



CITY OF WAUWATOSA

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TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING Tuesday, May 12, 2009

PRESENT: Aids. Jay, McBride, Meaux, Stepaniak - 4

ALSO PRESENT: W. Kappel, Dir. of Public Works; J. Archambo, City Admin.; Aids. Birschel, Nikceovich

Ald. Meaux in the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Zoo Interchange / West Suburban Traffic Analysis Update – Traffic Simulation Demonstration

The following representatives of the Zoo Interchange team were in attendance to present a traffic simulation demonstration that includes modeling of options for Hwy. 45, as previously viewed by the Director of Public Works and City Engineer and discussed by this committee: Tracy Gilliam, Project Supervisor, Wisconsin Department of Transportation; Rob Beuthling, Traffic Planning Engineer, HNTB Corporation; and Brad Heimlich, Project Manager, Forward 45, a consortium of consulting firms.

Mr. Gilliam outlined the project limits and reported that a completed corridor study document is anticipated by the end of the year. The estimated start of construction has been shifted from around 2012 to 2014 or 2015.

Mr. Heimlich explained that during the corridor study process they have quantified traffic, safety, capacity, and operations issues and developed alternatives to address needs. An environmental impact statement should be released by the end of the month and will be available for public review and comment for a 45-day period. There will be public hearings in an open house format on June 23 and 24. Once the corridor study process is complete, they will identify the preferred alternative and start to develop preliminary plans.

Mr. Beuthling displayed the traffic micro-simulation modeling, focusing primarily at the south end of the north leg from the core interchange to Watertown Plank Road. He pointed out that it identifies where backups will occur and shows improved traffic conditions not only on the freeway but on side roads. Separate simulations showed p.m. peak traffic under the M-1 alternative and a.m. peak traffic under the M-3 alternative. A summary of travel time between various points was distributed. Software calculated estimated times, and time trials under current traffic conditions were done for comparison purposes. Trips to and from the Regional Medical Center were specifically tracked. Existing travel time in most cases is greater than the forecasted travel time, showing that the system would not only accommodate more traffic but operate more efficiently, although several trips to points south and north during p.m. peak hours take longer than existing times due to traffic volume and how it exits the facility.

While the M-3 alternative utilizes "Texas U-turns," the M-1 alternative has a bridge and connection drive that serve as a more direct route for Research Park or Regional Medical Center traffic. Both of the alternatives significantly reduce traffic on Watertown Plank Road because drivers have more freeway access options. M-1 provides more opportunities to access Hwy. 45 without relying on Watertown Plank Road. The bridge/drive is roughly an extension of Connor Avenue; planners have been working with both entities on its location.

Concerns about access to the Regional Medical Center for drivers approaching from eastbound or westbound I-94 were discussed. Mr. Heimlich said that options are limited by the proximity of Blue Mound Road and Wisconsin Avenue to the main core interchange. The first exit opportunity for traffic coming onto Hwy. 45 from east or westbound I-94 will be at Watertown Plank Road. I-94 drivers otherwise could access surface routes to the medical

campus from 84th Street/Glenview Avenue or Hwy. 100/Mayfair Road. They placed a high priority on staying within the corridor footprint and not disrupting neighborhoods. They tried to keep that area as narrow as possible. The core interchange is now three levels and will be four levels, about 25 feet higher than the existing interchange. Mr. Heimlich said that they will continue to look at possibilities. The change in access patterns is not taken lightly and planners have gone outside the footprint in other areas. He reiterated that added features will bring save travel time in the future and said that Watertown Plank Road will not look anything like it does today from a traffic perspective.

Asked about other plans relative to Watertown Plank Road and the possible UW-M engineering school campus, Mr. Heimlich said that creation of a 95th Street intersection or extending 92nd Street have been discussed but are not specifically part of this plan. Access to and from that campus is built into future traffic numbers. The West Suburban Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) recognized that there is significant traffic demand off-system, which will be discussed as part of the traffic management planning phase in which the Director of Public Works will participate.

The only material change affecting access to Mayfair Mall is a proposal to keep both of the loop ramps to provide a second option for northbound traffic to access North Avenue. The concept of guide or changeable message signage to point drivers to relief routes such as Burleigh Street has been discussed. The Meinecke Avenue bridge over Hwy. 45 as well as the West High School/Whitman Middle School pedestrian bridge would be retained.

Mr. Heimlich was confident that traffic congestion will improve significantly. SEWRPC has had upgrade or replacement recommendations in place for 20 years, but the work will be done in pieces and any backups would be more a result of work not yet completed. If funds are not available for some work, there would be some bogging down at the outer limits. Asked about determining the final option, Mr. Heimlich said it is a combination of things; there are benefits and disadvantages to both alternatives. The decision will be made after the public hearings so that they can hear from the cities involved, possibly through formal action, the county, businesses, homeowners, and the public in general. He pointed out that past feedback has generated changes.

John Balzer, Vice President of Facility Planning & Development, Froedtert Hospital, said he has been very impressed with how participatory the process has been but noted that the Regional Medical Center still has strong concerns about limiting access from east and westbound I-94. He believes the facility's almost 20,000 employees will figure out alternate routes and they will be on city streets and through neighborhoods.

Ald. Meaux questioned impact on pedestrians and bicyclists. Mr. Heimlich said that although the system will be handling 20% more traffic, distributing it better will lessen congestion on Watertown Plank Road, Blue Mound Road, and Wisconsin Avenue and should provide opportunities to be more pedestrian and bicycle friendly. A pedestrian bridge across Watertown Plank Road from the Ronald McDonald House has been discussed, for example, and there will be additional accommodations for bike lanes or more space at the side.

Ald. Stepaniak saw Watertown Plank Road/Regional Medical Center traffic issues as potential sticking points regardless of the chosen alternative. He felt it would be fairly easy to underestimate the demand when considering the rate of growth at the medical center in the next 10-20 years. He felt that there should still be consideration of some other southwestern access point for the Medical Center that combines some portions of an existing plan but perhaps goes beyond the existing footprint. Mr. Heimlich responded that they have worked closely with SEWRPC to ensure that additional development in this area is reflected in traffic volumes used for modeling. That will be refined as they move forward through the design process.

Mr. Heimlich indicated that the group would be available to return at any time.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

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Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin