

Hearing Handout Packet



Public Hearing For Environmental Assessment

Spoooner - Minong

Trego Interchange

US 53

Washburn County

Project ID 1197-00-00

Spoooner Agricultural Research Station

Spoooner, WI

August 16, 2018

5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

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Handout Packet Contents

- Welcome 4
- Public Hearing Agenda 4
- Options and Instructions for Providing Testimony 4
- Project Location Map 6
- Purpose of the Public Hearing..... 7
- Environmental Document Process..... 7
- Information for the Public Hearing Record 8
- Project Statement 8
- Alternatives Comparison Matrix 14
- Property Acquisition/Relocation Assistance 15
- Next Steps 15
- Description of Public Hearing Exhibits 15
- WisDOT Contact Information 16
- Written Testimony Form 17
- Registration Slip for Verbal Testimony..... 19

Welcome

Thank you for attending today’s public hearing for the US 53 Trego Interchange project. This public hearing provides you the opportunity to give testimony on the Environmental Assessment that contains information regarding proposed transportation improvements that affect both near-term and long-term changes to the corridor.

Public Hearing Agenda

Time	Item
5 p.m.	Sign in, pick up handout, review exhibits, visit with project staff and ask questions about the proposed improvements.
	Important! – Determine if you will be providing testimony. If so, determine which option(s) and follow the instructions*.
	Availability to provide Private Verbal Testimony* and Written Testimony* begins. Both options are available until the end of the public hearing.
5:15 p.m.	Project statement.
5:15 p.m.	Public Verbal Testimony* option begins upon completion of reading the project statement.
	Opportunity to review exhibits and visit with project staff continues.
7 p.m.	Public Hearing ends.
	Written (mail in or email) testimony* available until August 31, 2018 .

*See the following “Options and Instructions for Providing Testimony”

Options and Instructions for Providing Testimony

There are several options for providing testimony as described below. Your testimony will be reviewed and considered by Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as part of the process for choosing the preferred alternative. **Testimony should be limited to tonight’s public hearing aspects (see Page 7), and statements or opinions about the project.** Provide comments on the alternative(s) you support or oppose and your reasons. Questions related to the project can be directed to project staff during the informal discussions but will not be recorded by the court reporter or included in the public hearing record.

Private Verbal Testimony

This option may be preferred if you wish to make your statement privately to the court reporter rather than in front of an audience. This option is available during the entire public hearing (5 to 7 p.m.), although you are also encouraged to attend reading of the project statement starting at 5:15 p.m. Follow the signs or ask for directions to the location for providing private verbal testimony. Wait for an opening, provide the court reporter with your completed “Registration Slip for Verbal Testimony” (included on the last page of this handout packet or on the table), state your name, address, and if applicable, the group, organization or business you are representing. Then give the court reporter your testimony.

Public Verbal Testimony

Following the reading of the project statement beginning at 5:15 p.m., public verbal testimony will be accepted. Complete a “Registration Slip for Verbal Testimony” (included on the last page of this handout packet or on the table). Give it to the designated project staff any time before, during or immediately following reading of the project statement. Your name will be called in the order the registration slips are received. When you are called to the microphone to provide testimony, please state your name, address, and if applicable, the group, organization or business you are representing. Please limit your testimony to approximately 3 minutes to allow time for others to provide their testimony in public. You can testify again as part of the public verbal testimony after others wishing to testify have done so. Public verbal testimony will continue until everyone interested in providing testimony has had the opportunity to do so or until the public hearing ends at 7 p.m., whichever comes first.

Written Testimony

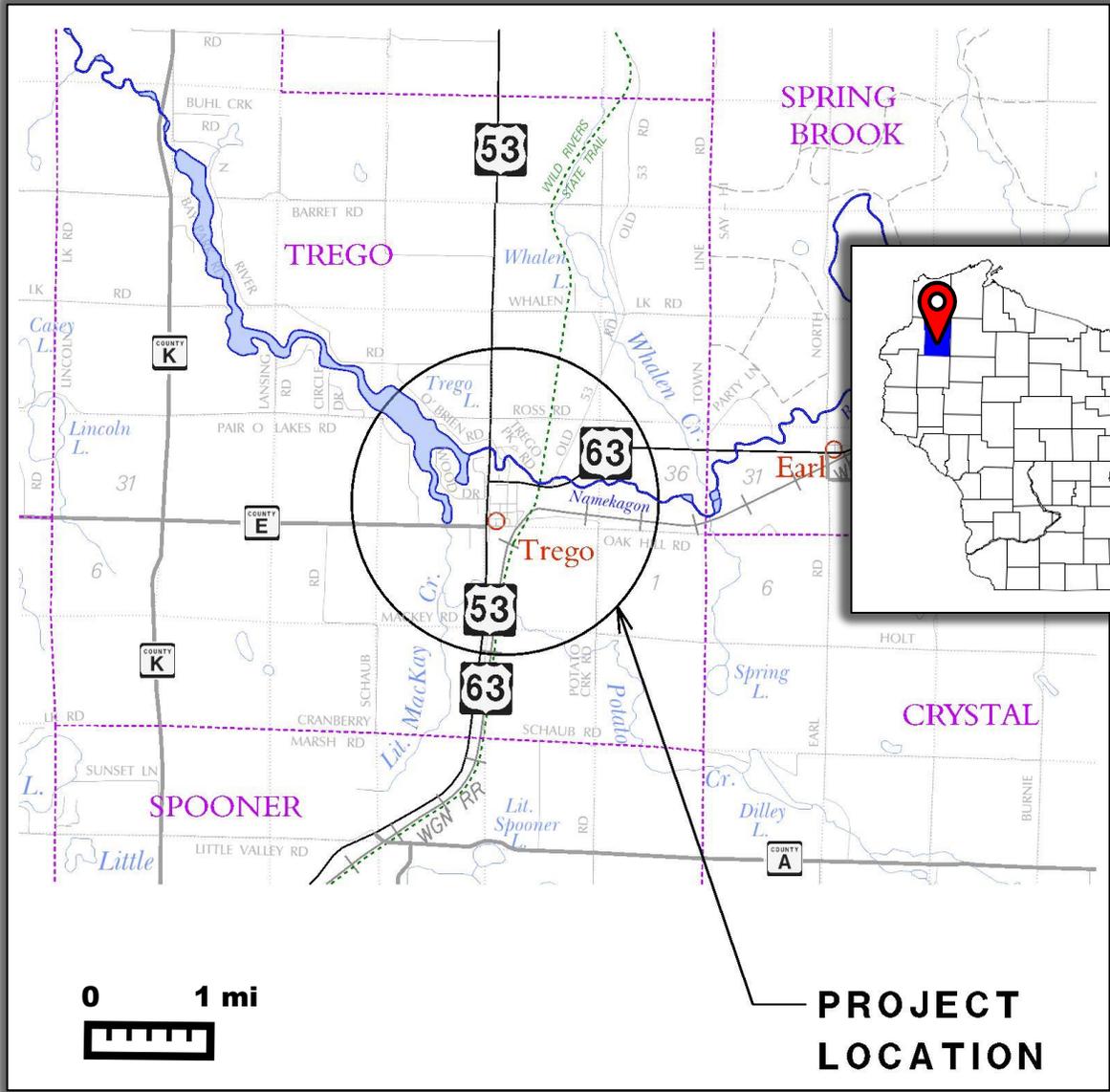
You may provide written testimony in addition to, or in place of, verbal testimony. Complete the “Written Testimony Form” (included in this handout packet or on the table). You may also use your own stationary. Include your name, address, and if applicable, the group, organization or business you are representing. If you prepared written testimony prior to the public hearing, you may submit that also. There are two options for submitting your written testimony as described below.

Submit Tonight: Complete the Written Testimony Form and place the form along with any other supporting documentation in the comment box.

OR,

Mail In: You may prefer this option if you would like additional time to organize your thoughts/testimony. The Written Testimony Form is pre-addressed. Postage paid envelopes are also available for you tonight. You may also send written testimony via e-mail. See “WisDOT Contact Information” on Page 16 of this handout. Mailed or e-mailed testimony must be postmarked or received no later than **August 31, 2018** to be included in the official public hearing record.

Project Location Map



Purpose of the Public Hearing

The objective of the public hearing and environmental document availability period is to get the most complete expression of public opinion regarding the project aspects listed in this handout for the record. Testimony provided during this public hearing and during the environmental document availability period will be considered along with all other judgments and opinions received before further decisions are made on the proposed project alternatives.

This public hearing includes a presentation of the project statement and opportunities to provide public/private verbal testimony to a court reporter and/or written testimony. All testimony will be entered into the public hearing record along with other public hearing presentations, exhibits, and materials

This public hearing will focus on the following aspects of the proposed US 53 Trego Interchange project:

- The location and design features of the proposed improvements and alternatives being considered.
- The National and Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act public hearing process, as applicable, on projects which include preparation of an environmental document. The final environmental document prepared following this public hearing will be the decision document for the proposed improvements. Copies of the environmental document are available for review at this public hearing.
- Project activities that require authorization from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers under the Clean Water Act for placing fill into waters of the United States including wetlands.

Environmental Document Process

The environmental documentation process includes development of a project purpose and need, range of alternatives, evaluation and screening of alternatives and selection of a preferred alternative. Numerous factors are considered throughout the environmental document development process including safety, mobility, compatibility with state/regional/local plans, engineering design standards, impacts to the socio-economic, natural and physical environment, cost, and input from the public and state/federal review agencies.

The US 53 Trego Interchange is currently at the Environmental Assessment stage. The Environmental Assessment documents the project purpose and need for the proposed improvements, alternatives considered, environmental impacts of the alternatives retained for detailed study, and public involvement and agency coordination during the development of the purpose and need and refinement of alternatives. The final environmental document will identify the preferred alternative, reasons for its selection and summarize the results of public testimony provided during the public hearing and document availability period along with agency comments on the Environmental Assessment.

Information for the Public Hearing Record

In addition to the testimony provided at this public hearing; all exhibits, handouts, and displays available for viewing at the public hearing will be included in the official public hearing record. Page 15 of this handout contains a complete listing of these materials. Other materials, along with other written testimony received after the public hearing, will be added to the official public hearing record provided they are postmarked or received no later than **August 31, 2018**.

Project Statement

Project purpose

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to address safety at the US 53 intersections with US 63 and County E in the Town of Trego while improving deteriorating traffic operational conditions, addressing roadway and structure deficiencies, and maintaining a safe recreational crossing of US 53 in the Trego area.

Project needs

The primary need for the Proposed Action is to improve safety and ensure safe operating conditions through the design year of 2042.

The secondary project needs which support construction of the proposed improvements include:

- Improving traffic operations during peak times
- Addressing roadway and structure deficiencies
- Supporting a safe recreational crossing of US 53

US 53 and US 63 are part of the National Highway System. The National Highway System routes are critical to the nation's economy, defense, and mobility providing a primary network for movement of goods and services throughout the United States. Maintaining safe links to US 53 and US 63 in the Trego area is important to continue to effectively move local, business, and truck traffic in northwestern Wisconsin.

The following statement will outline the crash history, traffic capacity issues, structural and roadway deficiencies, and multi-modal connections in the project area.

Crash History

Over a five-year study period from 2012 to 2016, 11 crashes occurred at the US 53 and US 63/Liesch Road intersection and 28 crashes occurred at the US 53 and County E/Oak Hill Drive intersection. Within the study period, 46% of crashes resulted in injuries and 41% of the crashes were angle-type crashes which are the most severe type of crash. As traffic volumes grow, crash rates are anticipated to increase at these intersections.

These two intersections are experiencing crash frequency rates at or above the state average. The US 53 and County E/Oak Hill Drive intersection has an annual crash rate of 1.07 crashes per Million Entering Vehicles, more than double the statewide average. The US 53 and US 63/Liesch Road intersection has a crash rate of 0.40 crashes per Million Entering Vehicles which is similar to the statewide average.

Traffic Capacity

While the existing number of travel lanes on US 53, US 63, and County E can manage the forecasted daily traffic through the design year of 2042, the level of service (LOS) is deteriorating in the project area.

The LOS is a measure of how well traffic flows along a portion of a highway with ratings ranging from LOS A (which are ideal operations) to LOS F (which is complete congestion). Per Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) Facilities Development Manual, LOS C or better is desirable for US 53 and LOS D is desirable for US 63 and County E in the design year. WisDOT desirable standards for LOS in the design year are recommended to ensure preservation and maintenance of a well-functioning and safe highway system funded by federal dollars.

The US 53 and US 63 corridors provide access to local and regional traffic while also supporting tourism related businesses and natural resources throughout northwestern Wisconsin. During summer weekends, traffic is backing up on US 63 causing deteriorating safety and traffic conditions especially during the summer tourism season on Fridays and Sundays. These periods were analyzed to evaluate existing and proposed operational conditions to ensure that these key intersections provide adequate capacity and function safely during these peak weekend periods.

While the US 53 mainline operates at a LOS A (ideal conditions), US 63 and County E are operating at much lower levels in the existing condition.

- The current operating conditions are a LOS F on westbound US 63 during the Sunday midday peak hour, with extensive vehicle queuing.
- During this period, queuing is anticipated to be 325-feet or 13 vehicles in the existing conditions based on traffic models. However, field observations have shown that on occasion, queues extended almost 500-feet or 20 vehicles east of the US 53/US 63 intersection.
- County E operates at a LOS D in the existing conditions.

With the existing intersection configurations, the 2042 design year traffic operations at the US 63 intersection which are currently functioning at a LOS F in the peak periods will continue to deteriorate and the County E intersection will further deteriorate to a LOS E.

Structural Deficiencies

There are structural deficiencies along US 53 over Potato Creek and along Lakeside Road over the Namekagon River.

The existing box culvert on US 53 over Potato Creek was originally constructed in 1925 and added onto in 1938 where a bend was constructed in the box culvert. The culvert was again extended in 1986 when the four-lane US 53 facility was constructed. The existing concrete is cracking and breaking away at various locations throughout the culvert and it is deteriorated beyond repair.

The Lakeside Road bridge over the Namekagon River was constructed in 1925. The bridge is owned and maintained by the Town of Trego. The bridge is a two-span concrete deck girder bridge. The bridge has been rehabilitated since the original construction including placement of an asphaltic surface on the deck which is deteriorated. The existing concrete is cracking and breaking away at various locations throughout the bridge. The bridge is posted for a weight limit of 40 tons. The bridge is not historically significant and the Town of Trego desires to remove the bridge from service.

Roadway Deficiencies

As improvements are being considered at the US 63 and County E intersections with US 53, other substandard or less than desirable features along US 53 were considered. The features include:

- Along US 53, intersection spacing between County E and Ross Road ranges from 1,000 to 2,100 feet which is less than WisDOT design standards ranging from 2,000 feet to 1-mile depending classification of the intersecting highway.
- The existing median has a variable width with a minimum of 50 feet in the project area. Desirable median width on high speed expressways is 60 feet.
- The intersections of Mackey Road, Obrien Road/Wagon Bridge Road, and Ross Road do not have turn lanes to serve all movements decelerating from US 53. Turn lanes are recommended on expressways and freeways posted at 60 miles per hour (mph) or more.

Safe Recreational Trail Connections

In the Trego area, there are existing recreational trail systems east and west of US 53 which are important to area residents and visitors to Washburn County and northwest Wisconsin. The local roadways throughout the Town of Trego are also designated as ATV routes via local ordinance.

There is a US 53 crossing connecting the Wild Rivers State Trail on the east side of US 53 to the local trail known as Trail 7A on the west side of US 53. This trail crossing is not currently permitted by WisDOT in its current location between the intersections of Mackey Road and County E.

While there is not a crash history in this area, the trail crossing location does not meet access spacing requirements and is located between public intersections where high-speed US 53 traffic would not expect entering traffic.

Any proposed improvements planned as part of the Proposed Action will continue to support safe connections to these recreational trails as well as providing opportunities for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Project description

The Environmental Assessment evaluates and documents the decision-making process for selecting a preferred alternative. Selection of a preferred alternative is based on collection of resource agency feedback, impact evaluations, public input, and comparison of factors between various alternatives considered. The Environmental Assessment made available for public review documents the evaluation process for comparison of three alternatives:

- The No-Build Alternative A would result in no construction and the existing roadways would continue to be maintained
- Preferred Alternative B which is a proposed US 53 interchange located south of County E and is described further below
- Alternative C which was also known as the local interchange alternative which considered construction of a diamond interchange located directly at the existing US 53 and US 63 intersection

Under preferred Alternative B, WisDOT is proposing to improve the US 53/US 63 and US 53/County E intersections with a new interchange to address the needs outlined previously. To construct the proposed interchange, the following improvements will be implemented as shown on the exhibits and in the project's Environmental Assessment:

- Closure of the US 53 intersections with US 63/Liesch Road and County E/Oak Hill Drive.
- Construction of a grade-separated interchange connecting US 53 to US 63 and County E. The interchange ramp intersections will be controlled with roundabouts.
- Reconstruction or modification of approximately 6,300-feet of northbound and southbound US 53 including replacement of the box culvert over Potato Creek.
- Construction of approximately 5,000-feet of US 63 on new alignment including closures and connections of various local intersecting roadways. A new structure will be constructed on the Wild Rivers State Trail to accommodate a crossing underneath the trail of US 63.
- Local roadway changes to improve local circulation and address new traffic patterns including the following:
 - Construction of east and west frontage roads including a new bridge over Potato Creek on the west side of US 53.
 - Closure of Lakeside Road north of US 63 and removal of the Lakeside Road bridge over the Namekagon River.
 - Reconstruction of portions of County E and Benson Boulevard.
- Modifications to the US 53 and Mackey Road intersection with right and left turn lanes. Left turns from Mackey Road to northbound US 53 will be prohibited and access to northbound US 53 will be via the new interchange.
- Modifications to the US 53 and Obrien Road/Wagon Bridge Road intersection with the construction of new southbound right turn lane and new northbound and southbound left turn lanes.

- Modifications to the US 53 and Ross Road intersection with the construction of new northbound and southbound right turn lanes and new northbound and southbound left turn lanes.
- Existing US 63 will be rehabilitated and transferred to a local town road.

The proposed improvements will be constructed while maintaining through traffic on US 53 and US 63. Local traffic and emergency access will be maintained throughout the project area to other roadways within the project area. Temporary widening and paving will be required on US 53 to accommodate traffic and the intersections of US 53 with US 63 and County E will be controlled by temporary traffic signals during part of the construction to ensure safe access to US 53 and to provide for a safe crossing of recreational vehicles within the work zone. During part of the construction, County E will also be detoured using Benson Boulevard and Liesch Road. Access will be maintained to the Wild Rivers State Trail and the local Trail 7A throughout construction.

Estimated Impacts

For preferred Alternative B, the estimated land and natural impacts are shown in your Hearing Handout Packet and in the project's Environmental Assessment.

The preferred Alternative B will require coordination for wetland fills. Estimated wetland impacts are shown on the exhibits and are estimated at approximately 1.2 acres for preferred Alternative B. Additional coordination will occur with the required environmental resource agencies to permit the proposed wetland fills prior to construction.

The preferred Alternative B will include work within the 100-year floodplain of the Namekagon River. Short term work will be required in the river to remove the piers for the deteriorated Lakeside Road bridge. No changes will occur to the floodplain from the bridge removal.

Right-of-way requirements vary throughout the project due to proposed roadway locations. The construction of an interchange between US 53 and US 63, the relocation of US 63, and the local road connections along the west and east sides of US 53 will require conversion of approximately 52 acres of lands to highway right-of-way.

Relocation of four housing units and one commercial building containing two commercial businesses are anticipated to result from the proposed improvements.

Before any property acquisition activities are initiated, members of the WisDOT Real Estate Section staff will contact property owners to explain the details of the acquisition process and Wisconsin's Eminent Domain Law. All properties to be acquired will be inspected and appraised by WisDOT Real Estate appraisers, as required. The property owner will be invited to accompany the appraiser during the inspection of the property to be acquired, to assure that its value is recognized in the appraisal. Based upon the appraisal or appraisals made, the fair market value of the property to be acquired will be determined, and that amount will be offered to the owner.

Relocation assistance

Relocation assistance will be made available to anyone displaced by this project. In this regard, a survey of available housing and business locations was made in November 2017. This survey indicates that there will be sufficient housing, rental units, and business locations available in the project vicinity at the time of the proposed relocations, within the means of the relocates, and meeting the requirements for replacement housing and replacement business operations.

The “Wisconsin Relocation Rights” brochures made available to you has been prepared to answer many of the general questions frequently asked concerning relocation assistance. Note, that in addition to the cost of replacement housing and business locations, additional monies are available to cover moving expenses, increased rental and mortgage payments and interest rates, and any closing costs incurred.

It is emphasized that no person shall be displaced unless a comparable and/or adequate replacement dwelling or business location has been provided or made available. In the event a relocated person is dissatisfied with the decision as to eligibility for payments or amounts offered under the relocation assistance program, he or she will be promptly advised of the procedure to follow in making an appeal.

Property acquisition for this improvement is scheduled to begin in fall 2018. Depending upon the availability of funds and the anticipated completion of relocations by August 2020, the earliest construction could begin is winter or spring of 2021 if a build alternative is selected.

Alternatives Comparison Matrix

Key factors from the alternatives comparison matrix presented in the Environmental Assessment are provided below. The preliminary design of Preferred Build Alternative B is shown on the exhibits here at the hearing and is available in a handout separate from this Hearing Handout Packet. Exhibits demonstrating Build Alternative C are provided in the Environmental Assessment.

PROJECT PARAMETERS	Unit of Measure	Alternatives/Sections		
		No-Build Alternative A	Build Alternative B (Preferred Alternative) (previously known as Alternative 4)	Build Alternative C (known as Local Interchange Concept)
Project Length (<i>Distance along US 53</i>)	Miles	0	1.6	2.0
PRELIMINARY COST ESTIMATE (Costs are shown in Year of Expenditure (YOE))				
Construction (YOE 2019/2022)	Million \$	\$1.5 ⁽¹⁾	\$18.1	\$25.0
Real Estate (YOE 2018-2021)	Million \$	\$0	\$2.5	\$3.5
TOTAL	Million \$	\$1.5	\$20.6	\$28.5
LAND CONVERSIONS				
Total Area Converted to ROW	Acres	0	52	59
REAL ESTATE				
Number of Farms Affected	Number	0	0	0
Total Buildings Required	Number	0	6 ⁽²⁾	10 ⁽²⁾
Housing Buildings Required	Number	0	4 ⁽²⁾	7 ⁽²⁾
Commercial Units Required	Number	0	1 ⁽³⁾	3
Other Buildings or Structures Required	Number	0	1	0
KEY ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS				
National Register Eligible Historic Structures Present in the Project Area	Number	0	1	0
National Register Eligible Archaeological Sites Present in the Project Area	Number	0	0	0
Section 4(f) Land Conversions	Yes/No	No	No	No
Section 6(f) Land Conversions	Yes/No	No	No	No
Estimated Total Wetlands Filled	Acres	0	1.12	0.70
Stream Crossings	Number	0	3	4

⁽¹⁾ These estimated costs are for pavement maintenance on US 53 and US 63 within the project limits.

⁽²⁾ Since preparation of the Environmental Assessment, further design refinements have reduced these values from those shown in the Environmental Assessment. Revised values are shown above.

⁽³⁾ One commercial unit contains two active business tenants that will be relocated.

Property Acquisition/Relocation Assistance

Individual property owners will be contacted by the WisDOT Real Estate staff to explain the details of Wisconsin's Eminent Domain Law and the acquisition process, as well as the relocation process if it is applicable. All properties to be acquired will be inspected and appraised by WisDOT Real Estate appraisers, as required. The property owner will be invited to accompany the appraiser during the inspection of the property to be acquired, to assure that its value is recognized in the appraisal. An offer will be made to the property owner for fair market value of the property to be acquired.

If a build alternative is identified as the preferred alternative in the final environmental document, acquisition is anticipated to begin in fall of 2018.

Next Steps

At the end of the document availability period, the project team will review and consider all public hearing testimony received on the Environmental Assessment. This input will assist the project team in selecting the preferred alternative. Upcoming milestones in completing the engineering and environmental study for the Trego Interchange project include the following:

- Final environmental document – September 2018
- Final right-of-way plat – November 2018
- Real estate acquisition – November 2018 to August 2020
- Final plans – August 2020 (earliest)
- Construction – 2021 to 2022 (earliest)*

*Final construction schedule is based on funding availability.

Description of Public Hearing Exhibits

The following articles will be entered into the record along with any verbal or written testimony received:

- Hearing Handout Packet
- Published Public Hearing Notice
- Environmental Assessment
- Brochure – The Rights of Landowners Under Wisconsin Eminent Domain Law
- Brochure - Wisconsin Relocation Rights for Residential Properties
- Brochure - Wisconsin Relocation Rights for Business Properties
- Handout Sized Exhibit of Preferred Alternative B
- Full-sized exhibits including the following:
 - The preliminary design of the preferred alternative showing the proposed improvements and proposed right-of-way needs
 - Construction staging concepts

WisDOT Contact Information

Submittal of Written testimony or general project questions

Additional written public hearing testimony on the Environmental Assessment after this public hearing should be sent to the WisDOT project manager at the address or email address given below. Additional testimony will be added to the official public hearing record and considered in the final environmental document provided it is postmarked or received no later than **August 31, 2018**.

WisDOT Northwest Region Design Project Manager

Beth Cunningham

WisDOT Northwest Region – Spooner Office

W7102 Green Valley Road

Spooner, WI 54801

Phone: (715) 635-4973

Email: Beth.Cunningham@dot.wi.gov

Property acquisition/relocation questions

Questions specific to property acquisition and/or relocations of homes and businesses can be most efficiently answered by WisDOT Real Estate staff. Real estate representatives are here tonight to answer your questions and real estate brochures are available. Any questions after the hearing can be directed to the WisDOT Real Estate contact shown below.

WisDOT Northwest Region Real Estate Contact

Debra Stensland

WisDOT Northwest Region – Superior Office

1701 North 4th Street

Superior, WI 54880

Phone: (715) 392-7999

Email: Debra.Stensland@dot.wi.gov

Project website (project information, environmental document, schedule, and updates)

<http://wisconsin.gov/Pages/projects/by-region/nw/us53trego/default.aspx>

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Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Northwest Region – Spooner Office

W7102 Green Valley Road

Spooner, WI 54801

Attn: Beth Cunningham

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Registration Slip for Verbal Testimony



Project ID 1197-00-00
Spoooner – Minong, Trego Interchange, US 53, Washburn County
Public Hearing
Spoooner Agricultural Research Station
August 16, 2018

This registration slip may be used for providing **public or private verbal testimony**. Following the reading of the project statement beginning at 5:15 p.m., **public verbal testimony** will take place. Complete this registration slip and submit it to a project team representative during or immediately following the reading of the project statement. Your name will be called in the order registration slips are received. When you are called to the microphone to provide testimony, please state your name, address, and who you represent if applicable (for example a business). Please speak slowly and clearly. A court reporter will record your testimony. Please limit your testimony to comments and/or opinions regarding the proposed project aspects for which this public hearing is being held. To allow everyone a chance to speak, please limit your testimony to approximately 3 minutes.

The same process applies for providing **private verbal testimony**, but this registration slip should be presented directly to the court reporter when the reporter is available to provide your private verbal testimony.

If you do not wish to speak, but would like to use this registration slip to record your position on the alternatives being considered at the public hearing, please check the applicable boxes below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

If applicable - group, organization, or business you are representing:

Wishing to speak

Not wishing to speak, but please record my position on the alternatives being considered at the public hearing:

Support, describe: _____

Do Not Support, describe: _____
