

# **WIS 29 Corridor Preservation Abbotsford to Wausau Marathon County**

**Project I.D. 1053-09-05**



## **Public Involvement Meeting**

**August 26, 2015  
6:30 to 8:30 p.m.  
Edgar High School  
Edgar**

**A presentation is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m.**

## **Purpose of the meeting**

Welcome to the fourth public involvement meeting to discuss the WIS 29 Corridor Preservation Plan (Abbotsford to Wausau). A brief presentation is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. The remainder of the meeting will follow an open house format, allowing you time to review the displays and discuss your questions with our design team.

The purpose of tonight's meeting is to provide an overview of the plan, discuss the preferred alternative for the future freeway conversion of this section of WIS 29, and update you on the next steps in the process.

## **Project information**

WIS 29 carries 11,800 to 20,500 vehicles per day between Abbotsford and Wausau. One of the primary objectives of the WIS 29 corridor preservation plan is to ensure that this important highway continues to operate safely and efficiently and to protect the state's investment in this important east/west route. By officially mapping and preserving the right of way, the department can protect the state's long-term investment in the highway while providing local communities with information needed to plan for future development.

## **Freeway conversion**

WIS 29 is the primary east-west route across northern Wisconsin, linking the Twin Cities metropolitan area in Minnesota and Green Bay. It is part of the National Highway System (NHS), which is reserved for those routes that are important to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility. It is classified as a principal arterial for through traffic and commodities transport, linking communities along the route.

Currently, the section of WIS 29 between Abbotsford and Wausau is an "expressway." Expressways provide access to and from the highway through interchanges, local roads, and private driveways.

As WIS 29 is converted to a freeway, all the at-grade, stop-controlled intersections would be replaced by well-spaced interchanges, grade separations (overpasses or underpasses), cul-de-sacs, and alternate connections that safely balance the access needs of the adjacent areas with the safety of the highway.

There is no construction currently scheduled to complete freeway conversion on this section of WIS 29. The highway will be converted to freeway as mobility and safety needs warrant changes and as funding becomes available.

## **Objectives of freeway conversion**

Converting WIS 29 to freeway in the future has several advantages which include mobility, long-term planning, and safety.

## Mobility

Highways have different functions, which are illustrated in Figure 1. The primary function of local roads is to provide land access. Freeways provide regional mobility. WIS 29 is an expressway. Its primary responsibility is for regional movements, such as from I-94 in Minneapolis to I-41 in Green Bay.

## Long-term planning

A plan that manages access along WIS 29 preserves the investments made in the facility and ensures that future freeway conversion is not affected by development decisions. By planning ahead, land needed for interchanges, grade separations, and associated local service roadways can be preserved. By officially mapping WIS 29 as a freeway, communities can better plan for future growth and opportunities. These communities can then foster reliance on roadways that will have future access to and across WIS 29.

## Safety

Intersections and driveways are major contributors to high crash rates. Each intersection introduces multiple opportunities for vehicle conflicts. Reducing intersections and driveways substantially reduces crash rates. Figure 2 illustrates the number of conflict points associated with an at-grade intersection.

The effect of access points is reflected in the statewide crash rate for different types of highways. The bar chart in Figure 3 illustrates the difference in crash rates between different types of Wisconsin highways. Wisconsin freeways have about 33 percent fewer crashes than Wisconsin expressways such as WIS 29.

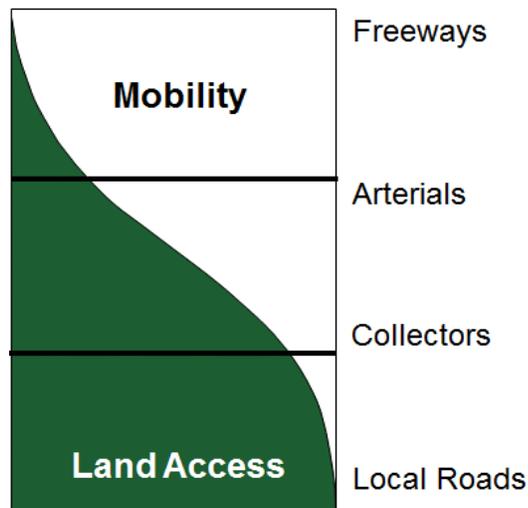


Figure 1 Roadway functions

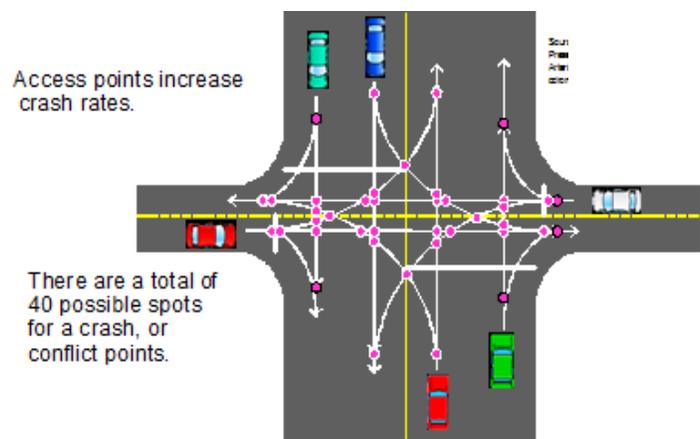


Figure 2 Intersection conflict points

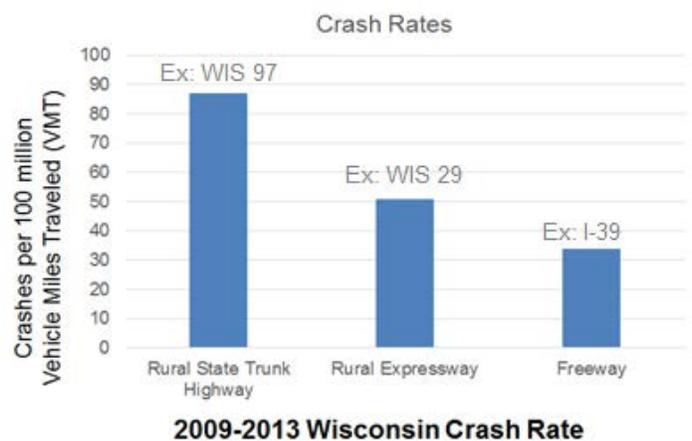


Figure 3 Crash rates for different highway types

## Objectives of corridor preservation

Preserving the land needed for future freeway conversion has several advantages:

- Allows property owners and local governments to more effectively plan for the future by considering future transportation improvements.
- Reduces taxpayer costs by guiding development away from land that would need to be purchased for future right of way.
- Reduces disruption to property owners by providing them the knowledge of right of way needs for future conversion, so they can plan their future improvements accordingly.

## Corridor preservation preferred alternative

The WIS 29 corridor from Abbotsford to Wausau is divided into four analysis sections (Figure 4).

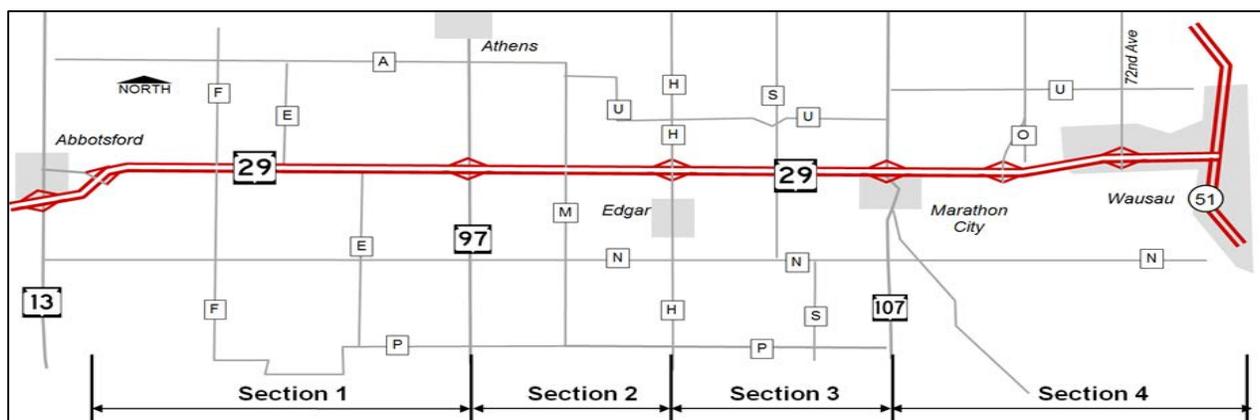


Figure 4 Study sections

For this study, we conducted more than 10 local official/stakeholder meetings, discussed access needs with property owners, and conducted three public involvement meetings to develop the preferred alternative for Sections 1 through 4.

Figures 5 through 7 illustrate the preferred freeway conversion plan that would be implemented in the future as mobility and safety needs warrant changes. The preferred alternative includes a new interchange, four grade separations, and local service roads to provide access to properties that will have their access removed from WIS 29. Please also review the more details exhibits and attachments available this evening.

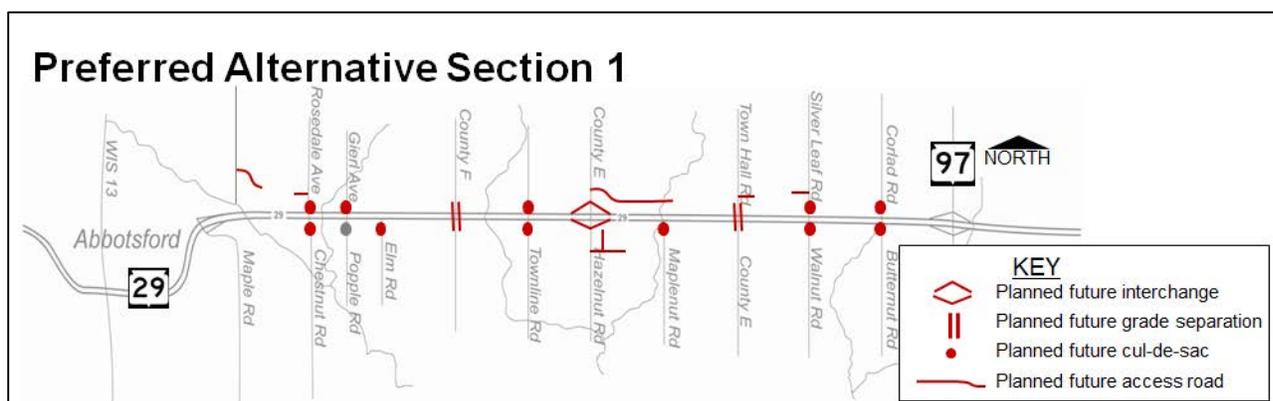
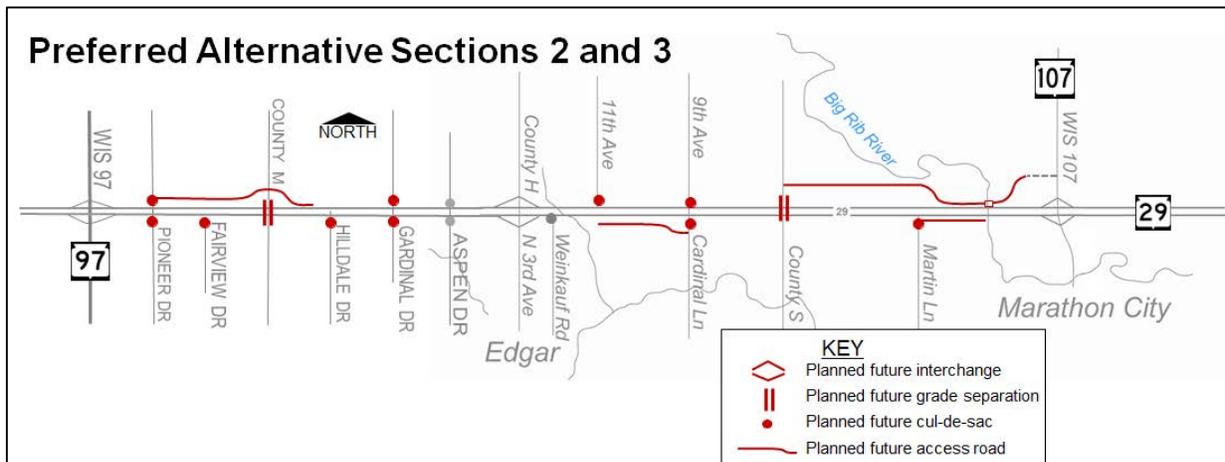


Figure 5

The County E (north) Interchange Alternative is the preferred corridor preservation alternative for Section 1 (WIS 13 to WIS 97). This alternative includes a future interchange at County E (north) and grade separations at County F and County E (south). This alternative:

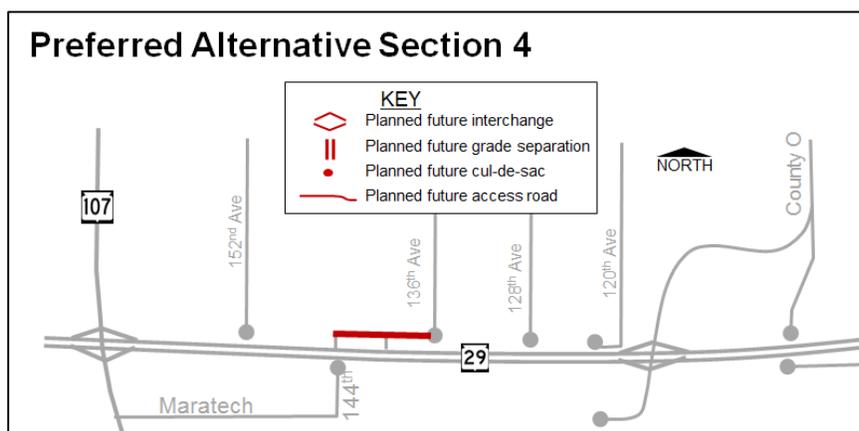
- Provides direct access to the community of Milan.
- Causes the least indirection for area residents.
- Has moderate environmental, agricultural, and structural impacts compared to other alternatives.
- Provides access to and across WIS 29 for roadways with reasonable traffic volume levels.
- Is not anticipated to have many wetland impacts.



**Figure 6**

The County M and County S Grade Separation Alternative is the preferred corridor preservation alternative for Sections 2 and 3. This alternative includes grade separations at County M and County S and a possible bridge over the Big Rib River. This alternative:

- Is consistent with WisDOT’s desired spacing for rural interchanges.
- Requires fewer home/building relocations.
- Requires less right of way acquisition.
- Minimizes indirection for business/industry, particularly those directly west of the Big Rib River.



**Figure 7**

Removal of the remaining access between 144th Avenue and 136th Avenue and installing an access road is the preferred corridor preservation alternative for Section 4. This would remove two direct access points to and from WIS 29. All other at-grade public and private accesses have been removed by previous projects.

## County M and S interchanges

Some communities requested that we officially map interchanges at County M and County S. We investigated these locations. We are not mapping interchanges at these locations because:

- The spacing between the existing WIS 97, County H, and WIS 107 interchanges is less than six miles, which provides reasonable access to WIS 29 for area residents and businesses.
- The existing population centers along Sections 2 and 3 of WIS 29 (Athens, Edgar, and Marathon City) are already served by interchanges. No population centers exist near the County M and County S intersections.
- The planned future grade separations at County S and County M will provide places for area residents and businesses to cross WIS 29 between the existing interchanges.
- The addition of the planned future service roads will improve the continuity of the local road system between the existing interchanges and planned grade separations.
- County M and County S do not have the kind of traffic volumes needed to invest in an interchange; their traffic volumes are about three-quarters or less of what is typically considered for the construction of an interchange.

If the local communities believe that interchanges are necessary at these locations, the local governments may use their official mapping powers to preserve right of way needed for an interchange at each location.

## Project timeline/next steps

- |  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| ✓ Local officials/stakeholders meeting (Section 1, 2, and 3) | August 8, 2007      |
| ✓ Local officials/stakeholders meeting (Section 1, 2, and 3) | October 15, 2007    |
| ✓ Local officials/stakeholders meeting (Section 4)           | March 31, 2008      |
| ✓ Local officials/stakeholders meeting (Section 4)           | April 21, 2008      |
| ✓ Local officials/stakeholders meeting (Section 4)           | May 20, 2008        |
| ✓ Public involvement meeting                                 | August 14, 2008     |
| ✓ Local officials/stakeholders meeting (Section 1, 2, and 3) | March 31, 2009      |
| ✓ Public involvement meeting                                 | October 27, 2011    |
| ✓ Public involvement meeting (Section 1 and 3)               | April 12, 2012      |
| ✓ Local officials meeting (Section 1, 2, 3, and 4)           | August 4, 2015      |
| • Public involvement meeting                                 | August 26, 2015     |
| • Complete environmental assessment (EA)                     | Last quarter 2015   |
| • EA available for public comment                            | Last quarter 2015   |
| • Public hearing for EA                                      | First quarter 2016  |
| • Public hearing for official mapping                        | Second quarter 2016 |

As previously indicated, this study will provide a plan for future freeway conversion. No construction or design is scheduled. Freeway conversion will take place as mobility or safety concerns warrant changes, and when funding is available.

## Real estate information

Following the public hearing for the environmental document scheduled for first quarter 2016, there will be another public hearing for the official mapping, scheduled for the second quarter 2016.

After the public hearing for the official mapping, an official map of right of way needed for future freeway conversion will be recorded at the County Register of Deeds. All impacted property owners are notified via registered mail when the map is recorded. The notification will include a copy of the map page(s) showing the affected property.

There are no plans to purchase real estate at this time. When future projects are implemented, and before any property acquisition activities are initiated, WisDOT real estate will contact the property owner to explain the details of the acquisition process as well as provide information on property owner's rights under Wisconsin's Eminent Domain Law.

Landowners who intend to make improvements in the area shown on the official map are required to notify WisDOT 60 days before beginning work. After notification, WisDOT will begin the acquisition process or concur with the improvement.

## **Public input**

We encourage you to review the displays and discuss your questions with the project representatives.

We are looking for your feedback on the preferred alternative. We are also seeking any information you have regarding history, historic structures, archaeology, or other environmental issues located in the proposed project area.

A comment form for providing written comments is attached. You may leave your comment form at today's meeting or mail it on or before **September 30, 2015**. We are also accepting written comments via email. The mailing and emailing addresses to send comments are provided below.

If you have questions or would like more information as the project progresses, please contact:

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