

DATE: 12-19-07

HNTB JOB NUMBER: 45218



PROJECT: WisDOT *Connections 2030* Plan

ATTENDEES:

See attached list

Meeting Summary

Resource Agency Consultation Meeting #1

Purpose of Meeting Summary – The meeting summary notes are intended to document key discussion points, comments/questions, and mitigation examples discussed during the first Agency Consultation Meeting. In general, the organization of these notes follows the meeting agenda. In certain cases and in response to certain comments, WisDOT provided clarification and additional information during the discussion. This supplementary information is noted as ‘Meeting response’ throughout these summary notes.

General Meeting Notes

1. Introduction

Sandy Beaupre, WisDOT Bureau of Planning and Economic Development, opened the meeting welcoming attendees and providing a broad overview of agency outreach during the *Connections 2030* planning process. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation is attached.

2. Purpose of meeting

Caron Kloser provided an overview of the intent of agency consultation in the *Connections 2030* planning process:

- To assure that the plan accounts for sensitive resources at a statewide and regional level,
- To establish a better understanding of the role of the statewide planning process as the basis of future project implementation, particularly the purpose and need of future projects.

3. Overview of the planning process and SAFETEA-LU

Aileen Switzer provided an overview of the planning process and the *Connections 2030* plan content. Key points are summarized as:

A. Plan overview:

The *Connections 2030* Plan is a policy and implementation-based plan, not a needs-based plan.

- The draft plan is still being developed and has not been made public yet
- Tribal consultation is scheduled for 2008
- WisDOT is currently drafting policies and chapters

The plan is comprised of about 40 policies that reflect the seven themes that are woven throughout the plan. Not listed in any particular order, the themes are:

- Preserve Wisconsin's transportation system
- Promote transportation safety
- Promote transportation security
- Promote transportation efficiencies
- Provide mobility and transportation choice
- Preserve and enhance Wisconsin's quality of life
- Foster Wisconsin's economic growth

The *Connections 2030* policies consist of existing and future WisDOT policies. Policy descriptions are stand-alone and include WisDOT commitments, actions steps, and areas where new funding would be required.

The Plan will also contain corridor maps. The maps identify critical transportation links, both within the state and links to neighboring states.

Several questions were raised during the discussion of the *Connections 2030* corridor maps. The following are the responses:

- The *Connections 2030* corridor maps include backbone routes.
- The corridor maps address statewide planning and do not emphasize one particular region within the state.
- The corridor maps are not intended to coordinate planning processes for corridors in neighboring states; that level of detail is addressed by WisDOT regional offices, during project planning stages. However, *Connections 2030* does note regional and national transportation issues that affect Wisconsin (e.g., high-speed passenger rail and freight movement).
- The corridor maps are not limited to highways. They also include airports and other transportation modes.

B. Environmental consultation

Caron provided additional descriptions of agencies' roles during the consultation process. These roles include:

- Review and comment on the initial draft chapters of the *Connections 2030* plan
- Compare goals among agencies' strategic plans
- Identify sensitive resource inventories
- Identify "red-flag" issues
- Identify liaisons within resource agencies to assist and provide resource data during future project planning efforts (this is important because sensitive resource inventories will change over time)

- Help identify potential mitigation strategies

In addition to the December 19th meeting, WisDOT anticipates holding two more agency meetings. The next meeting will review the remaining theme chapters in early spring 2008. The final meeting is anticipated in late spring 2008. The third meeting will include review of the System-wide Environmental Evaluation (SEE), the Environmental Justice analysis, and the funding and implementation chapters.

4. Chapter Review

Aileen Switzer continued the presentation with an overview of the first four draft theme chapters. These summary notes include agency comments, WisDOT's 'meeting responses' and examples of potential mitigation strategies discussed during the chapter review.

Theme Chapter: Promote Transportation Safety

Safety continues to be a priority for the department. WisDOT will continue current policies and actions. Aileen noted that WisDOT's role is relatively limited outside the State Trunk Highway (STH) system, but that WisDOT considers all transportation safety to be an agency concern and will continue to reach out to and coordinate efforts with local governments. Following a brief discussion of the chapter, two comments were noted:

Comment: Multiple uses of trails or of WisDOT right-of-way pose a safety concern for the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

Meeting response: Multi-use routes are addressed in *Connections 2030*. Currently, ATV operation is prohibited on WisDOT right-of-way. In the Northeast region, WisDOT regional offices have worked directly with local governments and the WDNR to address multiple uses along WisDOT right-of-way.

Comment: Deer / car collisions can lead to fatalities. The chapter should consider wildlife crossings to minimize collisions. In addition, conservation plans for protected species should be consulted to identify mitigation options (i.e. Lynx).

Meeting response: WisDOT uses signage to alert drivers to areas noted for high concentrations of wildlife crossing, and is currently conducting research. WisDOT also uses limited wildlife crossings or underpasses on certain projects (i.e. Butler's gartersnake).

Note: Later in the meeting, the USFS indicated that they've completed research on multi-use routes and that the research results are available for use.

Theme Chapter: Promote Transportation Security

Transportation security continues to be a concern for WisDOT. The *Connections 2030* plan marks the first time that security is addressed through formal policies. The policies seek to reduce the vulnerability and increase the resiliency of the transportation system. WisDOT's action steps include:

- Prioritization of vulnerable structures
- Coordination of actions across multiple agencies
- Development of plans to keep traffic moving during emergencies
- Development of evacuation plans for urban areas

No comments noted during the review of this chapter

Theme Chapter: Preserve and Enhance Wisconsin's Quality of Life

This chapter is the first time that WisDOT's environmental policies are presented together. The chapter consists of six policies that incorporate a wide range of environmental considerations. WisDOT received numerous comments and potential mitigation strategies during the discussion of this chapter. The comments and strategies are organized under the following main topics (*italicized*):

Environmental Justice

Comment: WisDOT should add some discussion of accessibility and service to medical facilities and schools. The commenter acknowledged that accessibility issues might be best-addressed at the project level, but indicated that *Connections 2030* should at least indicate that accessibility is an important issue.

Comment: *Connections 2030* should consider impacts of demographics on land use and transportation. Specifically, *Connections 2030* needs to consider access to transportation for the elderly as the population of Wisconsin is aging. It is unlikely that aging baby boomers will be content with public transit. This is especially important considering that some elderly populations should not be driving, for safety reasons.

Ecosystem Management

Comment: Resource agencies are taking ecosystem approaches to managing resources; addressing connectivity and wildlife crossings and focusing less on site-specific management.

Meeting response: WisDOT supports an ecosystem approach. The agency's mitigation options may be limited to some extent by existing agreements, statutory guidelines and impediments (i.e. ¼ mile rule). WisDOT continues to be willing to partner with other agencies to avoid, minimize and mitigate impacts to sensitive resources.

Comment: There are a large number of mitigation options that could be implemented in the right-of-way, inexpensively.

Comment: Agencies define the term 'ecosystem management' differently. It could include social, economic, or environmental factors. There are multiple ecosystem models and guidance documents available.

Comment: The Natural Resource Conservation Service is primarily focused on watershed-based management.

Comment: Project funding is an important consideration for mitigation options.

Comment: Connectivity is very important to ecosystems. For example, while project planning might avoid all wetlands in an area, the road itself might impact an ecosystem by dividing a cluster of wetlands.

Comment: Aquatic organism passage (AOP) is important to several resource agencies. The goal of providing AOP is to limit the occurrence of isolated stream reaches and restore ecosystems.

Comment: Transportation corridors harbor very productive habitat for birds and insects.

Meeting response: WisDOT has worked with several resource agencies to determine an appropriate mowing schedule. As of March 2007, WisDOT adopted a new mowing policy.

Examples of potential mitigation strategies or suggestions to improve mitigation strategies related to Ecosystem Management identified by the participants:

- Keep clearing widths as narrow as possible along transportation corridors.
- To minimize road footprint, avoid as many trees as possible along transportation corridors.
- Consider implementing mowing schedules to minimize impacts to habitat and wildlife in WisDOT right of way.
- Consider re-vegetation of medians to provide additional habitat.
- Mitigation to address AOP should consider both fish and amphibians and include hydraulic designs that mimic banks at full-width (100-year flow).
- Provide connectivity when planning transportation facilities in areas that contain clusters of sensitive resources.
- Use wetland mitigation site selection, and possibly 6(f) / 4(f) mitigation, as elements of an ecosystem management approach.
- Conduct workshops to identify barriers to achieving ecosystem-based mitigation opportunities.

Invasive Species

Comment: Does WisDOT consider invasive animals (i.e. gypsy moth) when identifying means and methods used to control invasive species?

Meeting response: WisDOT is a transportation-focused agency and typically takes its lead from resource agencies. The department assumes a more responsive or reactive role when determining where to focus efforts to control invasive species.

Comment: The list of invasive weeds included in *Connections 2030* excludes some of the most noxious weeds. The list under-represents the extent of the 'invasive weed' problem in Wisconsin. Garlic mustard and spotted knapweed are especially noxious and are not listed.

Comment: The chapter text should also mention the Governor's council on invasive species and the text should also identify best management practices (BMPs) that can be used to control invasive species.

Comment: The USFS has completed research on controlling invasive species and the research is available for all to use.

Comment: Simply increasing awareness among agencies can lead to improved invasive species control.

Examples of potential mitigation strategies that would help control invasive species identified by participants:

- Cleaning equipment before moving from one site to another (i.e. road grading equipment).
- Develop and maintain a database that details locations of noxious weeds.
- Consider research on biocontrols to control invasive species rather than relying on herbicides.

- Implement biological controls to address invasive species.
- Improve monitoring of invasive species on post-construction sites and correct if needed.
- Include incentives for gravel pit operators to maintain their property, thus minimizing the seed bank of invasive species.
- Implement mowing schedule for maximum control of invasive weeds.
- Review and revise operations plans / FDM for opportunities to minimize spread of invasive species.

Air Quality

During the discussion of air quality, WisDOT received several comments suggesting the following additions to the chapter:

- Provide a more comprehensive description of particulate matter; include discussion of counties that are not meeting standards.
- Describe air quality implications for public health, including particulates.
- Plan on discussing ozone regulations, add a placeholder in the mean time.
- In addition to existing text that addresses national efforts to improve air quality, include discussion of USEPA haze regulations and the BART rule (Best Alternative Retrofit Technology).

Cameron Bump (WDNR), indicated the WDNR is currently developing an air quality amendment to the WDNR/WisDOT Cooperative Agreement. The WDNR prefers a more robust policy for managing emissions for off-road vehicles.

Comment: It appears that the level of control and planning for individual construction projects has deteriorated over the last few years. The commenter suggested that careful project planning is important from standpoint of cost, safety, and minimizing schedule impacts to both WisDOT and the traveling public. Careful project planning would also minimize emissions from construction equipment and the traveling public.

Examples of potential mitigation strategies to minimize impacts to air quality discussed by participants:

- Require the use of low-sulfur diesel fuel for off-road equipment.
- Require idle restrictions on off-road equipment.
- Address air quality emissions during project construction rather than relying on CMAQ grants.
- Include incentives in contracts, which would foster innovative solutions from contractors to control air emissions.
- Look for opportunities to refine CMAQ funding to increase availability to communities in Wisconsin.
- Encourage the use of biofuels.
- Encourage the use of emissions controls on airport fleet vehicles.
- Encourage airports to convert to electrical power systems and reduce generator-powered equipment (i.e. gate electrification).
- Develop a stronger linkage between airport planning and statewide planning.
- Add air quality attachment to existing WDNR/WisDOT agreement.

Wetland Mitigation

WisDOT received two specific comments regarding wetland mitigation. The first comment indicated there is a need to continue fostering partnerships and communication among agencies to address broader goals of enhancing wetlands and other natural resources across the state. The second comment regarding wetland mitigation suggested that WisDOT and WDNR should consider structural improvements to the banking system and consider refinements to the overall policies / processes that guide the WisDOT wetland mitigation process.

Recreation

During a discussion of recreation and protected resources, WisDOT received a comment that the chapter text be revised to indicate that WisDOT will foster (versus preserve) non-vehicular activities. The commenter indicated this is important for improved recreation, health, and reducing traffic. WisDOT also received comments indicating that trails themselves can be considered a protected resource and that WisDOT should foster trail opportunities between communities.

Erosion and water quality

WisDOT received a comment suggesting that the chapter expand the discussion on water quality and erosion. Additionally, WisDOT should take credit for successful water quality protection efforts by adding text that provides information regarding WisDOT's current water quality protection and erosion control programs.

An additional comment indicated the text should place more emphasis on the threat of construction site sediment on surface water quality.

Transportation / Land use

During the discussion of transportation and land use, WisDOT received a question about whether local comprehensive plans are taken into account during the project planning processes.

Meeting response: WisDOT does consider local comprehensive plans.

WisDOT also received several comments during the discussion on transportation and land use. One comment indicated that local governments should be made aware of the availability of planning tools that can be used to assess direct and cumulative impacts of land use decisions along with forecasting tools.

Two other comments indicated that the corridor planning process, which addresses access management, is a good planning tool and that WisDOT should make sure that *Connections 2030* addresses section 4(f) issues.

Examples of potential mitigation strategies to minimize transportation impacts to land use identified by participants:

- WisDOT could continue to take local land use plans into account during project planning and development.
- In certain circumstances and if invited, WisDOT could engage more in guiding local land use decisions.
- WisDOT could reach out to local communities and demonstrate modeling and visioning tools that are available.

- WisDOT could continue to use corridor planning and access management as a planning tool.

Theme Chapter: Provide mobility and transportation choice

During the chapter review, Aileen emphasized the vision and related policies are aimed at supporting the increased number of choices of transportation alternatives, improving connections between modes and improving public awareness. The policies focus on WisDOT restating its commitment to transit statewide including, but not limited to, rural, public, specialized, human services, fixed guideway, commuter rail and high speed rail, as well as bike and pedestrian needs, TDM strategies and airport accommodations.

General Aviation

Comment: General aviation planning should be addressed in *Connections 2030*. Many attendees noted that aviation planning addressed in *Connections 2030* should not be limited to commercial aviation. One particular issue of concern is the increasing number of applications for municipal runway extensions. In some cases, the applicant-airports could be competing with each other. Municipal airports and potential expansion projects should be addressed in and linked to statewide aviation planning efforts.

Several other comments received regarding aviation at the project level are as follows:

- It is often difficult for agencies to make sense of specific project purpose and need statements because it is often unclear how the airport fits into the overall air system.
- The environmental review for aviation projects is often not as smooth as reviews conducted for highway projects.

Other comments received by WisDOT on the Mobility and Choice chapter:

- The chapter text should reflect encouragement of telecommuting (electronically conducting business from employee's homes).
- The chapter should also address environmental and economic impacts associated with energy use for transportation.
- The chapter should also address relationship among employment, demographics, VMT and the impacts of these variables on the travel forecasting used to develop *Connections 2030*.
- WisDOT should advocate more strongly for transit and seek to 'expand' transit versus 'continue' transit.
- Another comment regarding transit indicated that transit has a difficult time serving all areas economically. Often times, administrators need to see certain densities to justify transit, but they won't authorize higher densities without roadway capacity increases.
- WisDOT should consider merging issues of air quality, land use and transit together in a discussion in the text.

During this discussion, WisDOT received a question about whether the *Connections 2030* plan addresses freight and the need for intermodal facilities.

Meeting response: The plan does address freight, but in a subsequent chapter that will be reviewed at a later date. With respect to intermodal facilities, WisDOT previously conducted a feasibility study for the creation of new intermodal freight facilities in Wisconsin. The study indicated that the creation of new

intermodal facilities would not be economically feasible in Wisconsin because of existing facilities in Minnesota and Illinois.

5. Working Lunch

6. Mitigation Strategies

Note: agenda items 6 and 7 were switched to accommodate attendee schedules. During and after lunch, Caron Kloser summarized mitigation strategies identified in the minutes.

Review of Quality of Life Action Steps

Upon summarizing mitigation strategies identified during the chapter review session, Caron asked the group to comment on action steps in the Quality of Life chapter as many of them are mitigation strategies as well. The specific comments noted during this discussion are as follows:

Air Quality Policy

- Consider coordinating action steps with milestones. In other words, as WisDOT works to integrate the transportation and air management processes, consider tying specific WisDOT action items to schedules of air quality attainment status or other milestones.
- Change “consider” to “encourage” or “require” in third bullet item under short to medium-term Action Steps at the end of air quality section. Also, expand ‘retro fit’ language in this bullet item to include airports.

Invasive Species Policy

- WisDOT should involve other agencies with their rapid detection and early response program, in addition to the WDNR.

Positive land use/transportation policy

- The chapter should also include an action item that addresses the use of tools to educate public on land use decisions (land use tools, forecasting tools, etc).
- The chapter should also include an action item that addresses the public’s need for increased access to technical data versus general data.

Integrating transportation and environmental issues policy

- Define the term “consensus”.

7. Plan Comparison and Recap

Caron reviewed agency plans and inventories reviewed to date. The plan review is focused on statewide and regional plans. Some specific plans for significant properties such as USFS forests and National Park Service (NPS) properties are also specifically discussed. She noted that inventories will be identified in the plan comparison, but it will be more important to identify correct contacts within agencies for future projects so that WisDOT can obtain the most current data on important resources.

WisDOT received a comment that suggested that the State Implementation Plan be included. Mike Friedlander will provide air emissions projections.

For the SEE analysis, WisDOT plans to use proxy measures (databases) to evaluate potential impacts to resources. The evaluation will depend on the availability of databases. Examples of databases that may be used include Outstanding Water Resources, Impaired Waters, prime farmlands, and air quality.

Prior to closing the meeting, Caron requested individual agency observations and comments on how the agencies felt these four chapters support (or don't support) agency plans.

The Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) commented that they have provided Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and Farm and Ranchland Preserve Program (FRPP) databases to Caron already. The NRCS feels it is critical to get information as early as possible during project planning efforts. Rapid watershed management profiles are now available online. NRCS will provide prime farmland database for Wisconsin. NRCS also commented the meeting was a great start and that WisDOT and NRCS may encounter some conflicts between their plans.

The WDNR commented that there are no statewide GIS databases available for wetlands. Cameron indicated that WDNR was pleased with meeting. He also stated that he may choose to suggest additional plans that should be considered. Cameron will try to provide contacts for each plan/database. Mike reiterated that expanding transportation and the requirements of SIP for 1-hour ozone was predicated on 70% increase in transit in southeastern Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS) commented that their databases are constantly updated; this database will be difficult to download for other agency use.

The USFS indicated that GIS data is available. The USFS staff in regional offices can provide a great deal of information. The USFS also indicated that WisDOT should be aware of the fact that Bureau of Indian Affairs may have long range plans for tribes.

The United State Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) commented that WisDOT should be aware of USEPA Regional Plan. Sherry Kamke (USEPA) will send this plan to Aileen Switzer. Sherry also commented that WisDOT and USEPA plans are very broad. Also, WisDOT should be aware of impaired waters.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) indicated that they have provided WisDOT with a database of USFWS properties. Also, WisDOT should be aware of lands that have been purchased with USFWS funds. USFWS commented that the USFWS and *Connections 2030* are very broad.

The Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) commented that WisDOT should be aware of CREP lands. DATCP will send information and databases on CREP lands, working lands, and drainage districts to Caron Kloser.

The Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) commented that WisDOT should be aware of WDOA's interactive map of counties that have completed their Comprehensive Plans. The WDOA plans to follow up with a letter addressing comments.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) had no comment.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) commented that *Connections 2030* would be good for environmental reviews.

Follow up Items:

1. WisDOT to send the Statewide Bike map to Chuck LaPicola (USFS).
2. Cameron Bump (WDNR) will provide ideas for additional action steps at the end of the 'protected resources' policy within the Preserve Wisconsin's Quality of Life Chapter (*confirm with Cameron*).
3. Cameron will provide contacts for the WDNR plans and databases. Cameron may also provide additional WDNR plans for the plan comparison effort.
4. Sherry Kamke (USEPA) will send a copy of the USEPA Regional Plan to Caron Kloser.
5. Alice Halpin (DATCP) will send CREP, working lands, and drainage district information and databases to Caron Kloser.
6. Kent Peña (NRCS) will send Wisconsin prime farmland information and database to Caron Kloser.
7. Caron Kloser (HNTB) will distribute draft meeting minutes.
8. All participant agency comments on the four draft chapters discussed during the meeting are due on January 10, 2008.
9. Aileen Switzer (WisDOT) will follow up with Peter Nauth (DATCP)
10. Aileen Switzer to coordinate discussion with Louise Clemency (USFWS), Cameron Bump (WDNR) and Sherry Kamke (EPA) to discuss their specific ideas regarding habitat connectivity and air quality.
11. Caron Kloser will follow up with USFWS Division of Federal Assistance to identify Wisconsin lands that have been purchased with USFWS funds.
12. Mike Friedlander (WDNR) will provide air emissions projections out to year 2030.

All written comments are due on January 10th, 2008.

Sum



Meeting: Agency Consultation Meeting #1

Date: December 19, 2007

Location: UW-Madison Campus - Memorial Union

Name	Organization	e-mail address	Phone
Chuck Lopicola	USDA Forest Service	clapicola@fs.fed.us	414-297-3676
BOBBI RETZLAFF	WISDOT	bobbi.retzlaff@dot.state.wi.us	608-264-7266
Aileen Seitzer	WisDOT		608-266-3662
Stephanie Hickman	FHWA	stephanie.hickman@fhwa.dot.gov	608-829-7503
Michelle	DATEP	mtj@datep.state.wi.us	
Sherry Kamke	U.S. EPA	kamke.sherry@epa.gov	312-353-5794
Jean Murray	WisDOT	jeanfermurray@dot.state.wi.us	608-266-1169
Louise Clemency	FWS	louise-clemency@fws.gov	920-866-1725
Kurt Reina	USDA-NRCS		920-492-7712
Chris Wolth	WisDOT NE Region	christopher.wolth@dot.state.wi.us	920-492-7712
Matt Halach	" "		920-492-7725
Barbara Semml	WisDOT OPA		
Sandy Beazley	WisDOT - Planning		
Cameron Bump	Wis DNR	Cameron.Bump@wisconsin.gov	715-939-8286
Pat Trainer	WISDOT BEE		
FRIEDLANDER, MICHAEL	WONR-Air Mgmt		608-267-0806

