

Staff Report for PBMVC

RE File No 4535

In December 2016 File no 4535 was referred by the Council to PBMVC for consideration. File no 4535 references a City locally preferred alternative for the future cross-section of Stoughton Rd.

USH 51 is a backbone arterial street under the jurisdiction and control of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WISDOT). USH 51—Stoughton Rd is a United States Highway (USH) beginning in far northern Hurley Wisconsin running 1,286 miles south where it terminates outside the City of New Orleans, LA.

WISDOT is in the process of studying the corridor in advance of reconstruction estimated to take place in the early to mid-2020s. WISDOT provides this project process overview:

“This is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) study that will develop and evaluate long-term alternatives to address the safety and congestion issues along the corridor. It will also develop and evaluate alternatives to address gaps in bicycle and pedestrian facilities along the corridor.”

WISDOT is currently updating the corridor traffic model--considering new traffic, population, and socioeconomic data. They plan to have this work complete in early 2017. Their schedule is as follows:

- Summer 2017 - Public Involvement Meeting anticipated
- Winter 2017/2018 - Draft EIS (DEIS) anticipated to be completed
- Winter 2017/2018 - Public Hearing on DEIS anticipated
- Fall 2018
 - Final EIS (FEIS)
 - Record of Decision (ROD) anticipated

Transportation projects are subject to a variety of regulations including but not limited to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA).

Section 1.1 of WISDOTs FDM provides.

“Chapter 274, Laws of 1971, created Section 1.11 of the Wisconsin Statutes, which became commonly known as the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA). This Act is patterned after the national environmental policies established under NEPA.

WEPA requires state agencies to gather environmental information and to use it in their planning. They must also look at appropriate alternatives to the particular course of action they are proposing. If the action is considered a "major action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment," the law requires agencies to consult with other agencies about possible environmental impacts, prepare and circulate an environmental impact statement (EIS), and hold a public hearing. "

As part of this process, WISDOT is required to identify, study and review various roadway cross-section alternatives. The City of Madison has already requested WISDOT consider the urban boulevard cross-section as part of the NEPA process—see City correspondence to WISDOT dated December 20, 2013. Also attached is WISDOT's response.

WISDOT provides there is currently no recommended alternative identified for the corridor. A recommended alternative was identified at the March 2013 public meeting; however, WISDOT is revisiting alternatives along the corridor. Once the updated traffic models are completed, all alternatives under consideration will be re-evaluated to determine if any changes are warranted based on the updated data. Once the analysis is complete, a recommended alternative will be identified with input from the public, resources agencies, and local municipalities.

From project inception City staff have been working closely with WISDOT, encouraging the State to consider a broad range of alternatives throughout the corridor and as noted earlier the Mayor has also requested the State consider an urban boulevard cross-section as one of the corridor options. The State Department of Transportation should make their decision only after considering all of the information derived from the study and all of the public input obtained through the process. Similarly, the City should make a recommendation to the State based on careful consideration of all of the information and input. To take a firm position at this time is not appropriate given the current status of the study. Staff recommend allowing the study to proceed, allowing community input and an opportunity for stakeholders to consider the full range of advantages, disadvantages and costs of the alternatives identified.