.7
Other Services	72	3.8	54	5.6	548	4.2
Public Administration	119	6.2	35	3.6	454	3.5
Total	1912	100	963	100	13,113	100

c. Land use and development

There has been little or no change in land use along US 14/61/WIS 27 between the two cities from 2002 to 2006. The existing businesses, homes, and farms along the corridor were established well before 2002. WisDOT acquired one business and two

residential properties adjacent to the corridor as part of an early acquisition process.

Since the FEIS was completed, changes in the land use planning environment have included the completion of comprehensive plans for the cities of Westby and Viroqua and the Town of Viroqua in 2003. The comprehensive plans outline future development patterns for the communities and acknowledge the Proposed Action from the FEIS.

The comprehensive plans were reviewed to determine compatibility with the Proposed Action as these plans were not available during development of the FEIS. Upon review of the plans, it was determined that the Proposed Action is compatible with the land use and transportation goals of the communities.

Vernon County zoning authority remains limited to the floodplain and shoreland zoning ordinance. The Proposed Action lies outside of the shoreland zoning jurisdiction of the county. The cities of Westby and Viroqua have zoning jurisdictions within and extending 1.5 miles beyond their borders. The Proposed Action has a minimal affect on the current zoning jurisdictions within the communities.

d. Multi-modal plans

The FEIS indicated that there were no designated bicycle facilities located within the study area, however, the state bicycle suitability map at the time identified County Y, County B, and County J as having “Best Conditions for Bicycling”.

Comprehensive plans have since been developed that outline multi-modal recommendations within the study area. These were not identified in the FEIS because they were generated as part of the recently completed comprehensive plan process. Signed bicycle routes from the *Major Streets and Bicycle Plan* (City of Viroqua) identifies US 14/61/WIS 27 as a future signed bicycle route extending from County BB and north of County Y.

The Proposed Action has been modified to include a separate 10 foot multi-use path and wayside along the west side of the US 14/61/WIS 27 corridor requiring additional right-of-way. The modification accommodates planned bicycle facilities within the study area not previously identified prior to 2002. The path would be located within the US 14/61/WIS 27 right-of-way and would hold a temporary occupancy with the potential for conversion to highway use if additional roadway right-of-way were required in the future.

The remaining former wayside property would be deeded over to Vernon County as part of the agreement for construction of the multi-use path. The deed includes a description of permitted uses and outlines the conditions of the property transferring it back to the WisDOT in the event the land is needed for a future transportation project. Access would be limited to multi-use path users as well as emergency and maintenance vehicles (Appendix C).

2. Environmental setting

a. Air quality

There have been no substantial changes in air quality during the four years following the completion of the FEIS. Vernon County is not located in a “non-attainment” area. In addition, the Proposed Action still meets exemption criteria under Administrative Code Chapter NR 411 – *Construction and Operation Permits for Indirect Sources*.

b. Noise conditions

Three residential homes (receptor R-12) and one farmhouse (receptor R-11) were identified in the FEIS as potentially affected from widening the corridor along the west side of the existing travel lanes. There are no additional receptors present along the corridor that were not already identified in the FEIS. Noise impacts identified in the FEIS are still applicable for the corridor. Additional encroachment on the west side of the corridor is due to the addition of the multi-use path. An increase in noise levels as a result of the path is anticipated to be minimal.

c. Wetlands, floodplains, and water quality

Executive Order 11990 – Wetland Protection

Wetland W-5 (wet meadow (M)) is located along the US 14/61/WIS 27 corridor southwest of Tri-State Road. The 1.5 acre wetland lies within an agricultural area impacted by farming or grazing. Wetland impacts include an additional impact of 0.21 acres to this wetland to accommodate the multi-use path. The additional wetland impact would require the complete removal of the wetland. *Section 6 – Only Practicable Alternative Finding* from the FEIS and recommended mitigation measures are likely still applicable.

Executive Order 11988 – Floodplain Protection

There have been no additional stream crossings identified as a result of changes to the Proposed Action since completion of the FEIS. Stream crossing would still be constructed with a box culvert but wider crossings of streams would be required to accommodate the addition of the multi-use path.

Changes to floodplain encroachment as a result of modification of the Proposed Action include an additional 2.89 acres. The change is a result of adding the multi-use path along the west side of the corridor. Additional encroachment is due to the flattening of slopes in order to remove and replace the existing cable guard fence.

The change in floodplain encroachment would not result in a significant potential interruption or termination of a community's only emergency evacuation route, a significant probability of flooding with the potential for property loss and a hazard to life, or a significant adverse affects on natural floodplain values. Mitigation measures identified in the FEIS are still applicable.

Permits

The additional affects to wetlands and floodplains beyond those identified in the FEIS are subject to authorization under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Coordination with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers would occur during the project's engineering phase to determine the appropriate type of permit required. Coordination with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act, and Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter 299 would occur as outlined in the FEIS.

3. Traffic, travel, and transportation

a. Traffic volumes and characteristics

US 14/61 is classified as a principal arterial with the primary function of providing efficient regional traffic movement. Traffic volumes on this segment of US 14/61/WIS 27 currently range between 12,300 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) near the City of Viroqua to 8,700 AADT near the City of Westby. Major intersections with regional roads include County Y and County BB.

b. Travel trends

Travel patterns include a mix of regional traffic destined to locations outside of the study area and traffic traveling between the cities of Viroqua and Westby. In addition, the cities themselves are destinations for regional traffic traveling to the area.

c. Public transportation

Neither the City of Viroqua nor the City of Westby has a formalized public transit system. This remains unchanged from when the FEIS was completed.

4. Parks, recreational lands and historic or archeological properties

a. Highway Wayside (site W-62-6)

Approximately 3.2 acres of the WisDOT wayside would be directly affected by the Proposed Action for right-of-way purposes. This includes an additional 0.83 acres required for a multi-use path beyond the 2.4 acres previously identified in the FEIS. The wayside had been previously identified by WisDOT for closure since completion of the FEIS.

The remaining former wayside property would be deeded over to Vernon County as part of the agreement for construction of the multi-use path. The deed includes a description of permitted uses and outlines the conditions of the property transferring it back to the WisDOT in the event the land is needed for a future transportation project. See Appendix C. Access would be limited to multi-use path users as well as emergency and maintenance vehicles.

The wayside is not currently considered to be a recreational facility and is therefore not subject to Section 4(f) requirements. The primary function of the bike path would be for transportation purposes and even though it could have recreational users, it would not be subject to Section 4(f) requirements.

b. Historic Property

As identified in the FEIS, there are no impacts from the Proposed Action to historical properties. The intersections and shifting of the airport runway were no impact to historic properties. The multi-use path was in the boundary of the original survey.

c. Archeological Resources

The FEIS identified one archeological site located adjacent to US 14/61/WIS 27 between the City of Viroqua and the City of Westby. Impacts to the site remain the same as those identified in the FEIS. The intersections and shifting of the airport runway were surveyed and no archeological sites were identified. The added right-of-way for the multi-use path lie within the boundary of the original survey conducted for the FEIS. The Section 106 Form (Appendix D) was approved January 8, 2008.

5. Hazardous Materials Sites

A windshield survey of the corridor was conducted on August 29, 2007. No areas of concern were observed. The manager of the airport in Viroqua was interviewed regarding his awareness of potential areas of environmental concern and was not aware of any spills, drums, or other environmental concerns on or near the airport property.

Three sites with historic environmental concerns were identified from a search of the Wisconsin DNR Remediation and Redevelopment databases titled RR Sites Map and BRRTS on the Web Database. No further investigation of the sites is warranted, however, standard special provisions for handling petroleum-contaminated soils and groundwater should be in place prior to construction activities.

C. Changes in the Anticipated Impacts

This section of the document identifies and addresses changes in the anticipated impacts as a result of changes in the affected environment or minor changes in the Proposed Action since completion of the FEIS.

1. Socioeconomic impacts

a. Displacement and relocation

Changes in the Proposed Action would cause no additional residences, commercial businesses, or farms to be relocated. The Proposed Action would displace a total of seven residences, three businesses, and one dairy barn located along the corridor. Two of the residences and one business have already been acquired as part of an early acquisition process.

b. Community disruption

There are no additional changes to impacts beyond those that would have been required for implementation of the FEIS Proposed Action.

Because construction of the Proposed Action would be located primarily outside the limits of the cities of Viroqua and Westby, community disruption is anticipated to be minimal. The majority of construction would occur in the sparsely populated rural township areas and along the existing highway corridor.

c. Economic development

There are no additional changes to impacts beyond those that would have been required for implementation of the FEIS Proposed Action.

Impacts to economic development are anticipated to be minor because access to local businesses not acquired would remain and/or be provided at alternate locations. The construction of the Proposed Action on the existing US 14/61/WIS 27 corridor between the communities would not create additional changes to economic development within the two communities beyond those already identified in the FEIS. There is potential for the multi-use path to be leveraged by the local communities as a destination/attraction in the future.

Businesses located along US 14/61 between County BB and Tri-state Road and outside of the municipal limits of Viroqua and Westby include:

- Auto sales/vehicle repair shop
- Religious school/academy
- Antiques dealer
- Cellular tower
- Farm implement and equipment dealer
- Gift shop
- Photography studio

d. Impacts on community facilities and services

There are no additional changes to impacts beyond those that would have been required for implementation of the FEIS Proposed Action.

The Viroqua Municipal Airport (Y51) is located adjacent to the US 14/61/WIS 27 corridor and would be directly affected by the additional right of way requirements for the facility. In addition to right-of-way needs, runway 02/20 (turf runway) will be shifted approximately 120 feet further west to provide adequate clear zone between the end of the runway and the new roadway. The shifting will result in an improved safety zone for the runway over what currently exists.

Shifting the runway does not require Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approval, but will require a construction project notification and new runway coordinates to be submitted. In addition, the Airport Layout Plan will need to be updated to reflect the changes. Local airport officials and the WisDOT Bureau of Aeronautics have been coordinated with as part of the re-evaluation process.

e. Land use and community character

There are no additional changes to impacts beyond those that would have been required for implementation of the FEIS Proposed Action.

Land use and development patterns have remained stable since completion of the FEIS in 2002. New development within the study area has not occurred along this segment of the US 14/61 corridor. Land uses include small residential tracts and subdivisions, widely distributed commercial properties, and large agricultural operations.

f. Energy consumption

Energy consumption includes the raw materials and fuels used to construct, operate, and maintain the four-lane corridor. Construction energy is comprised of the raw materials and equipment necessary to construct the Proposed Action. Operational energy is the direct consumption of fuel by vehicles using the facility. Fuel consumption is affected by the type of vehicles using the facility and the roadway's travel speed, geometry, condition, and congestion.

Even though the initial construction of the Proposed Action would result in the consumption of energy in the short-term, fuel consumption would be reduced by vehicles using the highway because of an improved level of service allowing for efficient travel speeds. The savings in operational energy over the life of the highway are expected to offset the energy required to construct the Proposed Action.

Additional changes to impacts in energy consumption include the energy that would be expended during construction for grading and paving the multi-use path. Energy savings from bicycle commuting, recreational riding, and walking though minor in comparison to motor vehicle use, should result in energy savings over the life of the path, beyond the initial construction energy used.

g. Agricultural impacts

Changes to agricultural impacts as a result of modification of the Proposed Action include the acquisition of an additional 14 acres. The change is a result of adding a 10-foot multi-use path along the west side of the corridor; flattening slopes for removal and replacement of the existing cable fence guard (that meet current design standards); and moving the northern (City of Westby end) two-lane to four-lane transition further north. Additional impacts include all lands in agricultural use in addition to direct field impacts.

Impacts to agricultural operations would consist primarily of strip acquisitions along the existing US 14/61 right-of-way to accommodate the multi-use path, additional travel lanes, and a 60-foot wide median along the corridor. Three of the residential acquisitions are also farm operations. Structural acquisitions from agricultural operations would also include one barn and a garage. None of the existing farm operations would be severed as a result of implementation of the Proposed Action. Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) determined that an Agricultural Impact Statement (AIS) will not be prepared for this project (Appendix E).

h. Environmental justice

The re-evaluation determined that minority or low income populations are not present within the project's area of influence.

This document complies with Executive Order 12898 requiring agencies to achieve environmental justice by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on minority populations and low-income populations, including the interrelated social and economic effects.

2. Physical and natural environmental impacts

Physical impacts remain similar to those identified in the FEIS. And include additional fill and changes to grade and drainage patterns as well as widening existing crossings of a stream and other drainage ways. In addition, changes to existing grade and cutting of slopes to accommodate a wider right-of-way. Best management practices would be implemented to reduce impacts from storm water runoff into drainage ways and stream beds during construction.

3. Impacts on traffic, travel or transportation

The Proposed Action would reduce travel delay and improve safety for this portion of the US 14/61/WIS 27 corridor. The Proposed Action would result in the US 14/61/WIS 27 corridor operating at LOS A in 2032.

Changes to the Viroqua Municipal Airport would not result in long-term changes to aviation in the area. Affects would primarily occur during construction and the additional time to re-establish the grass turf. Even though runway 02/20 would be shifted slightly, the airport's primary paved runway (runway 11/29) would remain in service during construction.

4. Parks, recreational lands, and historic or archeological properties

Park and recreational facilities are not located adjacent to this segment of US 14/61/WIS 27. No additional impacts to these resources were identified during the functional plan development phase or preliminary design.

Historic properties are not located within the area of potential affect of the Proposed Action located between County BB and Tri-State Road as identified in the FEIS.

Archaeological resources present between County BB and Tri-State Road within the area of potential affect include one site located along the existing US 14/61/WIS 27 corridor. Impacts to the site from the Proposed Action remain similar to those identified in the FEIS.

5. Impacts during construction

Construction impacts include increased noise and disruptions to traffic. Construction would be staged to minimize disruption in travel along the highway while construction occurs. The new southbound lanes would likely be constructed first while traffic uses the existing highway travel lanes. Traffic would be transferred to the new southbound lanes while the northbound lanes are reconstructed. This approach to the construction staging would ensure the existing capacity is maintained and limit disruption to intersections and transition areas.

The primary affect during construction would consist of noise from the operation of equipment and compaction to adjacent agricultural and other soils from the movement of machinery during construction. Impacts would be restricted to within the right-of-way to the extent possible.

6. Cost impacts or changes

Construction cost estimates have changed due to increased costs in fuel, raw materials, and labor. Real estate costs reflect changes in the appreciated value for acquisitions along the corridor after 2002. The total construction costs are \$13.5 million and the real estate costs are \$3.1 million.

Other costs reflect the addition of a multi-use path along the west side of US 14/61/WIS 27 and include additional right-of-way acquisition and construction costs. It is estimated that the total cost of the path would require an additional \$1,000,000 of which \$40,000 to \$50,000 would be required for additional right-of-way. Approximately \$48,000 of the construction cost would be required from local governments as a cost share for multi-use path construction. The Cities of Westby and Viroqua and the Vernon County Board all voted to support the trail.

In addition, construction of the facility would require the shifting of runway 02/20 (Viroqua Municipal Airport). The cost associated with the new runway alignment includes grading, clearing, and seeding and is estimated at \$10,000 (included as part of the project cost).

D. Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures outlined in the FEIS are applicable to implementation of the Proposed Action unless noted below.

1. Construction stage noise abatement

To reduce the potential impact of construction noise, the special provisions for this project would require that motorized equipment shall be operated in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations relating to noise levels permissible within and adjacent to the project construction site. At a minimum, the special provisions would require that motorized construction equipment shall not be operated between 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. without the prior written approval of the project engineer. All motorized construction equipment would be required to have mufflers constructed in accordance with the equipment manufacturer's specifications or a system of equivalent noise reducing capacity. It would also be required that mufflers and exhaust systems be maintained in good working condition, free from leaks and holes.

III. FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the project purpose and need, the existing environmental conditions, and the potential impacts was conducted for the Proposed Action located between the cities of Viroqua and Westby in Vernon County. The following findings were determined from the analysis:

- The Proposed Action consisting of a four-lane divided highway located between County BB and Tri-State Road has not changed significantly from the alternative included in the FEIS. Changes to the Proposed Action include the additional right-of-way requirements for a multi-use path along the west side of the facility. Other minimal changes to the alternative stem primarily from further refinement of design elements not available/conducted as part of the FEIS and/or change to WisDOT design standards for highway facilities, specifically changes to intersection geometry at some locations.
- The affected environment has remained relatively similar to what existed within the project's area of influence during the EIS process and includes:
 - Relatively stable and consistent population, housing, and other land use trends.
 - Similar socioeconomic conditions to what existed during the EIS process.
 - No major changes to environmental conditions such as stream crossings, wetlands, significant, endangered, and threatened species, and other existing natural areas.
- Traffic and travel patterns have remained similar to conditions occurring during the EIS process with traffic volumes increasing at slightly lower rates than initially projected. In addition, the existing facility currently operates at/near maximum capacity and exceeds the threshold for capacity expansion.

- The purpose and need of the Proposed Action is still valid as the safety and operational issues persist along the corridor.

It is the conclusion of this EIS re-evaluation that the Proposed Action of constructing a divided four-lane facility with a separate and parallel multi-use path between the cities of Viroqua and Westby does not vary significantly from the Proposed Action of the original FEIS. The conclusion is due to the fact that changes to the Proposed Action, its potential impacts, and the affected environment are minimal. The Proposed Action does not warrant further changes to avoid, minimize, or mitigate additional impacts already identified in the FEIS. In addition, a supplemental EIS would not be required.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Preferred Alternative

Appendix B- Plan Drawings

Appendix C – Multi-use Path Resolution

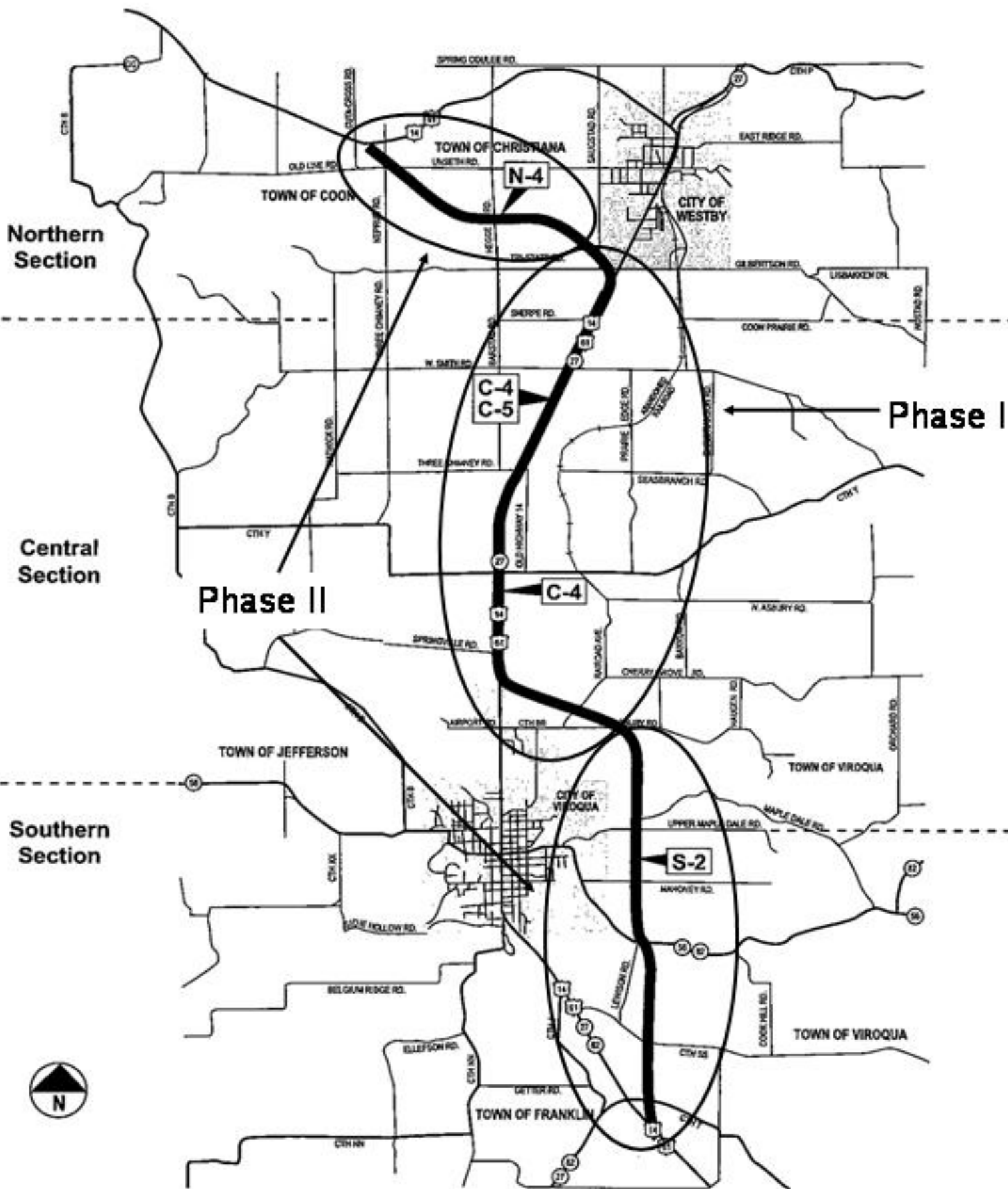
Appendix D – Section 106

Appendix E- DATCP Letter

Appendix A

Preferred Alternative

Recommended Alternative



Appendix B

Plan Drawings