

May 21, 2007

To/From Larry Barta, Project Manager, Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)

Hi, Linda: Sorry for the delay in responding to your follow-up e-mail. I had to wait for a decision on what to pull out of the Verona Road/West Beltline Draft EIS because of funding and other changes that have occurred since the DEIS was signed in March of 2004. includes both improvements and a capacity expansion. Though still just in the talking stage, we recently decided the West Beltline capacity expansion should be removed and possibly repackaged as a separate effort covering more of the beltline. The part that details relatively minor changes to the existing beltline that will help the beltline last for some extra years until a capacity increase can be accomplished has been expanded to encompass all of the beltline, from US14 at Middleton all the way east to CTH N. This is the new study you refer to below.

As I noted in answering your initial e-mail, the new beltline study is an assessment of operational and safety characteristics of the entire beltline from US 14 in Middleton to County N, east of I-39. The outcome will be a list of recommended study could be completed and new lanes added. Examples are things like adding ramp capacity and turn lanes, changing signal timing, adding ramp meters, changing message boards, etc. I have attached a fact sheet with additional details for your group to better understand the intent.

Though not specifically mentioned in the fact sheet, new crossings of the beltline will be assessed too. When the fact sheet was written, the question of whether to leave them in the Verona Rd Study or move them to the Beltline Study had not been answered. If any crossings are recommended by the Beltline Study, I expect they would likely be categorized as something that could be built as a stand alone project, or as something best paired with reconstruction of the beltline itself as part of a future major project. The biggest factors will probably be cost and constructability.

The main message I want to pass along is the Beltline Study will not be done in a vacuum. WisDOT and the City will definitely continue to include and coordinate with neighborhoods and other interested stakeholders. No additional outreach by the Beltline Study team has occurred yet because we are just completing the data gathering phase. On grade crossings, the study team will soon do a review of the past study done during the EIS. Any of those previously studied that no longer seem to make sense will be eliminated from further study. Others to the north and east of the 5 in the DEIS may be added. A revised list should include only those crossings that have the potential to improve the operation of the Beltline and are/can be made compatible with the local network on either side should be proposed as improvement projects. Affected and/or interested stakeholders will have opportunities to provide input and will be well-aware of the outcomes before any projects are programmed.

We haven't yet reviewed all the information on the crossings collected by the Verona Rd study, so I can't speculate as to whether or not the study of the crossing you are most concerned about will move forward, but I can answer your 5 questions in the generic sense:

1. Can you define the project that would include the Beltline crossings? See attached fact sheet.
2. The previous study included a laundry list of interchange improvement and crossing options that could be implemented in any combination. Will the new project more specifically define alternatives? All of the study activities done so far under the Verona Road/West Beltline Study that relate to new crossings and shorter-term interchange work will be reviewed by the Beltline Study Team. Those already built are of course already dropped from the list. We expect that those recommended will be

described with enough detail to program the design and construction of each and such that stakeholders fully understand what is being proposed. In general, this will be about the same detail as provided in the DEIS.

3. When would public involvement begin for the project? I expect we will do this over the summer and fall. This includes discussions with local groups such as yours, representatives of the city and others involved in the past or that may be potentially affected by any new recommendations.

4. What kind of environmental document will be prepared for the project? The overall Beltline Study does not include an environmental document. Once we have agreement on what improvements to move forward with and have them programmed, we will know what level of document to produce. A project that includes one or more new crossings of the Beltline would probably have an Environmental Assessment. From a process standpoint, a new doc means a new public involvement effort to ensure the details and effects of new work are fully explained and the designs take into account local concerns to the extent practical. The same is true of the design process itself.

5. Will a new traffic study be done? Yes. The county's traffic model has been enhanced with additional and more current traffic counts. And improvements to the beltline and other area roads, plus updates of local development plans have also been incorporated. However, it still remains true that this model will be heavily relied upon to show if and to what extent volumes would change under the various options being studied. Changes to neighborhood traffic are part of what is predicted, and become part of the total package of pluses and minuses that must be evaluated and understood before decisions are made.>> The final outcome of the Beltline Study is a list of recommended and prioritized "short term", non-capacity increasing improvements. Funding will then need to be programmed and given current commitments and projections of future budgets, construction no earlier than 2015 is probably realistic. And I won't try to guess a year for any recommended improvements that are best held until a beltline capacity expansion. After a project is programmed, lots more public involvement will take place during the design of an improvement something as locally significant as a new grade crossing.> In closing, I know from your website and from talking with John Steiner that the prime concern of your group with regard to a new beltline crossing at E Watts is an increase in traffic on neighborhood streets. This is a valid concern and one which will require the City to partner with WisDOT to discuss possible usage of signing, calming devices and other traffic devices, plus possible changes to local road network that would ensure a high level of safety for all using those streets could be maintained.

May 30, 2007

Additional Questions and Answers (Allen Youngwood, GTNA / Larry Barta, WISDOT)

QUESTION: I would like to get more clarification on the Beltline projects you outlined in your e-mails. It seems as though WisDOT has divided the work as follows:

- 1) The Verona Road interchange with Verona Road improvements, and the addition of a 3rd lane in each direction west of Verona Road to Mineral Point Road. Would the Verona Road DEIS be revised and recirculated, or simply move forward?
- 2) The Beltline operations and safety project which may include one or more Beltline crossings and may include any of the interchange improvement options that were part of the Verona Road DEIS. This would not include new capacity improvements.
- 3) A future Beltline project that would add capacity. Your message says: "reconstruction of the Beltline itself as part of a future major project". It is unclear exactly what this would involve. A fourth lane in each direction? From where to where?

ANSWER:

The DEIS will be modified to include ONLY Verona Rd from PD to the Beltline, some additional study and public involvement will occur related to refining what is in the DEIS regarding Verona Rd and to provide for the staged construction of the preferred alternative, create a FEIS and move on with final design plans to construct the Beltline/Verona Rd interchange, including through the intersections north and south and on the beltline for some distance east and west.

For 1) & 3) Only Verona Rd, including the interchange with the Beltline, will remain in the Verona Rd EIS. Traffic projections to the year 2030 now show a 3rd lane addition will be needed all the way up to US 14 in Middleton. An addition of capacity for this length (over 5 miles) means it should be a so-called "Major" project. These have special rules and require authorization and oversight by a legislative committee in order to study such an improvement and again to build it. I don't have any more information on that aspect at this time, but can speculate that IF any new grade separations are recommended, any that require the beltline to be raised or lowered would likely end up as part of the future study to add capacity to the beltline. Major rebuilds of some existing interchanges could also be part of such a study.

For 2): Correct. Design and Construction projects resulting from the current Beltline Operational Study would not add capacity to the beltline. However, one of more added crossings would increase the total capacity to cross the beltline, and interchange projects that add to or extend turn lanes on ramps would add to the capacity of the ramp and could add to the ramp/side road capacity too.

QUESTION 2: I assume there is some City involvement in each of these efforts. Do WisDOT and the City have any agreements as to roles and responsibilities on any of them? In particular, are there any MOA/MOUs either signed or in draft form.

ANSWER: I am not aware of any agreements regarding any of the 3 components in the current DEIS, and that includes new grade separations. In general, I expect the City will have to share the cost for any new crossings, and we also would want to define other responsibilities related to constructing and

maintaining any of the improvements to these facilities, so agreements will be created prior to completing the FEIS.

QUESTION 3: I would like to identify the relevant contact(s) at the City on the Beltline projects. I assume that Johnny Gerbitz is still the most appropriate person at FHWA. Is that correct?

ANSWER: For other contact people, you are correct that Johnny Gerbitz is still the FHWA contact for the Verona Rd project. He is also the contact for the beltline study, though FHWA doesn't have an "official" role in studies of that type until and unless WisDOT identifies and programs new design and construction projects that the study recommends. For the City, I would suggest Larry Nelson at this point.