

US 18/151 Access Study

County G/Dairy Ridge Road (Verona) to US 18/151 (Dodgeville)

Spring 2005

Frequently asked questions

Who is conducting the study?

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation - Madison District (WisDOT) is initiating the study. WisDOT has hired the consulting firm Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. (SEH) to assist them with their efforts. Other local representatives from Dane and Iowa counties and the SWWRPC (regional planning commission) will also be contributing to the study.

What is the US 18/151 Access Study all about?

First and foremost, the US 18/151 Access Study is just that, a study. There are no immediate project or construction dollars programmed for this stretch of US 18/151. The purpose of this study is to develop a long-term highway access plan for the corridor. This will allow both WisDOT and the local communities adjacent to the corridor to adequately plan for future land use and transportation needs.

In doing so, land use and transportation can be integrated in such a manner that keeps US 18/151 operating well into the future. This will ensure that recent investments to the highway in the past several decades can be preserved. It is important to note that this study is focusing on identifying and planning for long-term access to and from the corridor, not adding additional capacity (travel lanes).

What are the limits of the study?

The study limits extend from County G/Dairy Ridge Road (Verona) to US 18/151 (Dodgeville), a distance of approximately 37 miles. The study is located in both Dane and Iowa counties.

The US 18/151 corridor appears to be operating fairly well now, why are additional studies necessary?

As part of the U.S. Highway System, US 18/151 is an important roadway connecting the major Midwest cities of Dubuque, IA, and Madison, WI. US 18/151 is identified as a Backbone Route in WisDOT's Corridors 2020 Plan. The plan places high priority in protecting these highway investments that connect major economic/population centers and carry long-distance, statewide traffic.

As both traffic and land development pressure increase along US 18/151, experience around the state has demonstrated that unmanaged and unprotected highways can deteriorate quickly in terms of reduced operations and safety. Of great concern to WisDOT are the at-grade intersections along US 18/151. As traffic increases over time, it will become increasingly difficult to turn on, off, and/or cross the highway in a safe manner, and the potential for crashes will increase.

What types of long-term improvements will the study consider? Are you planning to convert US 18/151 to a freeway?

Most of the highway is currently designed as an "expressway." An expressway typically consists of 55-65 mph posted speed limit, a median to separate traffic, and at-grade intersections (meaning you can get directly on/off/across at the intersecting roads).

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Mission statement:

To provide leadership in the development and operation of a safe and efficient transportation system.



An expressway sometimes has some interchanges and a limited number of private driveways located directly on the highway. A “freeway” facility is usually a 4-lane facility with a median with a 65-mph posted speed limit. Unlike expressways, freeways accommodate access on/off the highway only at interchanges. With a freeway facility, there are no at-grade intersections or private driveways on the corridor.

The goal of the study is to plan for the ultimate conversion from an expressway to a freeway. Intersection improvements could include interchanges, grade-separations (overpass or underpass), cul-de-sacs, and/or local road extensions to provide for local circulation.

However, due to the rural nature and agricultural-emphasis of the area, it may not be financially feasible or practical to remove all private driveways along US 18/151. Driveways that access individual homes or agricultural fields may be allowed to remain since they generate little traffic.

When might improvements be made?

As indicated earlier there are no immediate project or construction dollars programmed for this stretch of US 18/151. The long-term plan will lay out the ultimate highway access conversion scenario, however it would likely be programmed, funded, and constructed over a number of decades. Even though actual improvements may be years away, developing a long-term highway access plan will allow both WisDOT and local communities to collectively plan for transportation and land use systems that are compatible with one another.

How might this study affect emergency services such as police, fire, EMS and other public services such as school bus routes?

The study team will be in direct contact with all of the local fire, police and EMS providers in the study area. The final highway access plan will accommodate the delivery of emergency services to the greatest extent possible. Similar to the emergency service providers, the study team will be in direct contact with area school districts and their transportation service coordinators to ensure school bus routes are integrated into the highway access plan.

What about agricultural operations, especially cross-highway farming?

WisDOT recognizes that agricultural operations are an important part of the local and statewide economy. Many operations currently use US 18/151 for travel and/or gain access to the opposite side of the highway. A special agricultural survey and focus group are planned to understand current and future operation needs while attempting to minimize disruption.

How can I get involved and stay informed?

Meetings (for both the general public and local officials) will be held later this spring in both Iowa and Dane counties. They will offer opportunities for you to provide early input on the study needs and issues. A project-mailing database has also been developed. The mailing list is comprised of corridor residents/businesses, local officials, emergency service providers, agricultural operators, school transportation officials, and other interested parties. If you received this mailing, you are already included on our mailing database.

If you know of others that did not receive a mailing or that wish to be included, please contact one of the individuals listed below and we would be happy to add them to our list.

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