

CHAPTER 4: Public Involvement

A comprehensive public involvement process is crucial to the success of any transportation planning process. It helps ensure that the plans and related decisions regarding the transportation system incorporate the concerns and issues of the transportation system's users.

A comprehensive process also involves gathering input from a variety of stakeholders and the general public to ensure that different perspectives are heard, and related comments are incorporated into the decision-making process.

WisDOT's process

To help the department focus outreach activities and ensure a comprehensive approach throughout the development of the long-range plan, WisDOT developed:

- » A public participation plan
- » An environmental justice plan

The public participation plan describes the public involvement activities WisDOT used during the development of *Connections 2030*. The plan identifies proposed strategies and techniques, as well as proposed meeting locations and the length of public comment periods.

The environmental justice plan builds on the public participation plan by providing a more detailed discussion on how WisDOT will ensure minority and low-income group participation in the planning process.

WisDOT recognizes that minority and low-income groups may face obstacles to participating in the transportation planning process. The environmental justice outreach plan targets public involvement activities and identifies meetings specifically for minority and low-income groups. The plan identifies strategies to help inform minority and low-income citizens about the *Connections 2030* planning process such as reaching out to community-based organizations and placing meeting notices in minority newspapers.



The *Connections 2030* public participation plan and environmental justice plan are available at www.wiconnections2030.gov.

Development of *Connections 2030* included a comprehensive, four-phase process to gather early input into the scope of the draft plan, as well as review and feedback on the detail of the individual policies and theme chapters. This approach allowed the department to structure its outreach to reflect and balance the variety of stakeholder needs and interests. The four phases included:

- » Phase 1: Early planning
- » Phase 2: Pre-draft plan
- » Phase 3: Draft plan
- » Phase 4: Final plan

Phase 1: Early planning

Early efforts to define the scope and focus of *Connections 2030* and identify key statewide transportation issues included:





▲ *Figure 4-1: Executive summaries and full reports of the telephone survey, interviews, focus groups and stakeholder meetings are available at www.wiconnections2030.gov.*

- » Statewide telephone survey
- » Stakeholder interviews
- » Focus groups
- » Stakeholder meetings

Statewide telephone survey

To obtain feedback from the general public, WisDOT conducted a statewide telephone survey. The survey contacted 1,100 Wisconsin adults to obtain their feedback on the state’s transportation system and some of their key concerns regarding transportation. The survey used a sampling technique to ensure representation from each county. The survey also used two techniques to ensure that minority populations were included: 1) oversampling in counties with higher than average minority populations, and 2) “name-based target sampling” to identify persons of Asian and Hispanic descent. These techniques ensured that the survey results are statistically representative of the state’s population.

Stakeholder interviews

The stakeholder interviews were designed as a structured yet informal opportunity to obtain an initial assessment of key planning issues, perceptions and opinions from a select sample of transportation opinion leaders through one-on-one interviews. Thirty-four interviews were conducted with individuals who represented a cross-section of opinion and perspectives regarding transportation issues in Wisconsin. The interviews:

- » Gathered suggestions to maximize the effectiveness of the public involvement process
- » Identified key issues, opportunities and community concerns related to the long-range plan
- » Assessed the issues needing to be addressed in the planning process and the range of opinions that will come into play
- » Identified effective methods for encouraging participation in the planning process

Focus groups

WisDOT conducted two focus groups regarding transportation planning in Wisconsin. WisDOT staff comprised the first group; the second involved external stakeholders.

The focus groups:

- » Identified opinions, beliefs and attitudes about issues related to the *Connections 2030* planning process
- » Elicited views on emerging trends and priorities to be addressed in the planning process
- » Assembled potential improvements in key planning and public involvement issues
- » Identified additional stakeholder audiences
- » Built interest in, awareness of and excitement about the planning process

Stakeholder meetings

WisDOT held meetings with a wide variety of stakeholder groups focused on issues specific to the environment, bike and pedestrian travel, needs of the aging, and roadway use. In addition, the department met with local government officials from the state's larger urban areas. These early outreach activities revealed a number of common themes.

The issues identified included:

- » Wisconsin's deteriorating transportation system
- » Availability of funding
- » Availability of transportation choice (such as public transit and intercity bus)

WisDOT used this input to create the draft plan's vision, seven overarching themes and 37 policies, and to evaluate the potential impacts considered in the system-plan environmental evaluation and environmental justice analysis.

Phase 2: Pre-draft plan

Pre-draft plan development outreach efforts focused on obtaining feedback through consultation with environment resource agencies and tribal governments having a historic interest in Wisconsin. WisDOT also consulted with Wisconsin's metropolitan planning organizations and regional planning commissions in the development of the statewide system-level priority corridors.

Environmental Resource Agency and Tribal Consultation

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires state transportation agencies to consult with environmental resource agencies and tribal governments when preparing long-range transportation plans. WisDOT developed a consultation process to inform environmental resource agencies and tribal governments about plan policies and to get feedback from them. This consultation process included a discussion of potential mitigation strategies. WisDOT also compared *Connections 2030* to available conservation plans, maps and databases of natural and historic resources (see Appendix B, *Summary of Consultation and Plan Comparison Activities*, for a discussion of the plan comparison).

Environmental resource agency consultation

WisDOT held three separate consultation meetings with representatives of many environmental

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resource agencies. Those invited to participate are shown below; those followed by an asterisk participated in at least one of the meetings.

- » Bureau of Land Management
- » Federal Aviation Administration
- » Federal Highway Administration*
- » Federal Railroad Administration
- » Federal Transit Administration*
- » National Park Service*
- » Natural Resources Conservation Service*
- » U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*
- » U.S. Coast Guard
- » U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*
- » U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*
- » U.S. Forest Service*
- » Wisconsin Department of Administration*
- » Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection*
- » Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources*
- » Wisconsin State Historical Society*

Environmental issues raised include those related to air quality, land use, ecosystem management and climate change.

Tribal consultation

WisDOT held one consultation meeting and one follow-up briefing with representatives of tribes having a historic interest in Wisconsin. The tribes invited to participate are shown below; those followed by an asterisk participated.

Tribes

Tribes having a historic interest in Wisconsin include those currently located in the state, as well as tribes that may have lived in the state at one time.



The feedback received during this consultation process helped to further shape and refine the content and focus of the long-range plan.

Meeting summaries and a discussion of how the draft plan was updated to reflect comments received through the consultation process are available at www.wiconnections2030.gov.

- » Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians
- » Forest County Potawatomi Community*
- » Ho-Chunk Nation*
- » Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma

- » Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa Tribes*
- » Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians*
- » Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin*
- » Oneida Nation of Wisconsin
- » Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation
- » Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
- » Sac & Fox Nation
- » Sokagon Chippewa Community*
- » St. Croix Chippewa Indians
- » Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans

The U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs was also invited and participated in the tribal consultation process.

Some of the key topics raised were wetland mitigation, movement of hazardous materials on tribal lands, and WisDOT's maintenance contracts with county governments.

Wisconsin's metropolitan planning organizations and regional planning commission consultation
Connections 2030 directly reflects the recommendations of the state's metropolitan planning organizations and regional planning commissions. WisDOT staff met with transportation planners from metropolitan planning organizations and regional planning commissions to discuss their long-range transportation plan recommendations and how those recommendations could be incorporated into *Connections 2030*. Metropolitan planning organization and regional planning commission planners reviewed the draft corridor maps to ensure that WisDOT accurately portrayed their recommended activities. The feedback received during this effort was integrated into the draft plan and helped to further update the corridor maps.

Learning more about *Connections 2030*

WisDOT developed a variety of materials for the public outreach efforts:

- > Printed executive summaries*
- > Printed fact sheets*
- > Display boards
- > PowerPoint presentation
- > Review copies of the complete draft plan
- > Review copies of the corridor maps
- > CDs containing the complete draft plan, executive summary and all the corridor maps

**Spanish versions also developed.*

Phase 3: Draft plan

Phase 3 began with the release of the draft version of *Connections 2030* for public comment on November 9, 2008. The public comment period ended March 13, 2009. During this time, WisDOT conducted public information meetings and meetings with minority, low income, and senior citizen groups. WisDOT also met with various stakeholder groups, at their request, to discuss the draft plan. Throughout this public comment period, WisDOT accepted feedback on the draft plan via the Internet, e-mail, phone, U.S. mail, and in person at the meetings. The comments received during this time were then compiled and analyzed to determine if and how the plan would be revised to reflect the public's opinions. These revisions can include clarifying existing policies to more effectively explain them to the public, and refining existing policies so that they better address the public's needs.

Release of the draft plan

WisDOT used a number of tools to publicize the release of the draft plan, the times and locations of



Table 4-1: Newspapers in which display ads for the draft *Connections 2030* public information meetings were published

Public meeting	Newspaper
Madison	<i>Wisconsin State Journal</i> <i>Capital Times</i> <i>Madison Times</i> <i>Isthmus</i>
La Crosse	<i>La Crosse Tribune</i>
Milwaukee	<i>Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</i> <i>Milwaukee Times</i>
Kenosha	<i>Kenosha News</i> <i>Milwaukee Journal Sentinel</i>
Superior	<i>Duluth News Tribune</i> <i>Superior Daily Telegram</i>
Eau Claire	<i>Eau Claire Leader Telegram</i>
Rhinelanders	<i>Rhinelanders Daily News</i>
Wausau	<i>Wausau Daily Herald</i>
Green Bay	<i>Green Bay Press-Gazette</i> <i>Appleton Post-Crescent</i>
Oshkosh	<i>Oshkosh Northwestern</i> <i>Appleton Post-Crescent</i>

the public meetings, and the methods available for obtaining information and providing feedback. Some of these tools included:

- » Publishing a legal notice in the *Wisconsin State Journal*
- » Mailing 7, 000 postcards to individuals and organizations on the plan’s mailing list
- » Sending follow-up letters to the stakeholder groups WisDOT met with early in the plan scoping effort to highlight the comments they provided and explain how those comments helped shape the plan
- » Issuing statewide and local press releases to Wisconsin media outlets
- » Placing display ads in newspapers serving areas in which public meetings were held (Table 4-1)
- » Submitting listings to Internet event calendars for areas in which public meetings were held (Table 4-2)

Table 4-2: Online calendar posting of public information meetings

Public meeting	Web site community/event calendar
Madison	City of Madison; Madison Convention & Visitors Bureau; Craigslist (Madison); Madison.com; Wisconsin Online (Madison); Eventful (Madison); WMSN TV Fox 47; WMTV TV NBC 15; WKOW TV ABC 27; The Bubbler (Madison)
La Crosse	City of La Crosse; My Live; Craigslist (La Crosse); WXOW TV ABC 19; Eventful (La Crosse); La Crosse Area Convention & Visitors Bureau; La Crosse Wisconsin.com; The Bubbler (La Crosse)
Milwaukee	OnMilwaukee.com; KeyMilwaukee.com; Craigslist (Milwaukee); Wisconsin Online (Milwaukee); KGET TV NBC 17; WDJT TV CBS 58; Eventful (Milwaukee); The Bubbler (Milwaukee)
Kenosha	Kenosha Area Chamber of Commerce; Craigslist (Kenosha-Racine); The Daily Kenoshan
Superior	Duluth News Tribune; Superior Telegram; Superior-Douglas Chamber of Commerce; City of Superior; American Towns (Superior); KBJR TV NBC 6
Eau Claire	VolumeOne.org; WEAU TV NBC 13; Leader Telegram; Chippewa Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau; WEUX TV Fox; WQOW TV ABC 18; Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce
Rhinelanders	Rhinelanders Chamber of Commerce; The Bubbler (Rhinelanders); ExploreWisconsin.com; Rhinelanders Daily News
Wausau	Wausau Daily Herald; WausauCityGuide.com; WAOW TV ABC 9; Marathon County; Eventful (Wausau); The Bubbler (Wausau)
Green Bay	PressGazette.com; Craigslist (Green Bay); WBAY TV ABC 2; WLUK Fox 11
Oshkosh (postpone)	Craigslist (Oshkosh); Hometown USA (Oshkosh); Eventful (Oshkosh); American Towns (Oshkosh); The Bubbler (Oshkosh); OshkoshEvents.com; TheNorthwestern.com
Oshkosh (rescheduled)	WLUK Fox 11; WFRV TV CBS 5; Eventful (Oshkosh); American Towns (Oshkosh); The Bubbler (Oshkosh); OshkoshEvents.com; TheNorthwestern.com

- » Posting plan documents and accompanying information on *Connections 2030* Web site

Meetings

WisDOT held 10 public meetings (Map 4-1) and nine targeted outreach meetings (Table 4-3) throughout the state and met with seven stakeholder groups (Table 4-4) during the comment period. The targeted outreach meetings were aimed at minority, older and low-income persons and groups to ensure they had opportunities to provide input into WisDOT’s decision-making process.

Public meetings

Conducted as open houses, the public meetings were scheduled on weeknights from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. to allow attendees to comfortably review the materials, ask questions and provide comments at their own pace. The time and format of the targeted outreach and stakeholder meetings varied, depending on the groups’ requests, needs, and availability. More than 300 people attended the *Connections 2030* public information meetings. Attendees included a mixture of residents, business representatives, local officials and elected officials.

The format for each of the public meetings included a brief presentation on the plan, more than 20 display boards presenting the plan’s key points, printed review copies of the complete draft plan and corridor maps, as well as copies of the *Connections 2030* executive summary and fact sheets. WisDOT did not print hard copies of the complete draft plan for distribution. Instead, CD-ROMs were made available that contained the entire draft plan, as well as the executive summary and corridor maps. WisDOT staff were available to present an overview of the draft plan, answer questions and take comments. Attendees had the opportunity to provide written comments on flip charts, or on a paper questionnaire that could either be submitted directly at the meeting, or later, via U.S. mail. Additionally, a laptop computer was available for attendees to submit their comments online.

Targeted outreach meetings

The targeted outreach meetings were designed to provide opportunities for minority, senior and low-

Table 4-3: Targeted outreach meetings held for the draft *Connections 2030*

Date	Organization	Attendance
December 18, 2008	Urban League of Greater Madison	1
January 8, 2009	Platteville Senior Center	40
January 22, 2009	Hmong Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce (Milwaukee)	4
January 26, 2009	Urban League of Racine and Kenosha	12
February 4, 2009	Milwaukee Hispanic Chamber of Commerce	12
February 4, 2009	United Community Center of Milwaukee	6
February 12, 2009	Spooner Senior Citizens Center	15
February 19, 2009	Hmong Mutual Association (Wausau)	4
February 25, 2009	Green Bay Multicultural Center	7
Total	All groups	101

income groups to participate in the *Connections 2030* public outreach process. As part of WisDOT’s environmental justice effort, the targeted outreach meetings ensured that feedback from these populations was included during the public review period and analysis of comments. The individual meetings were tailored to the interests and focus of the respective groups. The meeting format differed slightly from the public meetings: WisDOT staff gave a short overview of the plan and then facilitated a question and answer period with attendees.

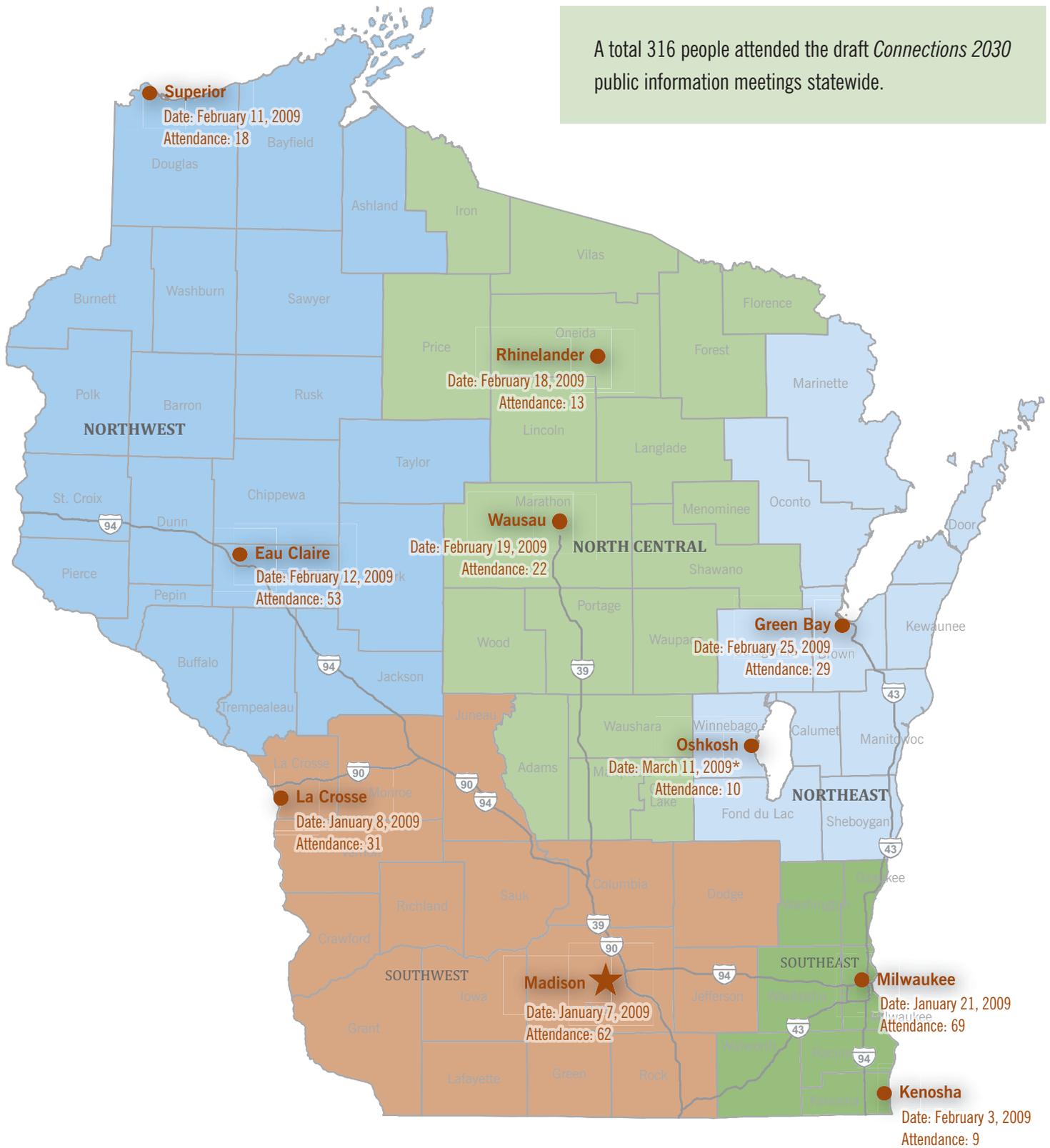
The results of the environmental justice analysis were used to determine the locations for the targeted outreach meetings (see Chapter 15, *Environmental Justice Analysis*, for more information on the environmental justice analysis). Approximately 100 people from African American, Hmong, Hispanic, senior citizen and low-income populations attended these meetings.

Stakeholder presentations

WisDOT received requests from a number of stakeholders to present information regarding *Connections 2030* at one of their meetings. These



A total 316 people attended the draft *Connections 2030* public information meetings statewide.



▲ Map 4-1: Draft *Connections 2030* public information meeting dates, locations and attendance.

*Meeting rescheduled from February 26, 2009, due to inclement weather.

presentations were an opportunity for the groups to discuss their organization’s interests with WisDOT staff and ask questions. As with the targeted outreach meetings, the length and format of the stakeholder presentations were customized to meet their specific needs.

Comments received

In addition to the comments submitted at the meetings, WisDOT received a large number of comments through its Web site – which contained a link to an online comment form that could be completed and submitted from any computer – and a dedicated phone number, email address, and mailing address for information and feedback about the draft plan.

All comments received via U.S. mail, e-mail or the *Connections 2030* Web site were entered into a computerized comment tracking system. These comments – more than 400 of them – comprised nearly a third of the 1,200-plus comments received during the public comment period. Comments submitted via telephone were added to the rest of the comments for analysis.

Data compilation and analysis

WisDOT staff compiled and analyzed all comments to develop a complete picture of stakeholder interests and concerns. The comments were categorized and sorted using several criteria including date, comment method, geographic area (if known), transportation mode, primary comment topic, and *Connections 2030* theme.

Comments overall

Analysis of the comments revealed that the majority of the public is supportive of *Connections 2030*. Among the most important issues to those who responded are intercity passenger rail, funding, system preservation and transit.

Table 4-4: Stakeholder presentations provided for the draft *Connections 2030*

Date	Stakeholder group	Location
November 13, 2009	Transportation Development Association Conference	Madison
November 19, 2009	Annual Freight Rail Conference	Madison
December 11, 2009	Local Roads and Streets Council	Wisconsin Rapids
January 6, 2009	Ho-Chunk Nation	Black River Falls
January 22, 2009	Sheboygan Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical and Policy Advisory Committees	Sheboygan
January 28, 2009	Madison Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Coordinating Committee	Madison
February 3, 2009	Wisconsin Transportation Builders Association Policy Board	Madison
February 13, 2009	Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission	Green Bay

Intercity passenger rail

WisDOT received a large number of comments on intercity passenger rail. The majority of respondents support of the intercity passenger rail system connecting Chicago, Ill., Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn., and Milwaukee, Madison and Green Bay. Comments from the La Crosse and Eau Claire areas favored an intercity passenger rail option that serves their respective communities. Comments from the Green Bay and Fox River valley communities indicated support of a phased implementation approach for the Midwest Regional Rail System.

This phased approach would include incorporating these communities earlier than proposed in the draft plan by substituting the high-speed option recommended in *Connections 2030* for the standard 79 mile-per-hour top speed that Amtrak currently

ANALYSIS OF THE COMMENTS revealed that the majority of the public is supportive of *Connections 2030*.



uses. Finally, several comments from central and north central Wisconsin expressed the desire for intercity passenger rail service that would serve Stevens Point, Wausau and Rhinelander.

The public comments also revealed a demand for better coordination between passenger and freight lines to improve service levels. Some people stated that the proposed passenger rail speeds of up to 110 miles per hour are not fast enough and that, in order to be competitive with regional air service, passenger trains need to have even higher speeds.

In addition, some comments supported the need for exploration of new, dedicated right of way for high-speed trains to eliminate the need for passenger trains to share the railways with freight trains. Not all comments were supportive of intercity passenger rail. Some people said that the expense, and potential limited ridership, would not justify the cost to create and maintain the system.

Funding

Many comments related to the various funding sources for transportation, notably the gas tax. Several participants said the gas tax indexing¹ should be reinstated to provide a stable funding source. Some also want to see a larger portion of the gas tax go to other modes of transportation such as transit, bicycle and pedestrian. Others suggested that local governments should be able to levy their own gas tax so funding for local roads would not have to come out of the property tax.

Participants also commented that WisDOT should implement tolling in Wisconsin because it would provide a new funding mechanism that charges only the users of the highway and would ensure that users from outside Wisconsin pay for their roadway usage. In addition, some participants suggested implementing an idling tax to discourage trucks from idling in major

¹ Wisconsin uses a “per gallon” rate that does not fluctuate with the price of gasoline. In 1985, the Wisconsin Legislature created an annual indexing adjustment based on inflation and overall fuel consumption. In 1997, the Legislature removed the consumption factor and based the adjustment on the Consumer Price Index. In 2005, the Legislature eliminated the annual indexing adjustment altogether



▲ *Figure 4-2: More than 300 people attended the Connections 2030 public information meetings.*

cities. Others suggested increasing the license fee to a percentage of vehicle value.

Some people commented that increasing roadway capacity in Southeastern Wisconsin would encourage congestion and dispersed development that could reduce farmlands. A few participants opposed to highway expansion expressed that they wanted to see more investment in transit or the use of turn lanes and controlled intersections to minimize or postpone the need for roadway expansion.

Transit

In addition to intercity passenger rail issues, participants commented on other transit modes including intercity bus, local and rural public transit, fixed-guideway transit and Regional Transit Authorities. WisDOT received many comments, from both urban and rural areas, expressing the need to expand and improve public transit options and service. In general, people pointed out the potential benefits of public transit such as improved connections to employment centers, sporting and cultural events, downtowns, and airports; the need for more transit options late at night and on weekends; and the benefits of dedicated transit lanes.

Southeastern Wisconsin residents frequently mentioned the need for commuter rail and light rail. Specifically, they identified the Kenosha, Racine, and

Milwaukee (KRM) commuter rail study as an important effort. In northern Wisconsin, people's comments indicated that these areas are currently underserved by transit due to the lack of transit service options and poor coordination among transportation providers.

Other frequently identified issues

People raised several additional issues during the public comment period. Numerous people commented on bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, expressing the importance of adding bike and pedestrian facilities when existing roadways are reconstructed or expanded. Other improvements mentioned were bicycle and pedestrian tunnels, year-round maintenance and snow removal on paths and sidewalks, and improved bicycle and pedestrian planning. Participants cited the need for bicycle and pedestrian safety, with emphasis on improved road crossings and more motorist education.

People also commented on the need for more and improved intermodal facilities for travelers. This broad topic includes issues such as terminals that serve intercity buses and public transit, bicycle access to park and ride lots, transit connections at ferry landings, passenger terminals that integrate rail, bus, and air travel services, and the importance of the complete streets philosophy in planning and improving the transportation network.

A number of other issues were raised by participants; The most frequently mentioned are discussed briefly:

- » Technology: Participants commented on the value of the technology that WisDOT uses to disseminate traffic information through various media outlets, and expressed the need for real time arrival and departure information for public transportation. Some people commented that WisDOT should do more to control excessive access points and dispersed development along highways.
- » Quality of life: People also commented on the need for improved coordination between land use and transportation planning to ensure better quality of life, and on the importance of incorporating community sensitive solutions into

transportation projects – with needs ranging from safe pedestrian tunnels to landscaping with native plant species to highway noise mitigation. There were also comments pertaining to energy usage and climate change, focused on the increasing need for alternative fuel vehicles across all modes.

- » Transportation safety: Feedback on transportation safety included statements about increased use of technology such as roadway cameras, the 511 traveler information system, and statewide monitoring of the roadways through the Statewide Traffic Operations Center and Emergency Transportation Operations during and after major events such as blizzards and flooding.

Key issues identified from targeted outreach meetings

The comments from the targeted outreach meetings fall into the same categories as the main themes from the public meetings and other feedback. The primary themes reflected in the comments are the need for affordable, accessible public transportation; making preservation of the existing transportation system a priority; and concerns about transportation funding. One common theme mentioned throughout the targeted outreach meetings was an interest in job and business opportunities through transportation projects.

Draft plan changes

Based on the analysis of all the feedback from the public, WisDOT staff developed recommendations for changes to the draft plan to address key issues identified by the public and department staff. A large number of the comments received did not result in changes to the draft plan and, therefore, are not reflected in this summary.

These included comments that were based on incorrect information, outside the scope of the long range plan, not within WisDOT's jurisdiction, statements of fact or opinion with no direction for change, extreme and unrealistic, not feasible due to funding constraints, unclear, or are already addressed in the draft plan. WisDOT staff organized the compiled public comment data into three tiers of recommended plan revisions:



BASED ON THE ANALYSIS of all the feedback from the public, WisDOT staff developed recommendations for changes to the draft plan to address key issues identified by the public and department staff.

- » Top tier: Changes that, if implemented, could change the scope or direction of a policy or theme chapter
- » Second tier: Changes that would not necessarily change the scope or direction of a policy or theme chapter
- » Third tier: Lower level changes such as paragraph reordering, grammatical revisions, corrections to names, numbers, dates and places, data updates, and language revisions to clarify minor details and non-controversial information

Top tier

A key change to the draft plan is the plan's policy statement on intercity passenger rail. Because of the overwhelming response on this topic during the public comment period, the draft plan was revised to clarify that the proposed route for the Midwest Regional Rail system between Madison and Minneapolis-St. Paul has not been finalized. During the environmental review process, WisDOT will consider all viable routes and system enhancements, including any that were not part of the 2004 Midwest Regional Rail Initiative Business Plan.

The rail policy has also been revised to make it clear that throughout the planning period, WisDOT will study the potential for expanding the intercity passenger rail system across the state.

Another important revision to the draft plan relates to tolling on state highways, discussed in Chapter 12, *Funding Wisconsin's Transportation System*. Although the department's position remains the same as when the draft plan was released, this policy has been revised slightly to explain that other funding options are available to support transportation needs, and WisDOT will consider them in the short term.

Second tier

Several other issues were expanded on in the revised draft plan based on feedback received during the various meetings. In Chapter 11, *Promote Transportation Security*, WisDOT added language to describe increases in the use of WisDOT's Emergency Transportation Operations Plan and technologies such as the 511 system and roadway cameras. Chapter 6, *Promote Transportation Safety*, was revised to state that WisDOT does support enforcement tools such as allowing primary enforcement of the safety belt law. And WisDOT added information in Chapter 12, *Funding Wisconsin's Transportation System*, to reference the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the federal economic stimulus plan), which was beginning to be implemented the public comment period in February 2009.

With the completion of these revisions to the draft plan, the public involvement process enters its fourth and final phase.

Phase 4: Final plan

WisDOT released the final draft of *Connections 2030* in July 2009. The public review period officially started on July 24, 2009, with the publication of a legal notice in the Wisconsin State Journal. The public review period continued through August 31, 2009. During this time, WisDOT held six public hearings throughout the state on the final draft of *Connections 2030* and its System-Plan Environmental Evaluation (SEE). Each public hearing included opportunities for attendees to submit oral or written testimony about the final draft plan, as well as a chance to view an oral presentation and talk to WisDOT staff.

To advertise the public hearings, WisDOT:

- » Mailed a postcard or e-mail notice to over 7,000 individuals and organizations on the plan's mailing list

Table 4-5: Public hearings held for the final draft *Connections 2030*

City, location	Date	Attendance	Oral testimony
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County Transit Center	August 11	22	7
Madison, Alliant Energy Center	August 12	19	4
Appleton, Appleton West High School	August 13	23	4
Stevens Point, UWSP Dreyfus University Center	August 19	35	8
Eau Claire, Sacred Heart Conference Center	August 20	42	5
La Crosse, WisDOT SW Region Office	August 26	61	23
Total	All dates	202	51

- » Published display ads in the newspapers serving the cities in which the public hearings were held
- » Issued press releases announcing the individual public hearings and the availability of the final draft plan for public comment
- » Posted plan documents and information related to the public hearings on the *Connections 2030* Web site

A total of 202 people attended the public hearings. Of those, 51 submitted oral testimony. In addition, 103 people submitted written testimony during the public comment period.

At the close of the public comment period, WisDOT staff reviewed and analyzed the written and oral testimony. Public comments covered a range of topics, with the majority of comments focused on either intercity passenger rail or highways.

Intercity passenger rail

As during Phase 3, WisDOT received the largest number of comments regarding intercity passenger rail. Overall, those who commented support improved intercity passenger rail and called for

WisDOT to be more active with its rail planning activities. Many individuals also commented on the proposed intercity passenger rail routes. Individuals expressed a need for a route through La Crosse, a route through Eau Claire, or a route through both cities. Numerous comments also noted that WisDOT should not delay implementation of intercity passenger rail to Green Bay.

Highways

Overall, individuals noted that WisDOT should focus on preserving and maintaining existing highway infrastructure before constructing additional lanes on both state-owned and local roads. Other statements focused on highway safety and economic development.

Other issues

People commented on several additional issues. Examples of these issues include:

- » The need for a long-term approach to transit, including improved funding for transit and better intermodal linkages
- » The importance of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations
- » Changes to the current modal funding allocations



▲ *Figure 4-3: More than 200 people attended the Connections 2030 public hearings.*



Changes to Final Draft

The oral and written comments did not result in major changes to the policies or actions in *Connections 2030*.

There are four minor revisions to the final draft:

- » The action table for intercity passenger rail service was modified to clarify which actions are projected for the mid-term (2014-2019) and long-term (2020-2030).
- » The language regarding primary enforcement of safety belts was updated to reflect that primary enforcement became law in Wisconsin in June 2009.
- » The map depicting Wisconsin's major retail distribution centers (Map 7-1) was revised to show three distribution centers that had not been included in earlier drafts of the plan.
- » The Eau Claire metropolitan planning area corridor map has been updated to clarify existing and planned intercity bus stops.

In addition, minor formatting changes were made to correct grammar and typographical errors, and to improve readability.