



CONNECTING WISCONSIN

US 41 PROJECT

Memorial to County M Frequently Asked Questions

For Alternative E, why eliminate access between I-43 and Velp Avenue via US 41?

Some of the highest crash rates along US 41 within Brown County occur in the segment between the Velp Avenue and I-43 interchanges. This is due to the tight interchange spacing and weaving movements that occur in this segment as vehicles maneuver from the US 41 mainline to access I-43. Alternative E fully reconfigures the US 41/I-43 interchange to maximize safety and regional transportation efficiency. The resulting ramp reconfiguration for the US 41/I-43 interchange necessitates the elimination of the existing ramps/access between I-43 and Velp Avenue via US 41. The Department has analyzed several different options in an effort to maintain this or similar access. However, all options analyzed compromise safety, substantially increase environmental impacts and construction costs, and/or violate design and safety standards. Under Alternative E, local travelers would be able to access I-43 via Atkinson Drive, Shawano Avenue, and County M.

For Alternative E, what will be done to address increased traffic on Velp Avenue and Atkinson Drive if access between I-43 and Velp Avenue is eliminated?

As part of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the Department is studying future traffic flows to ensure that alternate routes will be able to handle future traffic demand. As part of a different project, Velp Avenue will be reconstructed starting in 2011 and will be able to accommodate increased traffic. If improvements to other local roads are needed, the Department would coordinate and communicate with municipalities to address necessary upgrades.

For Alternative E, have the impacts to businesses along Velp Avenue been considered?

The Department's primary concern is improving safety and maintaining mobility. The alternative that is ultimately selected will be expected to meet the project's purpose and need and serve the entire community and region. Access to businesses along Velp Avenue would be maintained under Alternative E, but the access to and from US 41 would change with the elimination of the link along US 41 connecting Velp Avenue with I-43. Businesses would likely experience a reduction in traffic directly from US 41, however, the total traffic volumes along Velp Avenue east of US 41 are expected to experience a net increase under Alternative E. We expect this net increase to be higher under Alternative E than it would be under Alternative D. The reason that the net increase is greatest for Alternative E is primarily because, unlike Alternative D, the segment of Velp Avenue east of US 41 would be used as a primary route for vehicles traveling to and from I-43 to the south. The Department developed these conclusions by running traffic models for the design year 2035. The results of that analysis indicate that volumes along Velp Avenue east of US 41 would be approximately 4,000 vehicles per day higher for Alternative E than they would be for Alternative D.

Has an interchange on I-43 at Military Avenue and/or on US 41 at County EB/Lakeview Drive been considered?

The interchange spacing between Military Avenue and US 41/I-43

and County EB/Lakeview Drive and County M would be too close together, resulting in impacts to traffic operations and potentially unsafe traffic conditions. The recommended minimum spacing between interchanges according to Department guidelines is 2 miles and each of those locations is less than 1 mile from the adjacent interchange.

What changes in access to Wietor Wharf Park are being considered?

Both remaining alternatives include maintaining the existing access to Wietor Wharf Park.

Is the Department coordinating with businesses and trucking companies?

The Department places a high priority on outreach to the business community, including trucking companies. There is a business outreach program in place for the US 41 corridor, which includes business-specific meetings during design, traffic management planning and construction activities. Additionally, Department staff is in regular contact with businesses throughout the corridor as specific concerns arise.

What are the safety aspects of the alternatives?

The EIS will address a range of issues, including traffic operations and safety. All of the alternatives fully evaluated in the EIS must meet the purpose and need for the project, which includes the need to improve safety along the corridor. Alternative E is the safest alternative primarily because the tight loop ramps at the US 41/I-43 interchange would be replaced with directional ramps. Compared to the existing highway, safety would also be improved with Alternative D. However, this alternative maintains the tight loop ramps which have historically contributed to crashes. Some safety improvements, such as improved lighting, pavement marking, and signage, are common to both of the remaining build alternatives.

Why build roundabouts at County M and Velp Avenue?

Early in the development of the US 41 Project in Brown County, the Department conducted detailed traffic analyses that reviewed the safety and traffic operations benefits of traffic signals versus roundabouts. The results of that study indicate that roundabouts provide safer and more efficient traffic flow than standard intersections by slowing traffic down and keeping traffic moving.

Will sound barriers be constructed?

Noise abatement (noise barriers) was analyzed for the project in accordance with Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter TRANS 405, Siting Noise Barriers. TRANS 405 states that noise barriers are considered reasonable if the cost of the barrier does not exceed \$30,000 per abutting residence and if the barrier would reduce noise levels by at least 8 decibels. The noise barrier analysis indicated that the criteria above will not be met anywhere along the project under the current proposed Alternative D or Alternative E, including the Island Court and Lone Grove Avenue neighborhoods where the majority of questions were raised about this issue. Therefore, noise barriers are not included as part of the US 41 Memorial Drive to County M project.

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Where are the funds coming from to pay for the project?

The project will be funded out of the Department's Majors program. The sources of the funds are approximately 20% state and 80% federal.

Why consider converting US 41 to an interstate?

The Department is conducting an interstate conversion study for US 41 following the passage of the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) federal transportation bill. The most important benefit of converting US 41 to an interstate is improved safety. Interstate design requirements incorporate the highest degree of safety standards and the required upgrades to US 41 would improve safety along the US 41 corridor. Interstates receive greater federal funding for maintenance (90% cost share versus 80% for non-interstate facilities), which would improve safety and accrue economic benefits for the region. Additionally, businesses perceive interstates as more viable. Designation of US 41 as an interstate would potentially enhance economic development within northeastern Wisconsin by attracting and maintaining business opportunities.

Which alternatives are compatible with possible future interstate conversion?

Both of the remaining alternatives meet Federal Highway Administration's requirements for interstate designation.

In an effort to reduce the number of accidents, why not reduce speed limit(s) on the US 41 mainline and/or US 41/I-43 ramps until improvements are made?

Reducing the posted speed limit(s) is not expected to reduce crashes within the project area. The Department has already posted speed reduction advisory speeds on all the ramps. Secondly, reducing posted speeds over a short segment of highway typically increases the number of crashes. This is due to the fact that most of the traffic will not comply with the reduced speed limit, while a few vehicles will slow down. This creates a speed differential which increases the potential for crashes. Also, posted speed reductions along a short segment of highway are difficult to enforce.

What is the purpose of the roundabout option shown at the intersection of County HS/Velp Avenue and the US 41 southbound off-ramp?

Based on traffic analyses, the Department determined that a roundabout will provide better traffic operations and a higher level of safety than a signalized intersection at this location (along with the other two roundabouts proposed at the Velp Avenue interchange). Two different options were evaluated for this location, which are common to both Alternatives D and E. One option is a standard 4-leg roundabout without a new/additional frontage road. Another option would be a 5-leg roundabout with a frontage road paralleling US 41. The local community (Village of Howard) has indicated the potential for commercial development in the northwest quadrant of the US 41/Velp Avenue interchange. A benefit realized with the fifth leg is that it would provide full access opportunities to Velp Avenue for that adjacent property. The fifth leg would need to be a public street and cannot be a private drive, which is why it is shown being connected to Memorial Drive east of US 41. Recent feedback from the Village of Howard indicates that they are not in favor of the 5-leg option due to factors

such as additional costs to the Village, impacts to developable land, and incompatibility with potential future development in the Memorial Drive area. However, both roundabout options are still included in the EIS as viable options providing the opportunity for public comment.

Has the Department considered realigning Beaver Dam Creek to flow into Duck Creek at the south end of Island Court?

The realignment of Beaver Dam Creek to flow into Duck Creek at the south end of Island Court was evaluated and determined to be undesirable. Realigning Duck Creek in that manner would shorten the length of Beaver Dam Creek by about a half mile and would straighten the stream channel. Regulatory agencies participating in the environmental review of the project are opposed to shortening and/or straightening this stream because doing so would negatively impact the creek's aquatic and riparian habitat, as well as affect stream hydraulics and flood storage along Beaver Dam Creek. The alternatives currently under study maintain the stream's existing length and habitat to the greatest degree practicable.

Will improvements be made to the Atkinson Drive/I-43 Interchange as part of this project?

Concerns have been raised regarding modified travel patterns and resulting additional traffic utilizing the Atkinson Drive/I-43 interchange during and after construction, particularly under Alternative E. WisDOT has conducted a study on safety, geometrics, and traffic operations for the existing and future (design year 2035) traffic volumes at this interchange. One minor geometric issue that was found and will be addressed is at the Atkinson Drive southbound ramp on to I-43 southbound. This movement is currently a free flow right turn movement, making it difficult for southbound traffic on Atkinson Drive to find a gap in the northbound thru traffic to make a left turn on to the ramp. This will be improved by replacing the ramp free flow right turn movement with a yield control, allowing gaps for the southbound left turn movement. WisDOT also evaluated increasing the acceleration length of this ramp to better accommodate heavy or large trucks with slow acceleration speeds. Providing the increased acceleration length for a parallel on ramp (vs. the existing taper ramp) would also require widening of the Leo Frigo Bridge. The cost versus benefit of providing this parallel on ramp and widening of the bridge is not great since the acceleration increase that heavily loaded trucks would gain is very minimal (1.5 - 2.0 mph), whereas the associated costs, environmental factors, and risks are significant. Therefore, WisDOT does not recommend increasing the acceleration length of this ramp. The current crash rate at the interchange is well below the state average for interstate highways, and the increased traffic volumes estimated during and after construction are not expected to increase the crash rate above the statewide average. All other traffic operations and geometrics studied at this interchange (under existing and projected/future traffic volumes) were found to be acceptable per interstate standards.