

**DATE:** 04-30-08

**HNTB JOB NUMBER:** 45218



**PROJECT:** WisDOT *Connections 2030* Plan

**ATTENDEES:**

See attached list

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**Meeting Summary**

Resource Agency Consultation Meeting #2

Purpose of Meeting Summary – The meeting summary notes are intended to document key discussion points, comments/questions, and mitigation examples discussed during the second Agency Consultation Meeting. In general, the organization of these notes follows the meeting agenda. In some cases, 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**

Aileen Switzer, WisDOT Bureau of Planning and Economic Development, opened the meeting by 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 and consultation**

Caron Kloser provided a recap of the purpose of the meeting and agency consultation during the *Connections 2030* planning process.

Caron reiterated the role of the environmental agencies and the plan comparison process; asking agencies to identify significant statewide natural/cultural resources, ecosystem conservation opportunities and ‘red-flag’ issues. This information may be used as future projects are implemented.

Aileen Switzer reiterated the contents and the purpose of the *Connections 2030* Plan, which:

- Identifies Wisconsin’s multimodal transportation vision and policy
- Articulates implementation, finance and investment strategies through 2030
- Establishes policies that develop/enhance:

- Transportation efficiencies and options
- Statewide economic growth
- Safety and security

### **3. Agency Consultation Meetings**

Caron reviewed the activities from the first agency consultation meeting, held on December 19, 2007. At that meeting, WisDOT reviewed four of the seven “theme” chapters of the Draft Plan and discussed agency plans used for plan comparison. The key comment themes collected during the first consultation meeting were:

- Consideration of wildlife crossings
- Connectivity and ecosystem management
- Managing invasive species
- Transportation access for an aging population
- Air quality
- Land use / transportation connection
- General aviation airport expansions

WisDOT is reviewing all agency comments and mitigation suggestions for possible inclusion in the Draft Plan prior to public outreach. Additional revisions to the Draft Plan will be made, as appropriate, when it goes through the public review process.

The April 30<sup>th</sup> meeting is the second of three agency consultation meetings. WisDOT convened the second meeting to review introductory chapters and the remaining three theme chapters:

- Preserve and Maintain Wisconsin’s Transportation System
- Promote Transportation Efficiencies
- Foster Wisconsin’s Economic Growth

The last agency consultation meeting (meeting #3) is planned for July 2008 and will review the System-Plan Environmental Evaluation (SEE), Environmental Justice (EJ), Funding and Implementation Chapters. WisDOT will send these chapters out in advance of third meeting.

### **4. Chapter Review**

Prior to introducing and discussing the remaining three theme chapters, Aileen Switzer presented a short overview of the *Introduction*, *Profiles of Wisconsin’s Transportation System*, and *Trends Chapters*.

The *Introduction* Chapter defines the long-term vision for the *Connections 2030* Plan and outlines the plan development process and organization. It also lays out fundamental ideas that were used to shape the plan.

The *Profile of Wisconsin’s Transportation System* Chapter discusses the existing conditions for each mode throughout the state. Specifically, the chapter provides statistics on system use and the condition of each mode. This chapter also provides an assessment of key challenges for each mode.

The *Trends* Chapter presents key considerations that will affect transportation in Wisconsin: population, travel patterns, safety, economic trends and environmental considerations. This chapter also includes a

discussion of Wisconsin's role in the global economy and the implications, from a transportation standpoint, of being geographically located between Minneapolis and Chicago.

Comment/question: How recent is trend data?

Meeting response: The most recent data possible was used to develop trends. Some data, such as U.S. Census data, is not updated as frequently.

Comment: Chapter 2 appears to combine the maintenance and preservation together and does not include much discussion of system preservation.

Meeting response: System preservation and maintenance are addressed in the *Preserve and Maintain Wisconsin's Transportation System* chapter. The *Promote Transportation Efficiencies* chapter addresses system operation.

Comment: There is no mention of enabling legislation for transit service in the introduction.

Meeting response: This will be clarified in the Plan. It is discussed in the *Provide Mobility and Transportation Choice* chapter.

### **Remaining Theme Chapters**

#### Theme Chapter: *Preserve and Maintain Wisconsin's Transportation System*

The chapter focuses on typical maintenance activities of individual system parts and tends to address immediate needs; long-term preservation activities; and ensuring the continued availability of transportation services. The chapter also includes a discussion of the update of Corridors 2020 to Corridors 2030 routes, a high priority system of STH corridors throughout the state which connect key destinations such as large population and economic centers, universities, medical centers and tourist destinations.

Comment: The chapter should have a discussion of what is sustainable in terms of funding for transportation systems and what is allotted by legislature.

Meeting response: The intent of the Plan is to focus first on preserving infrastructure to emphasize its useful life. This effort includes developing methods to evaluate costs to maintain infrastructure, as well as long term costs when infrastructure is added to the system. The current level of funding allows WisDOT to address needs, but it might take longer to implement projects. The increasing cost of infrastructure highlights the importance of maintenance activities. The chapter also discusses the issue of more needs than available funding.

Comment/question: Has WisDOT conducted a 'needs' study, and where are the needs documented?

Meeting response: While a specific needs study has not been conducted, WisDOT maintains a STH system database that identifies needs. The plan documents existing needs through various maps and threshold discussions for safety and congestion. In general, WisDOT estimates that the pavement on about 20% of the STH system is rated below desirable pavement standards.

#### Theme Chapter *Promote Transportation Efficiencies*

This chapter discusses system operation, focusing on the reliability, resilience, and connectivity of Wisconsin's transportation system. The chapter presents policies that maintain effective, coordinated,

and economical operations to maximize traffic movement. Policies range from improving traffic operations and adding capacity, to managing access and work zones.

Comment: The incident management discussion should break down incidents into various causes and challenges, which should help pinpoint greatest needs, such as increased funding, enforcement, and improved communication.

Meeting response: The chapter presents a list of potential incidents that need to be addressed, but is not intended to be a comprehensive listing.

Comment: WisDOT should change text on Page 17 regarding weigh stations along federal highways. Recommend use of either 'federal aid highway' or 'US routes'. The only federally-owned highways are in national parks.

Meeting response: Text will be updated.

Comment: Consider linking travel delay model with statewide travel demand model, if possible. Consider building on existing model as opposed developing a new model.

Meeting response: Linking the two models may be possible.

Comment: Optimizing signal timing can be important for maximizing efficiencies and system performance. Also, intermodal stations can reduce emissions through polices such as idle control and automatic shut offs for vehicles.

#### Theme Chapter: Foster Wisconsin's Economic Growth

This chapter captures WisDOT's vision to partner with communities and industries to maintain and improve the state's transportation system so it is responsive to global and regional economic needs and changes. While the chapter is predominantly focused on freight issues, it also reflects that other transportation components support economic growth and points the reader to those chapters. WisDOT's freight focus policies will improve Wisconsin's freight traffic and communication among freight stakeholders. The chapter also addresses local roads, energy, tourism and civil rights as related to business opportunities. The chapter focuses on:

- Improving WisDOT's role with the freight community
- Improving/increasing Class I railroad shipping
- Addressing local road issues
- Building business opportunities for individuals in Wisconsin's transportation industry

Comment/question: Future funding could be an issue with uncertainty surrounding gasoline use and gas tax. Would WisDOT ever consider tollways?

Meeting response: Tolling and public/private partnerships are state government policy issues and the decision of the governor. Also, it is uncertain if tolling would be legal from a state constitutional standpoint.

Other meeting response: There may be very strict regulations and payback provisions involved with using federal money to build a tollway.

Comment/question: Is the *Connections 2030* Plan tied into state's greenhouse gas initiative?

Meeting response: The *Connections 2030* Plan notes the efforts of the Governor's Task Force on Global Warming. WisDOT is represented on Governor's task force work group for transportation, and provides data and information when asked.

Comment: People tend to want to live in high value communities like Austin, TX. These communities seem to attract high value employers and employees, which facilitates economic growth. Does that chapter have a discussion of livable communities to attract employees?

Meeting response: The chapter does not have a specific discussion on livable communities, but it does contain discussion on the importance of local comprehensive planning. The high-speed intercity passenger rail initiative would certainly benefit Wisconsin communities, provide connectivity, and have the potential to attract out-of-state businesses.

Comment: Expand on the chapter's use of the word 'coordinate'. Is the chapter attempting to describe coordination with private sector and local communities? There will probably be a need for infrastructure improvements to better accommodate freight needs. Freight logistical planning should also consider the needs of the transportation network. The chapter tends to place a large emphasis on labor availability and Wisconsin's business needs.

Meeting response: At this point, *Connections 2030* focuses on WisDOT's need to better understand shippers' needs. WisDOT will need to get a handle on the basics of Wisconsin's statewide freight needs before focusing on coordination with MPOs and communities on specific freight issues.

Other meeting response: WisDOT is working to get a better handle on business' freight needs. While data on freight movements exists, there are no specific models to predict freight traffic. Furthermore, studies on freight need to address intermodal connections.

Other meeting response: Some coordination occurs with the Transportation Economic Assistance (TEA) program, and with the local roads and bridge program.

Comment: The chapter should address 'reverse' commutes with low-income employees commuting to suburban retail.

No further specific comments were received on the chapter. Caron Kloser summarized the comments to make sure the team captured all comments received. Caron then asked each agency for any additional overall comments.

Comment: Wisconsin rail infrastructure system is important for agriculture.

Comment: Address whether the state will support/fund an energy-efficient bus fleet.

Comment: The Plan should identify which operations are used outside of the State Traffic Operations Center (STOC) area. Identify effectiveness and acknowledge gaps. The Plan should take credit for these operations.

Comment: Work zone issues have changed lately. WisDOT needs to make sure the Plan incorporates the latest developments as FHWA will be looking for them in the final plan.

Comment/question: Do the VMT projections incorporate fuel costs? The Plan should clarify the technical underpinnings of the VMT projection.

Meeting response: Rising fuel cost makes the case for alternative passenger and freight modes, but 'just in time' business trends continue to focus on trucking.

Comment: 79 mph does not seem very fast for High Speed Rail.

Meeting response: In some cases, speeds will be a function of track conditions and proximity to urban areas. The long-term intent is to increase speeds to 110 mph wherever possible.

Comment/question: Would High Speed Rail be operated by public / private partnerships?

Meeting response: At this point, WisDOT presumes the system would be operated by Amtrak and not WisDOT.

Comment: WisDOT should consider robust emissions control strategies at airports

Comment: Transportation enhancement is a stand-alone budget item. The Plan should make clear that local systems receive funds for enhancement. Presently, Wisconsin is low on the list of enhancement funding. However, funding for bicycle and pedestrian projects is more directly addressed as part of roadway improvement projects, where paths, sidewalks, trails, etc. are incorporated into the project design.

## **5. Corridor Maps**

Aileen introduced the corridor maps, which will be discussed in more detail in upcoming chapters and at the next agency meeting. The corridor maps are a visual depiction of the Six-Year highway improvement program; tribal, MPO, RPC plans, and recommended *Connections 2030* policies and actions. The maps depict proposed plan implementation activities. Sandy Beaupre further emphasized that the corridor maps are not the end of the transportation planning function, but rather a first step in connecting a system level planning analysis to implementation at the corridor and/or local level. With this process, regions would conduct more detailed analyses at the project-level prior to deciding which projects on the corridor maps would be implemented.

All written comments due by May 21.