



COMMUNICATION GUIDE

Helping Businesses Thrive During Construction



The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is proposing to improve US 8 at both the County K/Norway Street intersection and the US 63/Maple Street intersection. These intersections have shown a history of crashes, and were included in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's 2011 "5% Safety Needs" list. Reconstruction of these intersections will address the safety problems and improve traffic flow.

With any reconstruction project, WisDOT recognizes that businesses located in or near construction zones will have business operations impacted. It's critical that customers have access and continue to visit businesses, regardless of any roadwork inconvenience.

The *In This Together* program targets businesses facing road construction in their community. The program's goal is to help businesses maintain daily operations while construction is underway.

This packet is a tool WisDOT created for the business community and provides techniques and tips that have been successful in communities throughout Wisconsin to help maintain customer and employee access during road construction. This packet is meant to provide you with ideas as you prepare for road construction in your community.



PLAN AHEAD

Throughout the design phase, WisDOT holds periodic meetings with local officials and community residents to provide updates on the design of the project and gather feedback. By the time construction crews begin work, all of the design decisions have been made. Therefore, it is important for the business community to get involved early and stay involved during construction. The following tips can help businesses better plan for construction:

- **Get involved early** by attending WisDOT public involvement meetings to learn about the project, ask questions and provide feedback.
- **Communicate** with WisDOT project managers to stay informed about project details, schedule and potential traffic impacts.
- **Understand how construction will impact access** to your business. Will there be changes to driveways or parking? Will work on interchanges impact traditional traffic patterns?
- **Develop a plan of action** that includes how you will communicate with your customers, employees and suppliers about road construction and traffic impacts.
- **Keep your customers informed** prior to and during construction. Make sure you have accurate contact information for all customers.
- **Identify alternate routes** to your business.
- **Work collaboratively with other affected businesses** in the area to share resources and ideas.



Sign outside River Run restaurant that reads, "Better road ahead. Stop in."



COMMUNICATE WITH CUSTOMERS

Drivers who are well informed about road construction are generally tolerant of traffic disruption. They know about construction before they leave home, rather than being surprised by the sudden appearance of barricades, orange barrels and/or road closed signs.

The following tips can help you keep customers coming through your doors:

- **Put up signs that point the way to your business.** When appropriate, WisDOT will help by permitting businesses to temporarily host signs in the highway right of way to reassure customers that businesses are accessible. Contact the project manager to determine if this is appropriate for your business and to obtain signage guidelines. Please make certain your sign complies with WisDOT guidelines. Contact Beth Cunningham, WisDOT Project Manager, at beth.cunningham@dot.wi.gov to obtain signage guidelines. Also coordinate with your local municipality for additional advertising guidelines.
- **Use simple maps to tell your customers about the best alternate routes to reach your business.** Post them on your doors and bulletin boards, upload them to your website, insert them into mailings and distribute them to your customers, some of whom may be unfamiliar with alternative routes to access your business.
- **Add directions to your voicemail** or keep a script with directions to your business next to the phone so employees can explain to customers how to reach your business.
- **Let the public know you're open for business.** Develop advertisements for newspaper, radio or television. Consider pooling your resources with other businesses for group advertising. Advertising cooperatively can be very cost-effective. Brainstorm for innovative ideas to promote your business.



Banner attached to a streetlight to promote a road construction sale.



TIPS

Businesses can take basic actions to not only survive, but thrive, during road construction:

- Plan ahead as much as possible; get involved early. The further out you plan, the more prepared you will be.
- Form an alliance with other businesses in your area. Pool resources to purchase group advertising.
- Attend WisDOT's public involvement meetings to increase your knowledge about the project and to provide feedback.
- Hold regular and frequent meetings with other businesses to share strategies and support. Write down your concerns and questions for discussion.
- Hold a pre-construction meeting with the WisDOT project manager and contractor to find out how long the project will take and what to expect (i.e., dirt, mud, noise, ground shaking, lane closures, etc.).
- Meet the on-site project manager. Keep his/her telephone number in a handy place.
- Establish a line of communication with Beth Cunningham, WisDOT Project Manager, at beth.cunningham@dot.wi.gov, – she is the person who coordinates directly with the contractor.
- Stay positive! Customers do notice.

Brainstorm ideas to promote your business and creatively communicate with customers:

- Hold events prior to construction to draw attention to the area.
- Design a logo for all affected businesses to use during construction.
- Hold special promotions such as free hot dogs and refreshments, or a one-day sign-up for a giveaway.
- Print placemat advertisements.
- Place advertisements in outlying newspapers.
- Sell hard-hat lunches to go.
- Start a delivery service during construction.



CHECKLIST

6-12 months before construction

- Conduct first meeting with WisDOT staff responsible for project design. Discuss the *In This Together* program and participate in question and answer session.
- Discuss access during construction and other issues.
- Form an association/group of businesses that will be impacted by the construction project. Determine who will lead and coordinate efforts for the community.
- Form committees for signing, advertising, promotions, special events, etc.
- Develop promotional campaign:
 - Adopt theme
 - Design and produce newspaper, television, and radio advertisements
 - Brainstorm and produce additional promotional materials
 - Plan special events

3 to 6 months before construction

- Conduct second meeting with appropriate WisDOT staff and business owners.
- Discuss *In This Together* progress.
- Begin work on sign development. Be sure to coordinate with WisDOT.

1 month before construction

- Conduct third meeting with community leaders and business owners.
- Obtain latest available information regarding project from WisDOT.
- Discuss access during construction, project schedule, and other outstanding issues.
- Complete work on signing development.
- Arrange for installation of signs to coincide with the start of work and/or any detours. Be sure to coordinate sign location with WisDOT.

After construction begins

- Attend construction business meetings. (WisDOT project leader will arrange.)
- Continue committee work as appropriate.
- Stay positive! Customers do notice.



STAY INFORMED

It is important for businesses to understand why US 8/US 63 is being improved, why there may be some inconvenience during reconstruction, what alternative solutions were evaluated and what steps are being taken to minimize negative impacts.

Businesses can stay informed by:

- **Attending public involvement meetings** during the design phase and other meetings just prior to construction.
- **Inviting WisDOT representatives to discuss the project** at your business association or group meetings.
- **Sharing what you've learned** with other business people, using letters, newsletters, social media, ads and other techniques to make the community and your customers more aware of what's ahead.
- **Staying in touch with WisDOT** project staff once construction begins.
- **Establishing a line of communication.** Call the project staff if you have questions. An effective method is to establish one of your business association members as a point person to collect questions or concerns from the membership and share them with project staff. These people will also be responsible for updating the association on what they have learned.

For additional resources and strategies on how to thrive during construction, please visit www.wisconsin.gov/Pages/projects/in-together



If you have questions about the *In This Together* program or about the US 8/US 63 reconstruction project, please contact Beth Cunningham at:

 715.635.4973

 beth.cunningham@dot.wi.gov

 www.wisconsin.gov/Pages/projects/by-region/nw/turtlelake