

Plans nearly complete for I-39/90 project

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Plans are nearly finalized for the reconstruction of the interchange at Interstate 39/90 and Interstate 43.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation officials plan to reveal the final plans for the project at a public meeting set for 5 - 8 p.m. Feb. 11 at the Beloit Public Library.

WisDOT plans to build high speed ramps to allow traffic traveling on both interstates to merge into each other at highway speeds. Right now I-43 flows into Milwaukee Road traffic creating a safety hazard near the current interchange. Under the new design, Milwaukee Road will be extended to meet up with Gateway Boulevard.

Steve Marshall, WisDOT project manager for the I-39/90 expansion, said the meeting is part of the Environmental Assessment process for the project.

Marshall said the meeting will be more formal than previous public hearings. A stenographer will record the presentation and public comments, and they will be used for the assessment.

Major construction isn't expected to start on the interchange reconstruction until late 2017, but there is still more work that needs to be done before then, Marshall said.

The environmental assessment needs to be complete before WisDOT can start acquiring the land needed for the expansion. He anticipated acquisition would start at the end of the year or in early 2016.

Last year, WisDOT unveiled plans to change the interchange alignment to a "Diverging Diamond Interchange." Traffic lanes would move over to the left side of the road when getting on I-39/90, which eliminates left-hand turns and increases safety.

Traffic lights will be used to control the intersections around the interchange, and bike and pedestrian paths also would be built. I-43 traffic would exit at Hart Road and use the extended Gateway Boulevard to get into Beloit.

While work isn't set to begin on the project for a couple years, the Inman Parkway extension is expected to be complete this summer and fall. WisDOT plans to extend Inman Parkway east to Shopiere road to give a more direct access to the interstate from the east side.

Additionally, about six miles of Prairie Avenue will be reconstructed from Huebbe Parkway in Beloit up to Wisconsin Highway 11 in Janesville.

Marshall said real estate acquisition is already under way for the Inman Parkway and Prairie projects. He said the interstate interchange project depends on funding availability at the time the project is set to begin. If construction does start in late 2017 the project would then continue in 2018 and wrap up in 2019, Marshall said.