



# US 151 Freeway Conversion Study

(Columbus to Waupun, WIS 73 – WIS 49)

WisDOT Project ID: 1110-00-09

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 1. Who is conducting the study?

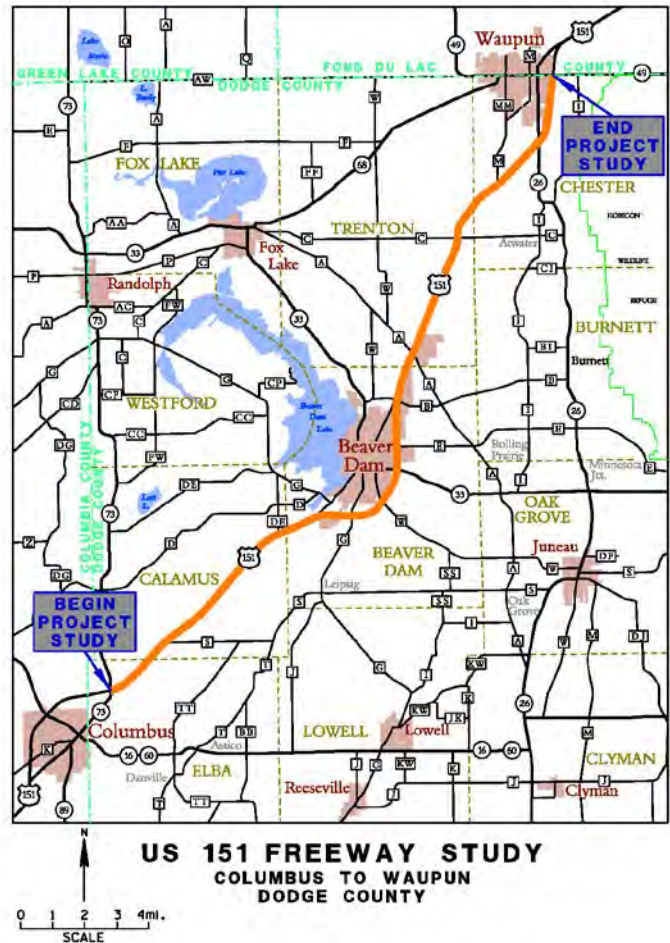
The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Southwest Region is initiating the study. WisDOT has hired the consulting firm Ayres Associates Inc to assist them with their efforts and several other consulting firms are working with Ayres Associates to complete the study activities.

### 2. What are the limits of the study?

The study limits extend from the WIS 73 interchange on the north side of Columbus to the WIS 49 interchange at Waupun, a distance of approximately 27 miles. The study passes through the towns of Elba, Calamus, Beaver Dam, Trenton, and Chester in Dodge County. Several other towns located fairly close to the project corridor have been contacted for their input.

### 3. What does the US 151 Freeway Conversion Study involve and when would actual construction improvements be made?

The most important thing to know is that the US 151 Freeway Conversion Study is just that, a study. The purpose of the study is to conceptualize the conversion of US 151 from the city of Columbus to the city of Waupun into a freeway, taking into account impacts on existing and future land uses, and access to the local transportation network. The final study phase involves officially mapping the right-of-way limits for conversion from an expressway to a freeway per Wisconsin State Statute 84.295.



There is no immediate construction planned on this section of US 151 and no funding allocations have been committed beyond the study phases. The long-term plan will lay out the ultimate highway access conversion scenario; however, it would likely be programmed, funded, and constructed over a number of decades. Even though actual improvements may be years away, developing a long-term highway access plan will allow both WisDOT and local communities to collectively plan for transportation and land use systems that are compatible with one another.

### 4. What is the definition of a Freeway?

A freeway is a divided highway with access provided only at interchanges.

### 5. The US 151 corridor appears to be operating well in this area. Why are additional studies necessary?

As part of the US Highway System, US 151 is an important roadway connecting the central part of the state with the Fox Valley and Green Bay areas. US 151 is identified as a Backbone Route in WisDOT's Connections 2030 Plan. The plan places high priority in protecting highway investments that connect major economic/population centers and carry long-distance, state-wide traffic. As both traffic and land development pressure increase along US 151, experience around the state has demonstrated that unmanaged and unprotected highways can deteriorate quickly in terms of reduced operations and safety. Of greatest concern to WisDOT are the at-grade intersections along US 151. As traffic increases over time, it will become increasingly difficult to turn on, off, and/or cross the highway in a safe manner, and the potential for crashes could increase.

**6. What types of long-term improvements will the study consider?**

Most of the highway is currently designed as an “expressway”. An expressway typically consists of 55-65 mph posted speed limit, a median to separate traffic, and at-grade intersections (meaning you can get directly on/off/across at the intersecting roads). An expressway sometimes has interchanges and a limited number of private driveways located directly on the highway.

A “freeway” facility is usually a 4-lane facility with a median and has a 65-70 mph posted speed limit. Unlike expressways, freeways accommodate access on/off the highway only at interchanges. With a freeway facility, there are no at-grade intersections or private driveways directly on the corridor. Good examples of freeway facilities are those highways belonging to the interstate system.

The goal of the study is to plan for the ultimate conversion from an expressway to a freeway. Intersection improvements could include interchanges, grade-separations (overpass or underpass), cul-de-sacs, and/or local road extensions to provide for local circulation.

**7. How might this study affect emergency services such as police, fire, EMS and other public services such as school bus routes?**

The study team will be in direct contact with all of the local fire, police, and EMS providers in the study area. The final highway access plan will accommodate the delivery of emergency services to the greatest extent possible. Similar to the emergency service providers, the study team will be in direct contact with area school districts and their transportation service coordinators to ensure school bus routes are integrated into the highway access plan.

**8. What about agricultural operations, especially cross-highway farming?**

WisDOT recognizes that agricultural operations are an important part of the local and statewide economy. Many operations currently use US 151 for travel and/or gain access to the opposite side of the highway. An agricultural survey was sent to adjacent property owners during the first phase of this study to help understand current and future operation needs while attempting to minimize disruption.

**9. Does WisDOT or FHWA have criteria or standards to determine when to convert from an expressway to a freeway?**

Yes, the statewide access management plan (SAMP) is based upon several safety and traffic movement thresholds to help WisDOT determine whether expressway upgrades or freeway conversions are recommended for a highway. Some of the main criteria factored include: existing traffic, forecasted traffic, crash levels and severity, type of facility, and route designation. This US 151 corridor falls within the SAMP Tier 1 designation. The long-term goal of access for corridors with Tier 1 designations calls for a maximization of interstate/statewide traffic movement and ultimately for interchanges, locked/gated driveways for emergency vehicles, and on an interim basis – isolated field entrances. US 151 is a strong candidate for freeway conversion because it is a high priority multi-lane Backbone facility and has current and long-term safety issues due to several at-grade intersections.

**10. The last public meeting for this study was held in 2014. What has occurred since that time and what is the remaining schedule?**

The study team has continued to develop roadway alternative concepts and analyzed the impacts of the alternatives that were carried forward for further analysis. Through this analysis, the project team has determined a Recommended Alternative to present to the public. This study is in the second of three planned phases and will involve the preparation of an environmental document to be completed in 2017. The third phase of the study involves the corridor mapping per Wisconsin State Statute 84.295 which is scheduled for completion in 2018-19.

**11. What is the Wisconsin State Statute 84.295?**

Wisconsin State Statute 84.295 is the state statute that allows WisDOT to officially map right-of-way widths for future freeways and expressways. The purpose of mapping is to prevent conflicting and costly economic development from happening within the mapped right-of-way and to help local municipalities plan for their future.

**12. How can I get involved in this process and stay informed?**

Please join us and provide feedback at our Public Involvement Meeting on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016 in Beaver Dam. Additionally, below is a link for the project on WisDOT’s website that contains project related information available for review. The website will be updated with the latest information after the Public Involvement Meeting in August 2016. A project mailing database has also been developed. The mailing list is comprised of corridor residents/businesses, local officials, emergency service providers, agricultural operators, school transportation officials, and other interested parties. If you received a mailing, you are already included in our mailing database. ***If you know of others that did not receive a mailing or that wish to be included, please contact Mark Westerveld, WisDOT Project Manager, at Mark.Westerveld@dot.wi.gov or at (608) 246-5355 and I would be happy to add them to our list.***

**Project website:** <http://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/projects/by-region/sw/151/default.aspx>

