DECEMBER 2015

COULEE REGION TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Innovative Solutions for the 21st Century

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) has transitioned to the final stage of the Coulee Region Transportation Study. The study process, Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL), is a collaborative approach to decision making that engages a broad range of stakeholders to plan for the area's environmental, community, and economic future.

The Coulee Region is comprised of the La Crosse, Onalaska, Holmen, West Salem, La Crescent and surrounding communities. The rivers and bluffs create a unique challenge for the transportation system in the region. The region's hub is in the south end of the study area and communities with population growth areas are to the north. The three major roads that connect the Coulee Region communities, businesses and neighborhoods are US 53, WIS 35 and WIS 16. These connections serve as gateways to the region, are critical for the movement of people, goods, and services and should take the burden off local roads to provide a safe and efficient transportation system.

Public Involvement

As part of the PEL process, WisDOT conducted extensive and inclusive public and stakeholder outreach efforts, including:

- Over 80 total meetings held to date
  - 8 Public Involvement Meetings
  - 4 Local Officials Meetings
  - 3 Agency Coordination Meetings
  - 11 Community Advisory Group & 11 Technical Advisory Group Meetings
  - 2 Transit Focus Group & 2 Bicycle and Pedestrian Focus Group Meetings
  - Over 40 additional community outreach meetings, with more scheduled to discuss the study conclusions.
- Over 1,300 combined total attendees at study meetings
- Over 700 total comments recorded

Strategy Development Process

Eight broad strategy areas were considered throughout the strategy development process:

- Travel Demand Management (TDM)
- Transportation System Management Operations and Technology (TSMO)
- Policy and Legislation
- Transit
- Bike and Pedestrian
- Improve Existing Roads
- Selective Expansion of Existing Roads
- Construct New Roads

These strategies are solutions or concepts that were grouped together to create strategy packages. Throughout the course of the study WisDOT developed and evaluated 18 different strategy packages. These strategies were developed from ideas received from the public. These packages were all evaluated against the study's goals and objectives. After several rounds of public input and evaluation, six packages were selected to move forward into the Project Development phase. Impacts will be evaluated as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, which is part of the Project Development phase.

PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT LINKAGES

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Study Goal

Improve the long term movement of people and goods, safely and efficiently, in a manner that accommodates economic development, incorporates community plans, and limits adverse environmental impacts and social effects, in ways that support the natural beauty and livability and contributes positively to the Region's quality of life.

Study Objectives

Root Objective	Desired Outcome
1. Safety	Reduce rate and severity of pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular crashes.
2. Infrastructure	Address pavement, structural, geometric deficiencies and utilities.
3. Improve Congestion and Travel Reliability	
Multimodal (Pedestrian/Bicycle/Transit)	Provide comfortable, direct, reliable and convenient access for all modes of transportation. Promote/ encourage the use of alternate modes of travel.
Motor Vehicles	Provide reliable travel times for both recurring and nonrecurring congestion. Reduce motor vehicle use during peak periods.
4. Plan for future transportation needs	Promote smart growth that considers all transportation modes along with changes to land use.
5. Limit impacts to community's resources	Consider strategies that balance transportation needs with protection of environmental and community resources.

Strategy Package H

WisDOT was asked by the community to analyze a package that does not expand any existing roadways or create a new facility. This package focuses on strategies that have minimal impacts. WisDOT estimated a 4% reduction in motor vehicle trips per day, based on other studies from around the country, on alternative modes of transportation and trip reduction methods. The WisDOT analysis looked at tripling the transit use in the region while significantly increasing bike, pedestrian, and carpool transportation modes. When analyzed, numbers show that this package does not adequately address the traffic congestion problems in the region and therefore has been eliminated as a stand-alone strategy package. Although it has been eliminated, WisDOT has incorporated this strategy package into every recommended strategy package with the hope that alternate modes of transportation will gather increasing support in the future and help alleviate congestion and improve safety.

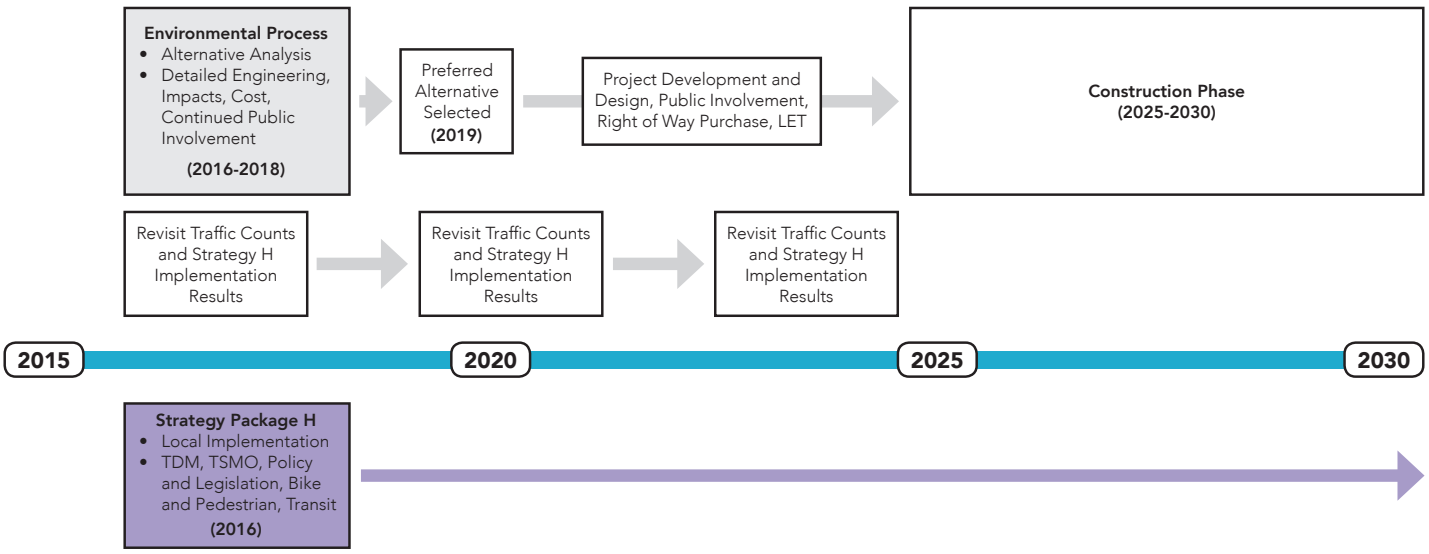
Future Timeline

The Coulee Region PEL Study is the first phase in a much larger process, where the final result is implementing transportation strategies that help meet the future needs of the region. The aim of PEL process is to identify a broad range of strategies that satisfy the study goals and objectives. Through extensive community coordination and outreach, WisDOT and the Coulee Region have done just that.

One action that can be taken immediately is the implementation of Strategy Package H, which is incorporated into all recommended strategy packages. A few of the elements from this strategy package fall within WisDOT's jurisdiction. However, most of the elements will require coordination and initiative from governments and organizations at the local level. Because of this, WisDOT's final public outreach effort for this study will be focused on sharing the study's final report with local groups and encouraging them to do their part in the implementation of Strategy Package H.

The next phase of the process will be to prepare an environmental document. This phase includes detailed engineering of the strategy packages (including a no-build alternative), detailed analysis of impacts and costs, and continued public involvement. WisDOT will revisit the traffic models in this phase, and also evaluate the progress and effects of Strategy H. With continued involvement from the public, a preferred alternative will be identified.

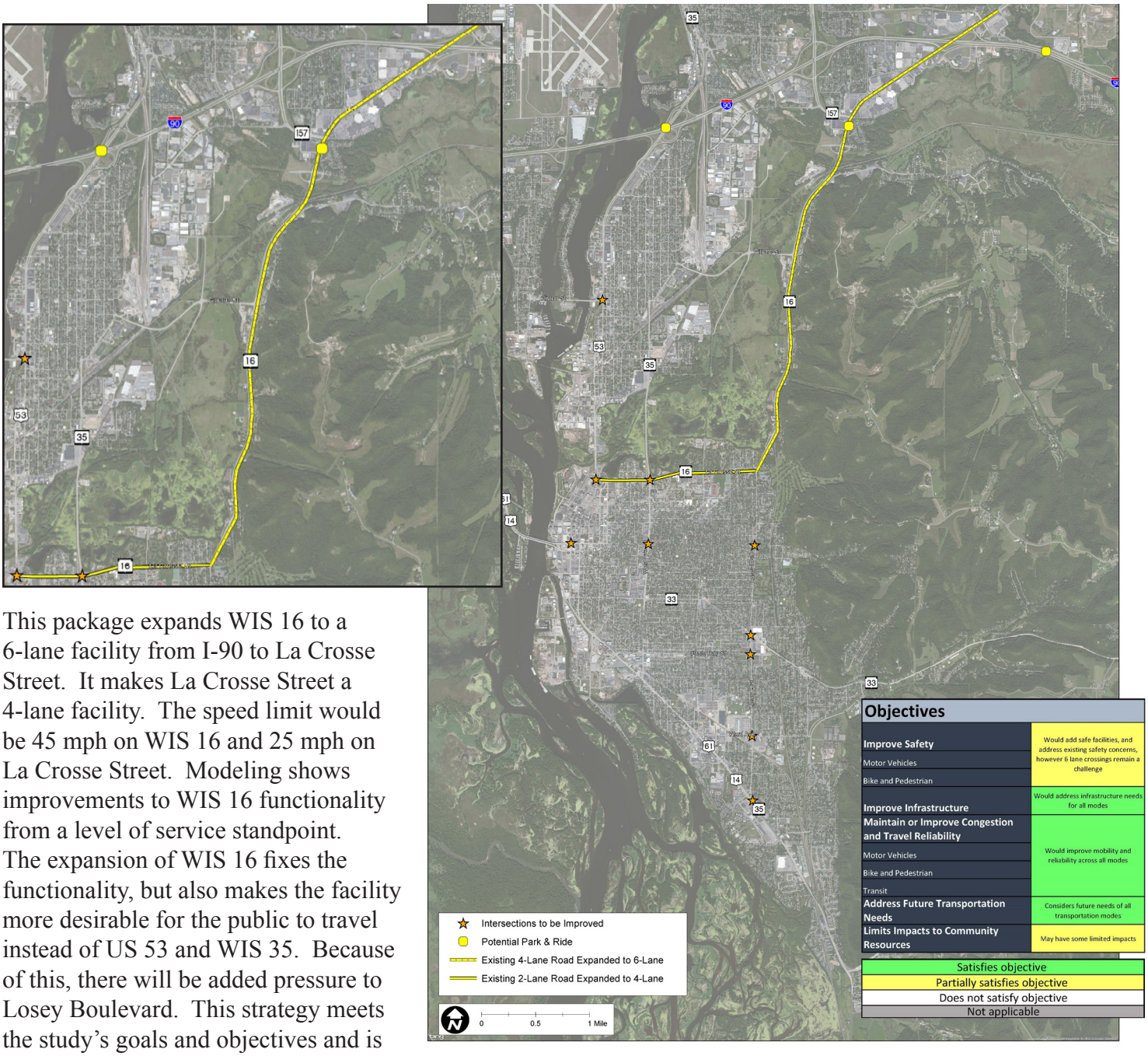
The figure below provides a general timeline for the entire process, from the PEL process through construction. All dates on this figure are approximate.



The next several pages of this newsletter contain more detailed information about the strategy packages that have been selected to move forward.

STRATEGY PACKAGE H + A1

Strategy Package	Strategies							
	TDM	Policy and Legislation	Bike and Pedestrian	Transit	TSMO	Improve Existing Road	Selective Expansion of Existing Road	Construct New Road
H + A1 Expand WIS 16 from 4 to 6 lanes Expand La Crosse Street from 2 to 4 Lanes	Park and Ride (Exit 3) Park and Ride (WIS 157) Support flex work hours Promote rideshare	Support parking management strategies Complete Streets Intergovernmental cooperation	Bike lanes/separated bike lanes Sidewalks/Multi-use paths Enhanced crossings at logical locations Dedicated bike signals	Express bus service Support Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Bus priority signals	Upgraded signals Increased traveler information	Improve Intersections: Losey Blvd & Cass St Losey Blvd & WIS 33 Losey & Green Bay St Losey Blvd & Ward Ave Losey Blvd & US 14/161 US 53 & Clinton St US 53 & La Crosse St WIS 35 & La Crosse St WIS 35 & Cass St	Expand WIS 16 to 6 lanes Expand La Crosse Street to 4 lanes	No new roadways



This package expands WIS 16 to a 6-lane facility from I-90 to La Crosse Street. It makes La Crosse Street a 4-lane facility. The speed limit would be 45 mph on WIS 16 and 25 mph on La Crosse Street. Modeling shows improvements to WIS 16 functionality from a level of service standpoint. The expansion of WIS 16 fixes the functionality, but also makes the facility more desirable for the public to travel instead of US 53 and WIS 35. Because of this, there will be added pressure to Losey Boulevard. This strategy meets the study's goals and objectives and is recommended to move forward.

Example Concept Renderings for Strategy Package H + A1

STRATEGY A1 (LA CROSSE STREET)
PROPOSED CONDITIONS

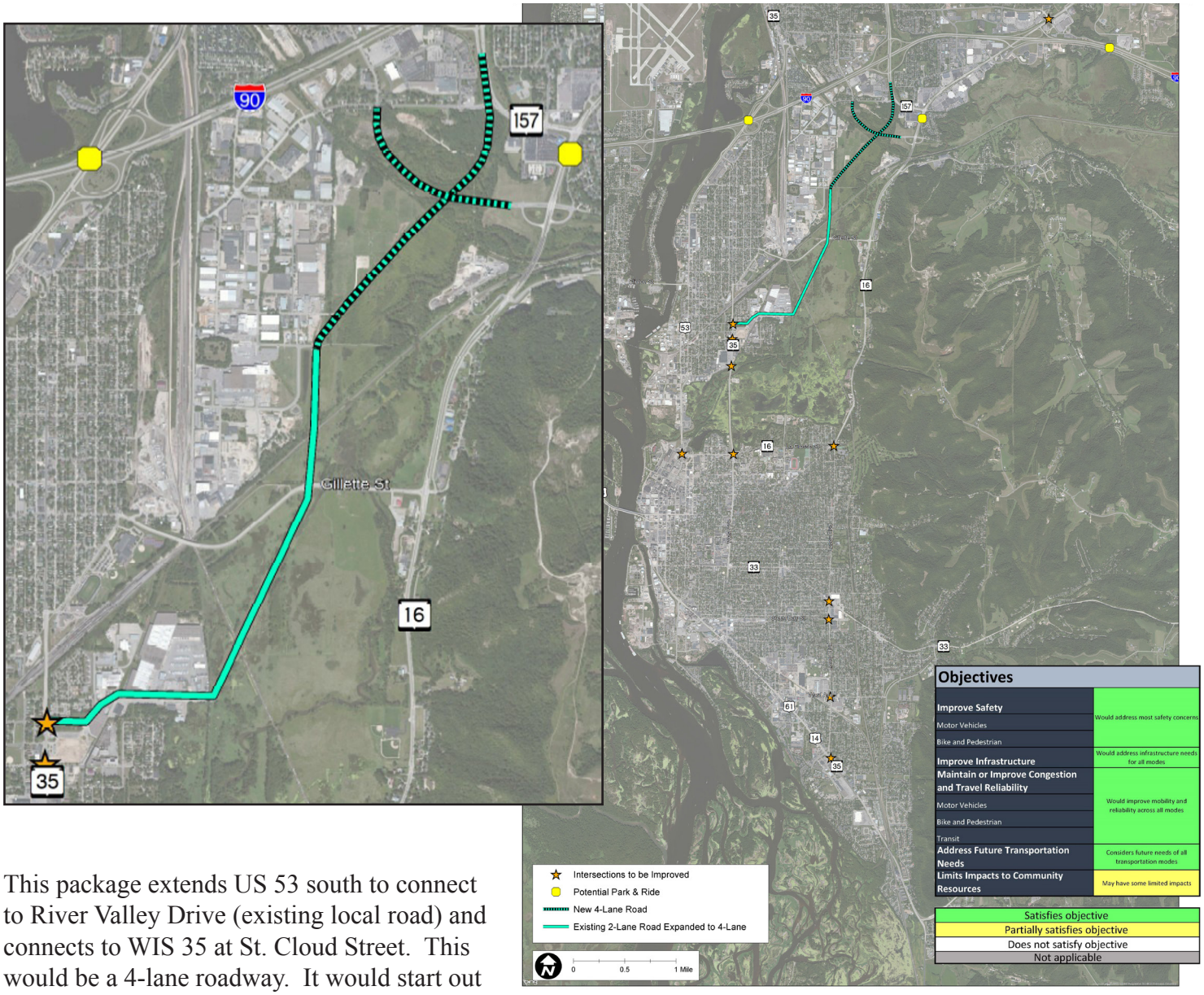
STRATEGY A1 (LA CROSSE STREET)
EXISTING CONDITIONS

STRATEGY A1 (WIS 16)
PROPOSED CONDITIONS

STRATEGY A1 (WIS 16)
EXISTING CONDITIONS

STRATEGY PACKAGE H + F1

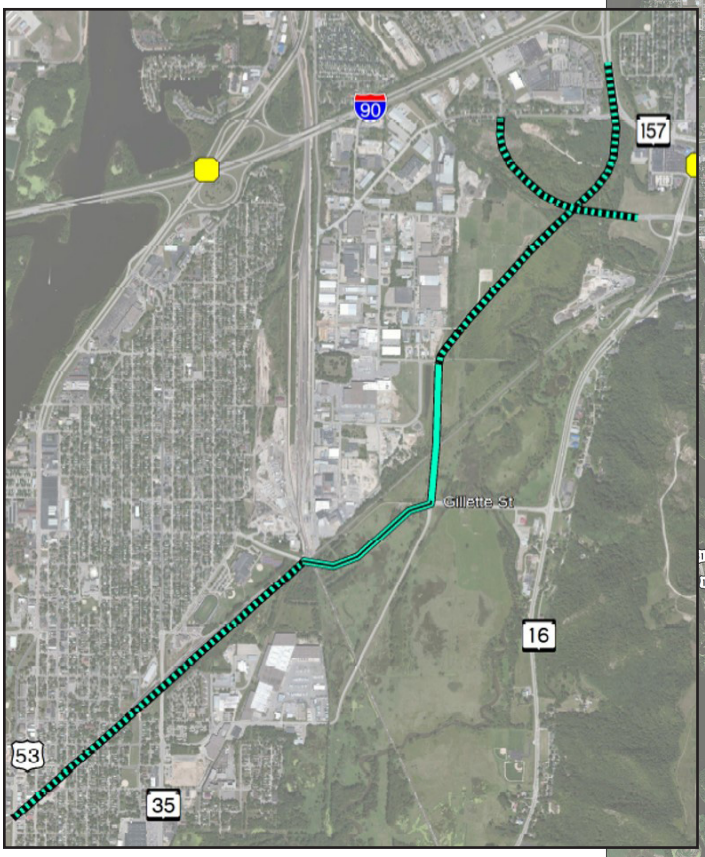
Strategy Package	Strategies							
	TDM	Policy and Legislation	Bike and Pedestrian	Transit	TSMO	Improve Existing Road	Selective Expansion of Existing Road	Construct New Road
H + F1 New Road from I-90/WIS 157 to River Valley Drive Expand River Valley Drive to 4 Lanes New Road from County SS/12th Ave. to 12th Ave./Medary Ln. Expand River Valley Drive and St. James Street	Park and Ride (Exit 3) Park and Ride (WIS 157) Support flex work hours Promote rideshare	Support parking management strategies Complete Streets Intergovernmental cooperation	Bike lanes/separated bike lanes Sidewalks/Multi-use paths Enhanced crossings at logical locations Dedicated bike signals	Express bus service Support Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Bus priority signals	Upgraded signals Increased traveler information	Improve Intersections: WIS 16 & La Crosse St Losey & Green Bay St WIS 35 & St Cloud St WIS 16 & County OS Losey Blvd & WIS 33 Losey Blvd & Ward Ave Losey Blvd & US 14/61 US 53 & La Crosse St WIS 35 & St Andrews St WIS 35 & Monitor St WIS 35 & La Crosse St	Expand River Valley Drive to 4 lanes Expand St. James Street to 4 lanes (River Valley Drive to WIS 35)	New Road from I-90/WIS 157 to River Valley Drive New road from County SS/12th Avenue to 12th Avenue/Medary Lane New road along St. James Street to WIS 35

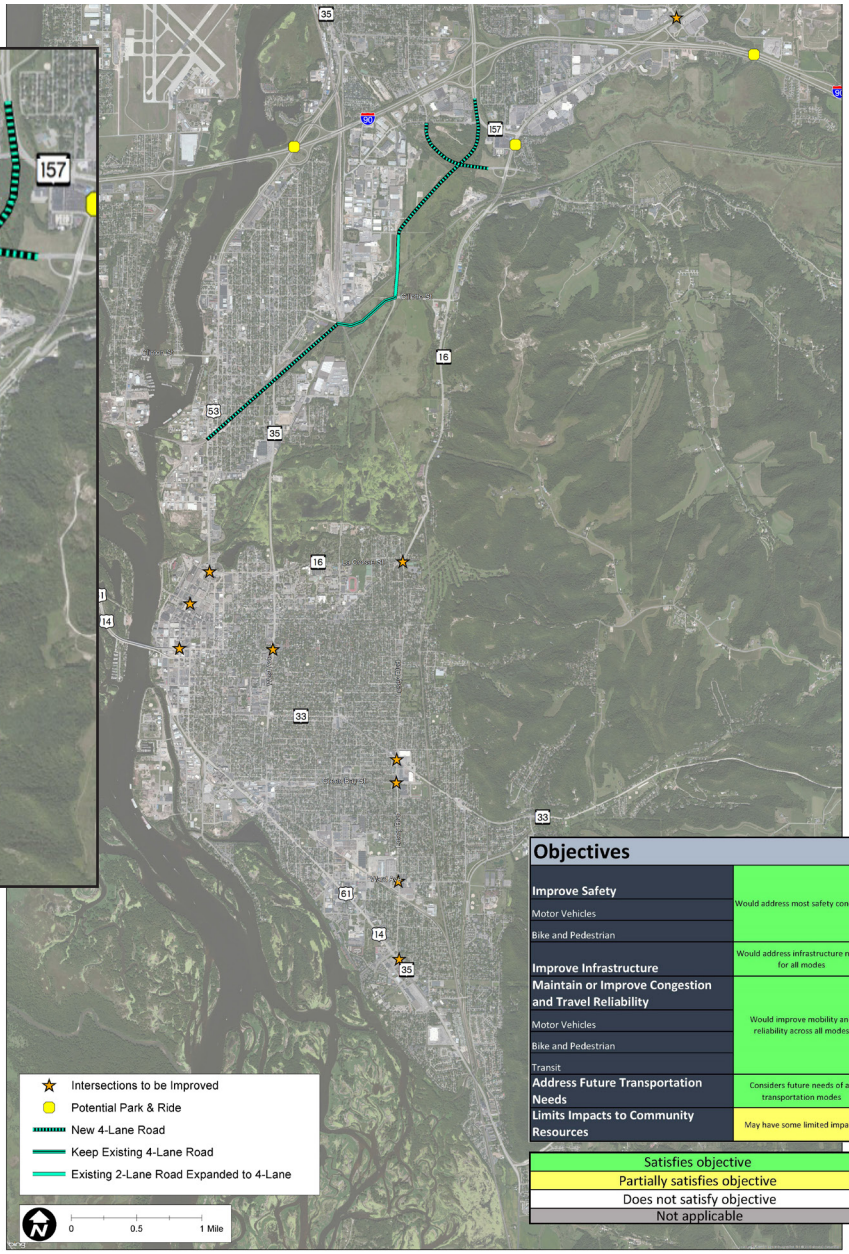


This package extends US 53 south to connect to River Valley Drive (existing local road) and connects to WIS 35 at St. Cloud Street. This would be a 4-lane roadway. It would start out at 45 mph coming off of US 53 and transition to 25 mph as you get to River Valley Drive. This package also includes a new connection from 12th Avenue South to Medary Lane. This package improves WIS 16 from a functional perspective, taking a lot of traffic off of that facility. It removes the bottleneck at WIS 16 and WIS 157. It takes some traffic off of the current US 53 facility, but adds some pressure on WIS 35. This strategy package meets the study's goals and objectives and is recommended to move forward.

STRATEGY PACKAGE H + F3

Strategy Package	Strategies							
	TDM	Policy and Legislation	Bike and Pedestrian	Transit	TSMO	Improve Existing Road	Selective Expansion of Existing Road	Construct New Road
H + F3 New Road from I-90/WIS 157 to River Valley Drive Expand River Valley Drive to 4 Lanes (New Road to Gillette St) New Road from County SS/12th Ave. to 12th Ave./Medary Ln. New Road from Gillette St. to US 53 along the CP Railroad	Park and Ride (Exit 3) Park and Ride (WIS 157) Support flex work hours Promote rideshare	Support parking management strategies Complete Streets Intergovernmental cooperation	Bike lanes/separated bike lanes Sidewalks/Multi-use paths Enhanced crossings at logical locations Dedicated bike signals	Express bus service Support Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Bus priority signals	Upgraded signals Increased traveler information	Improve Intersections: WIS 16 & La Crosse St US 53 (SB) & State St WIS 16 & County OS Losey Blvd & WIS 33 Losey & Green Bay St Losey Blvd & Ward Ave Losey Blvd & US 14/61 WIS 35 & Cass St US 53 & La Crosse St US 53 & Cass St	Expand River Valley Drive to 4 lanes (New Road to Gillette St)	New Road from I-90/WIS 157 to River Valley Drive New road from County SS/12th Avenue to 12th Avenue/Medary Lane New Road from Gillette Street to US 53 along the CP Railroad





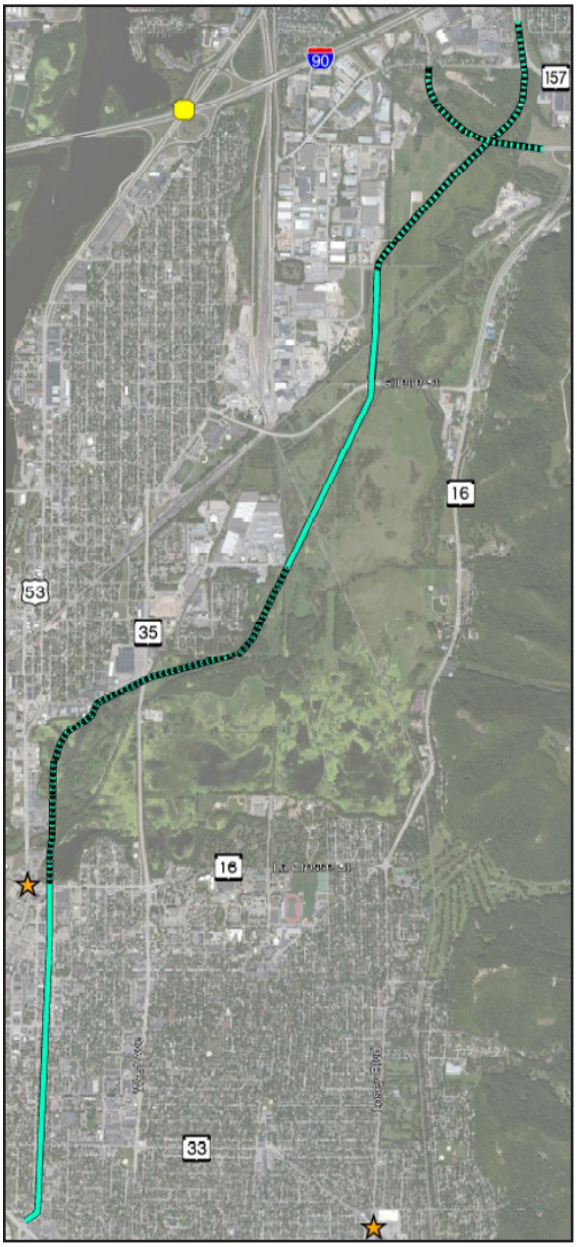
Objectives	
Improve Safety	Would address most safety concerns
Motor Vehicles	
Bike and Pedestrian	
Improve Infrastructure	Would address infrastructure needs for all modes
Maintain or Improve Congestion and Travel Reliability	Would improve mobility and reliability across all modes
Motor Vehicles	
Bike and Pedestrian	
Transit	
Address Future Transportation Needs	Considers future needs of all transportation modes
Limits Impacts to Community Resources	May have some limited impacts

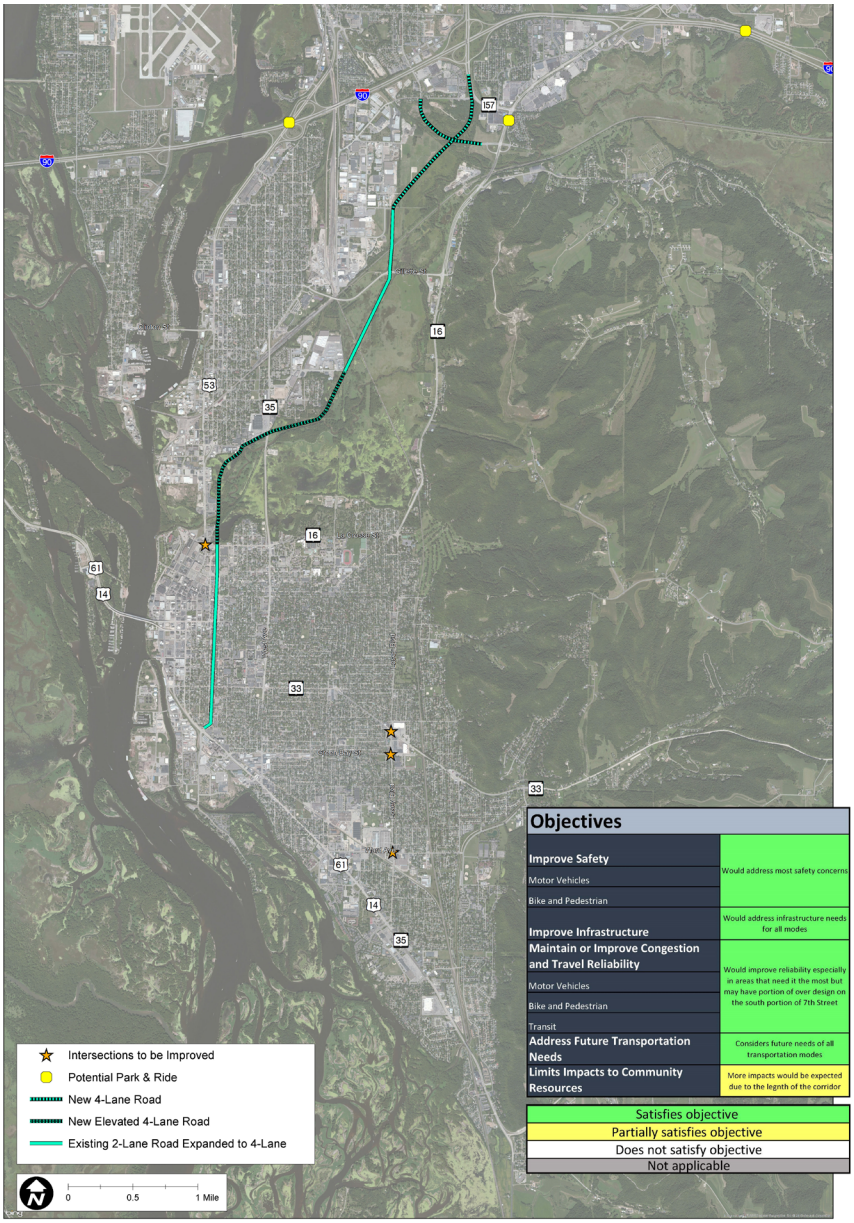
Satisfies objective
Partially satisfies objective
Does not satisfy objective
Not applicable

This package extends US 53 south to connect to River Valley Drive (existing local road) and uses Gillette Street to follow the railroad tracks connecting WIS 35 to the existing US 53. This would be a 4-lane facility. This package also includes a new connection from 12th Avenue South to Medary Lane. This package improves WIS 16 from a function perspective, shifting traffic from that facility to this one. It removes the bottleneck at WIS 16 and WIS 157. This strategy package also has improvements to WIS 35 and existing US 53. This strategy package meets the study's goals and objectives and is recommended to move forward.

STRATEGY PACKAGE H + F4

Strategy Package	Strategies							
	TDM	Policy and Legislation	Bike and Pedestrian	Transit	TSMO	Improve Existing Road	Selective Expansion of Existing Road	Construct New Road
H + F4 New Road from I-90/WIS 157 to River Valley Drive Expand River Valley Drive to 4 Lanes New Road from County SS/12th Ave. to 12th Ave./Medary Ln. New Road from St. James St. to La Crosse Street/7th Street Additional Expansion on 7th Street as Needed	Park and Ride (Exit 3) Park and Ride (WIS 157) Support flex work hours Promote rideshare	Support parking management strategies Complete Streets Intergovernmental cooperation	Bike lanes/separated bike lanes Sidewalks/Multi-use paths Enhanced crossings at logical locations Dedicated bike signals	Express bus service Support Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Bus priority signals	Upgraded signals Increased traveler information	Improve Intersections: Losey & Green Bay St WIS 16 & County OS Losey Blvd & WIS 33 Losey Blvd & Ward Ave US 53 & La Crosse St	Expand River Valley Drive to 4 lanes Additional Expandion on 7th St	New Road from I-90/WIS 157 to River Valley Drive New road from County SS/12th Avenue to 12th Avenue/Medary Lane New Road from St. James St. to La Crosse Street New La Crosse River crossing

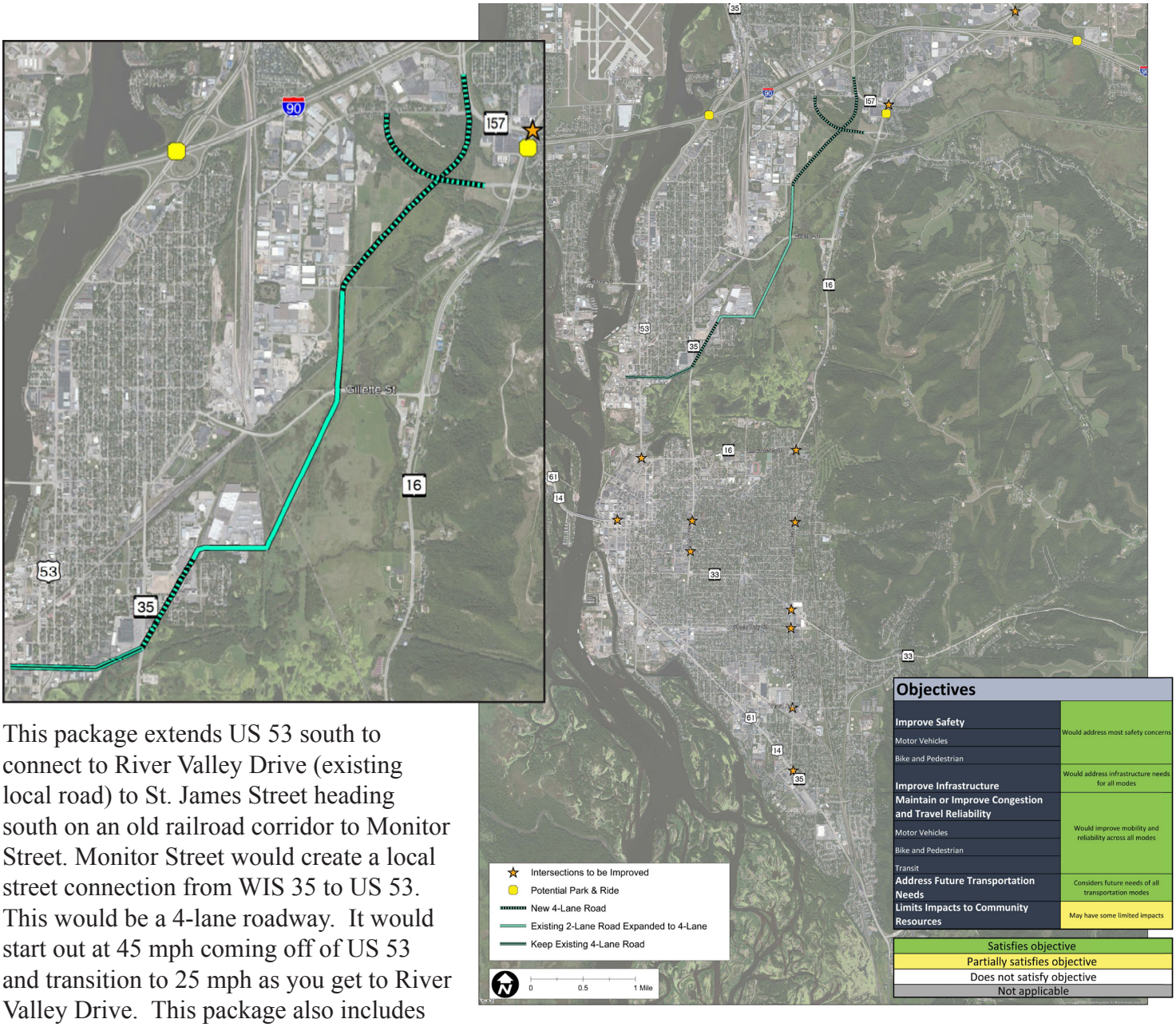




This package extends US 53 south to connect to River Valley Drive (existing local road) extending south along the south edge of the Indian Hill neighborhood, crossing WIS 35 and continuing south to connect to US 14/61. This would be a 4-lane roadway. It would start out at 45 mph coming off of US 53 and transition to 25 mph as you get to River Valley Drive. This package also includes a new connection from 12th Avenue South to Medary Lane. This package has significant improvements to WIS 16, WIS 35 and US 53. It removes the bottleneck at WIS 16 and WIS 157. This strategy package meets the study's goals and objectives and is recommended to move forward.

STRATEGY PACKAGE H + F5

Strategy Package	Strategies							
	TDM	Policy and Legislation	Bike and Pedestrian	Transit	TSMO	Improve Existing Road	Selective Expansion of Existing Road	Construct New Road
H + F5 New Road from I-90/WIS 157 to River Valley Drive Expand River Valley Drive and St. James Street to 4 Lanes New Road from County SS/12th Ave. to 12th Ave./Medary Ln. New Road from River Valley Drive to Monitor Street/WIS 35 Intersection	Park and Ride (Exit 3) Park and Ride (WIS 157) Support flex work hours Promote rideshare	Support parking management strategies Complete Streets Intergovernmental cooperation	Bike lanes/separated bike lanes Sidewalks/Multi-use paths Enhanced crossings at logical locations Dedicated bike signals	Express bus service Support Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Bus priority signals	Upgraded signals Increased traveler information	Improve Intersections: Losey Blvd & Cass St US 53 & Cass St WIS 35 & Market St WIS 16 & County OS WIS 16 & WIS 157 WIS 16 & La Crosse St Losey Blvd & WIS 33 Losey Blvd & Ward Ave Losey Blvd & US 14/61 Losey & Green Bay St US 53 & La Crosse St WIS 35 & Cass St	Expand River Valley Drive to 4 lanes Expand St. James Street to 4 lanes	New Road from I-90/WIS 157 to River Valley Drive New Road from County SS/12th Avenue to 12th Avenue/Medary Lane New Road from River Valley Drive to Monitor Street/WIS 35 Intersection



This package extends US 53 south to connect to River Valley Drive (existing local road) to St. James Street heading south on an old railroad corridor to Monitor Street. Monitor Street would create a local street connection from WIS 35 to US 53. This would be a 4-lane roadway. It would start out at 45 mph coming off of US 53 and transition to 25 mph as you get to River Valley Drive. This package also includes a new connection from 12th Avenue South to Medary Lane. This package has significant improvements to WIS 16 and some improvements to US 53. It removes the bottleneck at WIS 16 and WIS 157. It does put some pressure on WIS 35. This strategy package meets the study's goals and objectives and is recommended to move forward.

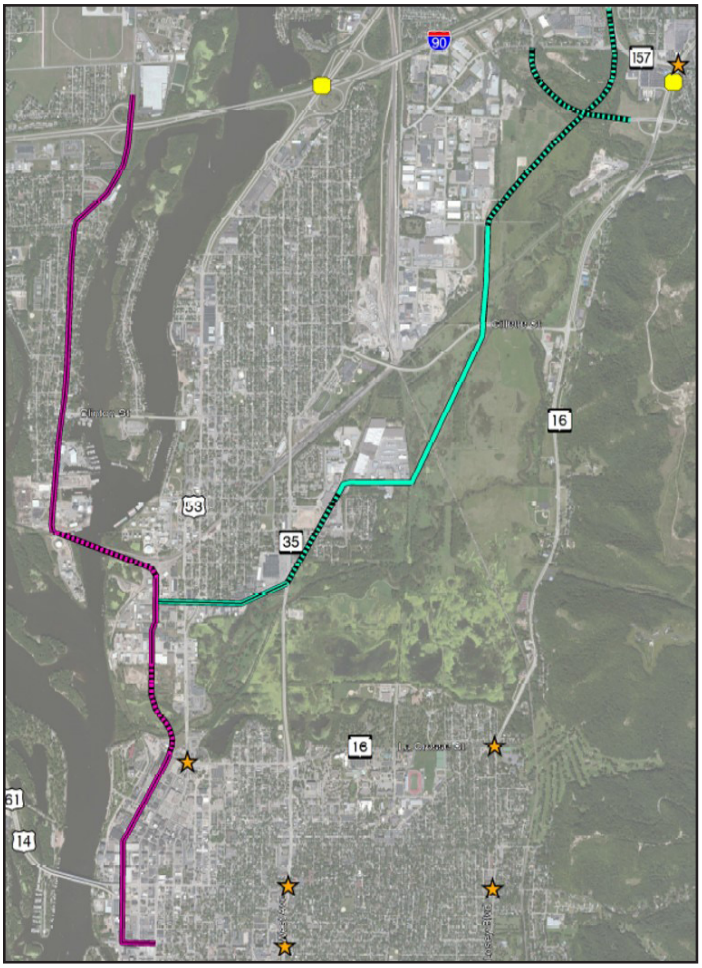
Example Concept Renderings for “E” and “F” Strategies

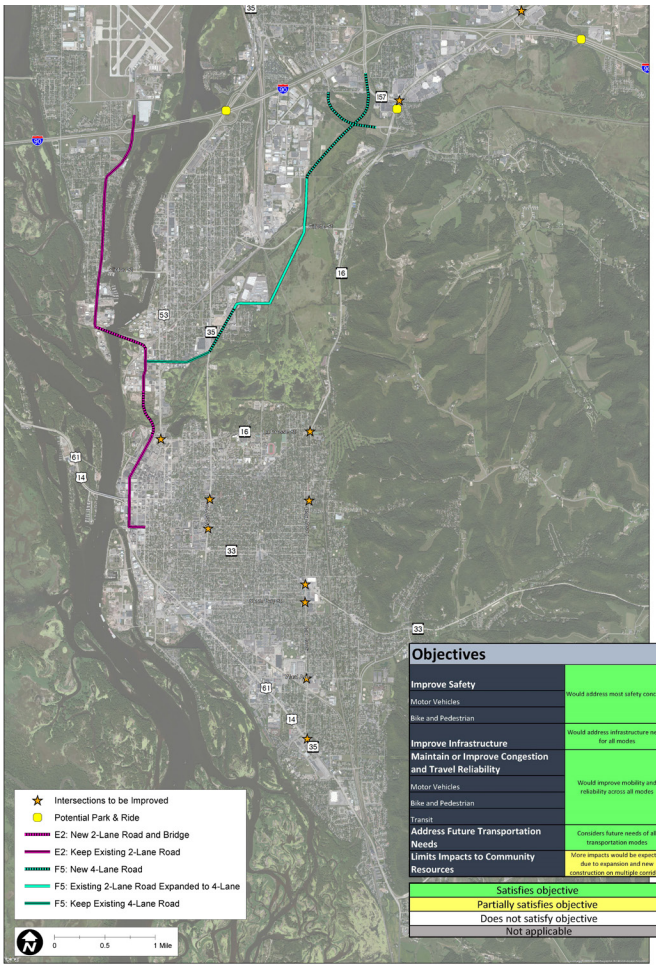
STRATEGY F (RIVER VALLEY DRIVE)
PROPOSED CONDITIONS

STRATEGY E2 (CTH B - FRENCH ISLAND)
PROPOSED CONDITIONS

STRATEGY PACKAGE H + E2 + F5

Strategy Package	Strategies							
	TDM	Policy and Legislation	Bike and Pedestrian	Transit	TSMO	Improve Existing Road	Selective Expansion of Existing Road	Construct New Road
H+ E2+ F5 New Road from I-90 to Downtown La Crosse French Island New Road from I-90/WIS 157 to River Valley Drive Expand River Valley Drive and St. James Street to 4 Lanes New Road from County SS/12th Ave. to 12th Ave./Medary Ln. New Road from River Valley Drive to Monitor Street/WIS 35 Intersection	Park and Ride (Exit 3) Park and Ride (WIS 157) Support flex work hours Promote rideshare	Support parking management strategies Complete Streets Intergovernmental cooperation	Bike lanes/separated bike lanes Sidewalks/Multi-use paths Enhanced crossings at logical locations Dedicated bike signals	Express bus service Support Regional Transit Authority (RTA) Bus priority signals	Upgraded signals Increased traveler information	Improve Intersections: Losey Blvd & Cass St WIS 35 & Market St WIS 16 & County OS WIS 16 & WIS 157 WIS 16 & La Crosse St Losey Blvd & WIS 33 Losey Blvd & Ward Ave Losey Blvd & US 14/61 Losey & Green Bay St US 53 & La Crosse St WIS 35 & Cass St	Expand River Valley Drive to 4 lanes Expand St. James Street to 4 lanes	New Road From I-90 to Downtown La Crosse with new Black and La Crosse River crossing New Road from I-90/WIS 157 to River Valley Drive New Road from County SS/12th Avenue to 12th Avenue/Medary Lane New Road from River Valley Drive to Monitor Street/WIS 35 Intersection





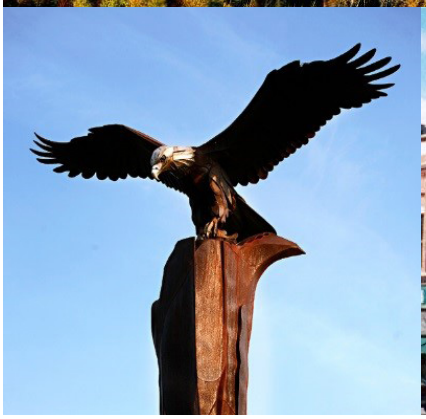
This package is a combination of E2 (dropped as a stand-alone strategy) and F5. It connects I-90 to downtown via Bainbridge Street. It would have a bridge over the Black River and the La Crosse River to 2nd Street in downtown La Crosse. This would be a 3-lane facility (two travel lanes and a two way left turn lane) along Bainbridge Street dropping to just a 2-lane facility as it crosses both rivers into 2nd Street. The speed limit on this facility would be 25 mph.

Additionally this combination package extends US 53 south to connect to River Valley Drive (existing local road) to St. James Street heading south on an old railroad corridor to Monitor Street. Monitor Street would create a local street connection from WIS 35 to Milwaukee Street. This would be a 4-lane roadway. It would start out at 45 mph coming off of US 53 and transition to 25 mph as you get to River Valley Drive.

This combination package creates a direct connection from I-90 to La Crosse's downtown. It has significant improvements to WIS 16, US 53 and WIS 35. It removes the bottleneck at WIS 16 and WIS 157. This strategy package meets the study's goals and objectives and is recommended to move forward.

Summary/Next Steps

Through the PEL process, WisDOT and the Coulee Region have worked together to develop a number of strategy packages to address the region's future transportation needs. With ongoing coordination and feedback from the public, WisDOT has selected six strategy packages to move forward for further evaluation. The next phase of the process will be the preparation of an environmental document where the selected strategy packages will be analyzed in further detail. Pending the results of the environmental document, construction could occur between 2025-2030.



Study Contacts:

WisDOT Project Manager
Andrew Winga, PE
WisDOT SW Region – La Crosse
3550 Mormon Coulee Road
La Crosse, WI 54601
608-785-9061
Andrew.Winga@dot.wi.gov

Consultant Project Manager
Darren Fortney, AICP, NCI, LEED-GA
Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc.
6808 Odana Road, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53719
608-620-6191
dfortney@sehinc.com

Be sure to stay involved with the study! Check out our website for study updates.

www.CouleeRegionStudy.dot.wi.gov