



# The ROAD TO OPPORTUNITY

*US 41 Corridor: Connecting NE Wisconsin to NE Wisconsin Business*

## CONTACT US!

Have a question about opportunities on the US 41 Project? Need assistance with plans and proposals? Call or visit the **Brown County Project Office** in Green Bay – We are here to serve you!

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or e-mail:

[DOTUS41Outreach@dot.wi.gov](mailto:DOTUS41Outreach@dot.wi.gov)

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation, (WisDOT) **US 41 Project Outreach staff** will help your business compete in the upcoming expansion project.

### US 41 Project Office

1940 W. Mason St.  
Green Bay, WI 54303



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration



Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
Dedicated people creating transportation solutions through innovation and exceptional service

## US 41 Outreach staff moves...



*The US 41 Project's Green Bay home on West Mason St.*

## ...work continues from new Green Bay location

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) opened its new US 41 Project office at 1940 W. Mason St. in Green Bay late in 2010. The Green Bay Outreach staff joined the rest of the US 41 Project team when they moved from their stand-alone office on Packerland Drive early in 2011.

"The Project Office brings together the design team, the construction teams and supporting staff in one location," said Colleen Harris, US 41 Project Manager. "It's more efficient to have everyone under one roof," she said, adding "It also makes it easier for businesses, officials and the general public to have a place to go for information."

Nestled in the busy office center are the cubicles of the Outreach Staff, whose mission is to assist Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE's) and maintain contact with other stakeholders in the Project.

"As the largest highway construction project ever in Northeast Wisconsin, the US 41 Project offers

tremendous opportunity to businesses—including DBE's—in this region," said Mark Higley, WisDOT's Finance and DBE Outreach Supervisor on the US 41 Project.

"We meet with DBE or potential DBE firms that are interested in securing work," he said. "We help identify opportunities on the Project, we do trainings and we help firms gain their DBE certification," Higley said.

"The building is designed with dedicated space to facilitate public meetings and is a great facility where DBEs and potential DBEs can go to learn about the Project and to get assistance and support," Higley said.

Another facet of the US 41 Project's public involvement is the staff of Neighborhood Liaisons, who also moved to the new Project Office.

"The liaisons' focus is on reaching out to neighborhoods and businesses. Working out of the Project Office brings them closer to the hub of everything," Higley said.

***"The US 41 Project offers tremendous opportunity to businesses—including DBE's—in this region."***

***-Mark Higley, WisDOT***

# Advisory Committee work resumes



*The US 41 Advisory Committee at Work*

The US 41 Advisory Committee has picked up where it left off in late 2010, when changes in location and a new Wisconsin administration temporarily postponed its meeting schedule.

Colleen Harris, US 41 Project Manager, said things are back on track. "As part of any transition, programs are reviewed and evaluated," she said. "After a brief hiatus, the Highway 41 Advisory Committee and related subcommittees have resumed their meeting schedule."

The mission of the US 41 Advisory Committee is to improve coordination, communication and planning of WisDOT programs and projects within the communities affected by its projects, Harris said. While the Committee has a number of goals and objectives, one of the main tasks of the Committee and its subcommittees is to make DBE goal recommendations to the WisDOT Secretary.

pieces of this mega-project entail. And the DOT needs to know what's happening at the local level so we can involve and engage all stakeholders—including DBEs."

There are three main subcommittees to the Advisory Committee: the Business Development Committee, the Labor Development Committee and the Tribal Subcommittee. According to Harris, it is in the subcommittees where some of the policy issues and DBE goal-setting discussion and debate take place.

According to Mark Higley, WisDOT's Finance and DBE Outreach Supervisor on the US 41 Project, the Advisory Committee meetings are public and any interested stakeholders are welcome to attend and participate. The meetings are held every other month at the Green Bay Project Office on West Mason Street in Green Bay. To be added to the email list for meeting reminders and agen-

"It's an important task, which we take very seriously," Harris said. "But to get to the point where the Committee can make recommendations takes a free flow of information both ways. The stakeholders need to know what the many

das, email a request to: DOTUS41Outreachoffice@dot.wi.gov, and put "Advisory Committee list" in the subject line.

## Advisory Committee goals and objectives

- Foster, nurture and promote effective and community-oriented relationships
- Identify appropriate and effective best practices to do business and disseminate to WisDOT's leadership, management team and staff
- Provide guidance in the areas of training, technical assistance and products to expand capacity and quality of life
- To assist WisDOT staff in serving the affected communities
- Provide a real-time mechanism and forum for WisDOT to explain efforts and for the community to relay expectations

## Tasks

- Exchange and share information
- Educate the community on WisDOT policies and procedures related to business and labor opportunities
- Provide reality checks for WisDOT and stakeholders regarding WisDOT efforts
- Make recommendations to the WisDOT Secretary regarding community expectations. Group consensus is required to forward a recommendation to the Secretary's office

## Bid Express Small Business Network

# Online bidding tools are here to stay

In an effort to seek out best practices, WisDOT's Disadvantage Business Enterprise Program (DBE) in collaboration with Bid Express Small Business Network has elected to provide an online bidding tool. This system will potentially replace the conventional methods of using paper documents, faxes, phone calls and emails. It will make bidding for projects much more efficient while bridging the gaps between prime contractors (primes), subcontractors (subs) and DBEs.

WisDOT has contracted with the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin (AICCW) to administer this initiative called the "Bid Express Small Business Network (SBN) Pilot & Rollout." Prime contractors are already mandated to use the Bid Express system to submit bids to WisDOT, which began in early 2010. Gary Mejchar, Project Manager from the AICCW, strongly supports the utilization of the SBN systems. "Within the foreseeable future, internet

bid and quote exchange will probably be the dominant way that the industry communicates," Mejchar said.

For more information about the Bid Express Small Business Network visit [www.bidx.com/main/services.html](http://www.bidx.com/main/services.html) or contact the American Indian Chamber of Commerce of Wisconsin at (414) 604-2044.

# Women contractors' role is increasing

The highway construction business is tough, demanding and competitive. Historically, it's been a man's world. But that is changing. Thanks to the efforts of the US 41 Outreach staff, the pace of change has been accelerating lately in North-east Wisconsin.

Since the US 41 Project construction phase began in 2009 through early 2011, there have been 18 women-owned construction companies working on the project that have received Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) status. "Women-owned businesses are definitely playing a part in this project," said Mark Higley, Finance and DBE Outreach Supervisor for WisDOT's US 41 Project, adding, "...but they don't get any special breaks. Hiring women-owned contractors is encouraged because it helps us reach our overall goals for hiring DBE firms, but in the end they have to win the contract by doing quality work at a competitive price."

Higley noted that there are also many women-owned consulting firms working on the project in construction management (51 percent DBE participation) and highway design (22 percent DBE participation). But on highway construction, Higley said total DBE participation is still only about 11 percent. He said the women-owned companies that have made inroads here have generally hired on as subcontractors. Their participation helps the prime contractor achieve their contractual goal of hiring minority subcontractors (subs), but

they have to have the lowest bid or they won't win the contract.

Diane Bisick grew up in her father's crushing, trucking and excavating business, and she's seen the world change. Now Owner-Operator of Ed Gersek, Inc., Bisick said there are more possibilities today for women. "I think contractors are more accepting of minorities and females now than they were 25 years ago. I would never have been able to run (a construction trucking firm) 25 or 30 years ago. I would not have been able to get my foot in the door," she said.

According to Higley, helping female and other minority businesses get a toe-hold is what the US 41 Outreach staff is for. "We help minority contractors gain DBE status; we provide training and assistance with bidding," Higley said. "Once they win a contract and work on the US 41 Project, our hope is that they will then have the experience to get more highway construction business in the future."

Mary Dvoratchek, Owner-President of Hard Rock Sawing & Drilling Specialists, Co., Keshena, worked for three years to be recognized as a DBE. "When I went to the (Wisconsin) DOT to get certified they thought I was a front because I bought an existing company," Dvoratchek said. But then the US 41 Outreach Office opened, and she said, "With help from the US 41 Project



Diane Bisick, Ed Gersek Inc.

Outreach staff and from the American Indian Chamber of Commerce, I was able to get my DBE certification."

Bisick and Dvoratchek agreed that women contractors need to prove themselves, but it's the work that does the talking. "When you go out there, no matter who you are—male, female, minority or not—the (prime) contractor is looking for your best performance," Bisick said. "They're looking for an A plus job, and that A plus job will carry you through anything, male or female."

Dvoratchek said she does not always win the contract, but prime contractors trust her. "I was talking to one contractor today finalizing a big job I had out on the 94 Project, and he said 'I'm just planning on working with you, Mary, because when I call, I know you are fair and you answer your phone.' And you know, that's all I ask for is that they realize that we do good work and we serve our customers to the best of our ability."

## DBE Training Calendar

2011		2012	
8/3/11	DBE Training	10/26/11	Bonding Training
8/10/11	Plan Reading	11/2/11	DBE Training
8/17/11	Finance Training	11/9/11	Plan Reading
8/24/11	Bonding Training	11/16/11	Finance Training
8/31/11	No Training	11/23/11	Bonding Training
9/7/11	DBE Training	11/30/11	No Training
9/14/11	Plan Reading	12/7/11	DBE Training
9/21/11	Finance Training	12/14/11	Plan Reading
9/28/11	Bonding Training	12/21/11	No Training
10/5/11	DBE Training	12/28/11	No Training
10/12/11	Plan Reading	1/4/12	DBE Training
10/19/11	Finance Training	1/11/12	Plan Reading
		1/18/12	Finance Training
		1/25/12	Bonding Training
		2/1/12	DBE Training
		2/8/12	Plan Reading
		2/15/12	Finance Training
		2/22/12	Bonding Training
		2/29/12	No Training
		3/7/12	DBE Training
		3/14/12	Plan Reading
		3/21/12	Finance Training
		3/28/12	Bonding Training
		4/4/12	DBE Training
		4/11/12	Plan Reading
		4/18/12	Finance Training
		4/25/12	Bonding Training
		5/2/12	DBE Training
		5/9/12	Plan Reading
		5/16/12	Finance Training
		5/23/12	Bonding Training
		5/30/12	No Training
		6/6/12	DBE Training
		6/13/12	Plan Reading
		6/20/12	Finance Training
		6/27/12	No Training
		7/4/12	No Training
		7/11/12	Plan Reading
		7/18/12	Finance Training
		7/25/12	Bonding Training
		8/1/12	DBE Training
		8/8/12	Plan Reading
		8/15/12	Finance Training
		8/22/12	Bonding Training
		8/29/12	No Training
		9/5/12	DBE Training
		9/12/12	Plan Reading
		9/19/12	Finance Training
		9/26/12	Bonding Training

All meetings will be held at the Brown County Project Office, 9 a.m. – Noon.  
\*Dates, times and training subject may change.



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**Green Bay Project Office**  
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## \*Remaining 2011 Advisory and Subcommittee calendar

### Advisory Committee meetings:

Wednesday, September 21  
 Wednesday, November 16

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Training: 2-3 p.m.  
 Meeting time: 3-4:30 p.m.

### Subcommittee Meetings:

Wednesday, August 17  
 Wednesday, October 19  
 Wednesday, December 21

### Business & Labor Subcommittees:

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Meeting time: 2-3 p.m.

### Tribal Subcommittee:

Meeting time: 1-2 p.m.



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\*Subject to change.

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