

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Comment Responses

Comment Response # 1

Text under heading *Environmental and Related Resources: Surface Water and Fishery* in Section 3 has been modified to include the DNR's comment.

Comment Response # 2

Text under heading *Environmental and Related Resources: Wetlands* in Section 3 has been modified to include the DNR's comment.

Comment Response # 3

Native grasslands may be present east of Prairie Edge Road between Westby and Viroqua well east of the recommended alternative. This determination was made from the road (at some distance from the potential grassland location) because the project biologist did not have permission to enter the property.

Comment Response # 4

Text under heading *Environmental and Related Resources: Upland Habitat/Wildlife* in Section 3 has been modified to include the DNR's comment.

Comment Response # 5

Text under heading *Environmental and Related Resources: Upland Habitat/Wildlife* in Section 3 has been modified to include the DNR's comment.

Comment Response # 6

The recommended alternative will be constructed to current design standards and will include a partial paved shoulder that could accommodate bicyclists.

Comment Response # 7

Snowmobile trail signage is the responsibility of those who maintain the trails, not WisDOT. WisDOT will coordinate with snowmobile interests during the project's engineering design phase.

Comment Response # 8

Text has been added to the secondary impact discussion beginning on page 4-5 to address DNR's comment.

Comment Response # 9

Of the eight tools in Table 4-2 that could be used to address secondary impacts, WisDOT only has control over one, roadway design features. WisDOT can and will control access along the bypasses and the portion of the highway between Westby and Viroqua. Controlling the location and number of access points along USH 14/61, however, is not

meant to preclude development. The remaining tools in Table 4-2 can only be implemented by local units of government. While WisDOT supports the overall concept of land use planning in the study corridor, it has no ability to implement it.

Comment Response # 10

Under heading *Access to Facilities and Services* in Section 4, the term access points refers to residential and commercial driveways onto USH 14/61, not side roads. Combining or connecting access points to local roads would have little or no effect on secondary impacts.

Comment Response # 11

The Aesthetics discussion in Section 4 discusses the visual impacts of the proposed improvements. This discussion pertains to all improvements along the corridor within the proposed right-of-way, including road signs. As a result, a separate discussion on the visual impacts of proposed road signs has not been included.

Comment Response # 12

To minimize the impacts of box culverts on fish movement, it may be possible to use a three-sided box (bottomless box) which would function like a bridge. This issue will be considered by WisDOT during the project's design phase. If a standard box culvert is used, the flowline will be set 12 inches below the stream bed to avoid impeding fish movement during periods of low flow.

To limit the impacts of erosion (associated with box culvert fill) on fish and other aquatic life, construction would be performed according to the WisDOT's Standard Specifications. State-of-the-art erosion control devices would be installed before erosion-prone construction activities begin.

Comment Response # 13

WisDOT will develop a project specific erosion control plan for DNR review during the project's engineering design phase. Conceptual elements of the erosion control plan are discussed under *Water Quality* in Section 5: Commitment to Impact Mitigation (see page 5-2).

Comment Response # 14

Alternative S-1, which is part of the west Viroqua Bypass, is not part of the recommended alternative and therefore, there will be no impacts associated with this alternative.

Comment Response # 15

The noise discussion in this EIS focuses on specific buildings in the project area for two major reasons. First, the purpose of the noise analysis is to determine the project's effect on noise levels for project-area residents, so measurements are made where residents live and work. Second, acceptable noise levels have been established for residences, churches, parks (67 decibels or less) and commercial areas (72 decibels or less). No noise levels have been established for undeveloped land. Therefore, it only makes sense to conduct noise levels in the vicinity of buildings in residential and commercial areas. While it is likely that noise levels will increase in some farm fields and other open areas adjacent to the proposed

highway, there is no established standard by which to judge the effect of the noise increase. Also, it should be noted that while the noise readings for this study were taken near buildings, they represent noise levels for the general area in which the reading was taken.

Comment Response # 16

Text under the heading *Highway Wayside* in Section 4 has been modified to include the DNR's comment. The land remaining after acquisition by the common Alternative C-4/C-5 segment will either continue to be used as a highway wayside, sold to adjacent property owners, or possibly used to mitigate project impacts associated with real estate acquisition.

Comment Response # 17

Text under the heading *Threatened and Endangered Species* in Section 4 has been modified to include the DNR's comment.

Comment Response # 18

Text under the heading *Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources* has been modified to address DNR's comment.

United States Department of the Interior

Comment Responses

Comment Response # 1

Because Alternative C-4 was selected as part of the project's preferred alternative, the project team prepared the documentation for No Adverse Effect on the historic Cina (Cunnigham) farmstead. See Section 4 "Historic Property" for more information. The Wisconsin Historical Society has concurred with the project team's assessment that the east Viroqua bypass would have No Adverse Effect on the Cina (Cunningham) farmstead. See the letter on page D-7.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Comment Responses

Comment Response # 1

Agriculture is the predominant land use in the project study area. In developing the Build Alternatives, alignments were located along farm property lines, where practicable, to minimize severance and overall impacts. However, since most of the land adjacent to the existing highway and proposed bypass segments is farmland, it is not possible to completely avoid farmland impacts.

The recommended east Viroqua bypass (Alternatives S-2, C-4) would affect 13 and sever 7 farms as compared to the west Viroqua bypass (Alternatives S-1, C-5) that would affect 16 and sever 13 farms. The recommended east Viroqua bypass alternative would affect 55 hectares (136 acres) of farmland, of which 12 hectares (30 acres) is publicly held (Vernon County Farm). The west Viroqua Bypass alternatives would affect 62 hectares (154 acres) of farmland, all from private property.

The recommended Westby bypass (Alternative N-4) would affect 3 more farms than the other Westby bypass alternatives (N-3 and N-7). However, all the Westby bypass alternatives would sever the same number of farms (4). The NRCS also rated the farmland along Alternative N-3 higher than Alternatives N-4 and N-7. Although the recommended alternative N-4 affects more farmland than Alternatives N-3 and N-7, these impacts are not severe enough to offset its other environmental and transportation advantages.

During the design phase, WisDOT will consider measures such as steeper side slopes and other similar options to further minimize impacts on affected farms.

Comment Response # 2

USH 14/61 is generally a two-lane highway. There is a four-lane section near Richland Center southeast of the Westby-Viroqua project area. The long-range plans currently programmed or envisioned by WisDOT in Districts 1 and 5 for USH 14/61, excluding the segments included in the project study area, are shown on the next page. The exhibit displays the location of these projects along USH 14/61 and the proposed action.

National Geodetic Survey (NGS)

Comment Responses

Comment Response # 1

During the engineering design phase of this project, WisDOT will determine whether any geodetic control monuments would be affected by the recommended alternative. WisDOT will notify NGS at least 90 days in advance of construction if any monuments would be affected by the recommended alternative.