

I-94 EAST-WEST FREEWAY *Update*

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

Summer 2016

Study nears completion; detailed design begins

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are close to finalizing their plan to reconstruct and modernize I-94 between 16th Street and 70th Street in Milwaukee. The design identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), published in February 2016, is the “at grade” alternative through the cemetery area west of Miller Park and the “on alignment” alternative east of the Stadium Interchange. An additional lane will be added to I-94 in each direction, making it an 8-lane freeway. All the alternatives WisDOT and FHWA considered are documented in the Final EIS which can be found at www.seffreeways.org.

The preferred alternative addresses the problems of deteriorated pavement, high crash rates and congestion while maintaining a key link in the local, state and national transportation network. (see page three - design modifications reduce impacts)

WisDOT and FHWA are currently reviewing public and agency comments on the Final EIS as they prepare the Record of Decision.

“We listened to the feedback and chose the design that provides the community with the best balance when all critical factors are evaluated.”

- Secretary Mark Gottlieb



Artist rendering of Stadium Interchange design

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Preferred alternative balances multiple factors

WisDOT's study of this segment of I-94 considered many alternatives, including spot improvements, and reconstructing the freeway without adding a lane in each direction. Numerous design options were reviewed, including a double-deck option through the cemetery area just west of Miller Park. Several factors made the double-deck option less desirable than the at grade alternative, such as increased cost, impacts to adjacent neighborhoods, and impacts to Wood National Cemetery, which is part of the Soldiers Home National Historic Landmark.

The at grade alternative will have four lanes in each direction and will be at about the same elevation as the existing freeway. The interchange at 68th/70th Streets will be reconstructed in a similar configuration. A half interchange will be provided at Hawley Road, with freeway access to and from the west only. The Mitchell Boulevard interchange will be removed, but it will be replaced by a new local road interchange under the Stadium Interchange. A new frontage road will connect this new local road interchange with Mitchell Boulevard.

The Stadium Interchange will be completely reconstructed to eliminate left-hand entrances and exits.

The on alignment alternative east of the Stadium Interchange will have four lanes in each direction and will maintain the 35th Street and 27th Street area interchanges in similar configurations as today.

Quick facts

- The 3.5 mile I-94 East-West Corridor connects the Marquette Interchange and Zoo Interchange. It opened to traffic in 1963.
- This segment of I-94 carries 143,000-160,000 vehicles on an average weekday.
- The current cost estimate is approximately \$852 million (2014 dollars) and will likely take four years to construct.

Are people driving less?

The vehicle miles traveled statistic

Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is the number of miles driven in a large area such as a county or state, it is not a statistic used to forecast traffic.

In 2015, US VMT was 3.14 trillion, higher than any pre-recession year. After slight declines in VMT statewide and nationally during the recession, VMT is rising.

The traffic on this stretch of I-94 exceeds the capacity it was designed to handle and freeway traffic in the Milwaukee area grew in recent years, even during the recession.

The number of vehicles using I-94 today warrants the need for an additional lane.



Public feedback

Transit

In addition to feedback about the freeway, many comments reflect a strong desire to improve area transit. WisDOT is forwarding those concerns to local units of government with the authority to manage transit systems.

“WisDOT does not have the authority to manage or fund transit independently of appropriations that are made by the legislature, but we certainly do have the ability and obligation to foster communication between agencies surrounding vital transportation needs in the region and improved public transit is one of those. We will certainly work to facilitate that communication.”

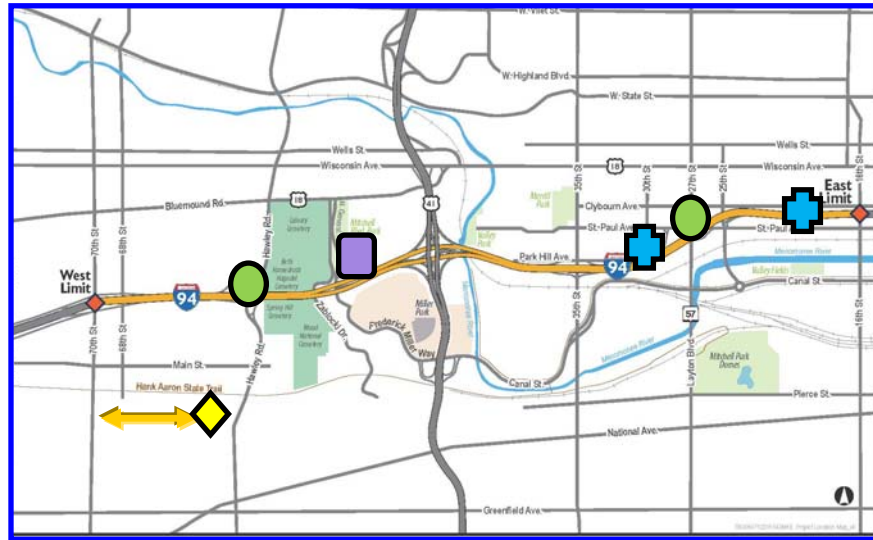
- Secretary Gottlieb

Access

The amount and location of freeway access (interchanges) has been an important design consideration.

A consistent message from the public is to keep the existing interchange locations. Early design options examined eliminating the 35th Street Interchange or consolidating access to I 94 at 68th and 70th Street; due in part to public feedback, both options were eliminated.

Given the limitations of the area immediately east of Hawley Road, WisDOT cannot safely provide all the movements that exist at the interchange today. WisDOT worked with FHWA to provide a half interchange (access to and from the west) in the design.



Project location

I-94 from 70th Street -16th Street in the City of Milwaukee

Design modifications reduce impacts

◆ The preferred alternative provides freeway access to and from the west at Hawley Road, unlike today's full interchange. Responding to concerns from West Allis and Milwaukee businesses and residents, WisDOT will build a new roadway connection between Hawley Road and 70th Street in West Allis, about a half mile south of I-94. The new connection:

- Responds to stakeholder comments
- Connects Hawley Road and 70th Street
- Mitigates the partial loss of freeway access at the Hawley Road Interchange
- Requires the relocation of WisDOT's sign shop on Hawley Road

● Reduce impacts and relocations:

- Hawley Road will not be shifted east, like it was shown in the Final EIS. Rather it will be rebuilt in about the same location, which will reduce the amount of land WisDOT needs to buy and avoids having to relocate a business and two residences.
- WisDOT will not reconstruct 27th Street between St. Paul Avenue and Clybourn Street (just north of I-94). This eliminates the need to displace two businesses and one vacant commercial building.

⊕ Reduce costs:

- On the east segment WisDOT modified the design to reduce costs. A minor realignment of the freeway between 25th Street and 16th Street has been dropped, and an auxiliary lane will be built on eastbound I-94 between 27th Street and 35th Street rather than more expensive braided ramps. Both changes reduce cost while providing a safe freeway.

■ Improve circulation:

- A frontage road will be added near Miller Park between Mitchell Boulevard and the Stadium Interchange. This roadway was added after the public hearing on the Draft EIS.

What's next

The final step in the study is FHWA's approval of the Record of Decision, which is the federal government's final approval of the project. After the Record of Decision is approved in late summer/early fall, WisDOT has several steps to complete before the project is ready for construction. The start of construction depends on budget and legislative approvals.

Design, real estate and utility work precede construction and typically take about three years; construction will likely take about four years.



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Cultural resources

WisDOT balances transportation needs with cultural resources stewardship. WisDOT and FHWA evaluate transportation projects for potential impacts to cultural resources pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

As the project moves into the design phase WisDOT will remain committed to protecting historic and archaeological resources. An agreement with historic preservation agencies, which is expected to be signed this summer, will ensure those agencies remain engaged in the project during design.

Graves

WisDOT continues to receive comments decrying impacts to the grave sites located in the four cemeteries that border the I-94 corridor. *Very early in the study process WisDOT made a firm commitment that the project would not impact graves. That commitment has not changed. Near the cemeteries, the preferred alternative stays within existing public right of way.*

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