

Plans advance for 39/90/43

By Shaun Zinck szinck@beloitdailynews.com | Posted: Thursday, February 12, 2015 4:00 pm

Stoplights will control the upgraded Freeman Parkway and Milwaukee Road intersection near Interstate 39/90, officials from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation said on Wednesday night during a public hearing.

It was the first public hearing held on the I-39/90 and I-43 interchange reconstruction plan after WisDOT held several public meetings over the last few years updating the plans. The difference between the hearings and the meetings is all the comments were put on the record, and will be put into the Environmental Assessment plan.

Under the plans Freeman Parkway and Milwaukee Road would be redone with Freeman lined up with Ford Street across Milwaukee Road.

Milwaukee Road will be extended east to meet up with Gateway Boulevard. Gateway Boulevard will be controlled by a stop sign, and Milwaukee Road, which will be designated as Highway 81, will have free flowing traffic up to Hart Road.

The new interchange will be a Diverging Diamond Interchange, and will redirect traffic to the left side of the road in order to eliminate left hand turns for vehicles looking to get onto the interstate.

High speed ramps will be built for traffic looking to go from one interstate to the other. The high speed ramps are safer than the current design, which has I-43 ending at Milwaukee Road, WisDOT officials have said.

Three people spoke during the public hearing including Beloit City Council Vice President Charles Haynes and residents Jane Threinen and Brad Trewyn.

Haynes said the city council submitted a written testimony, and he read some of the statement during the hearing. He said the city has always considered the current interchange design as a safety hazard, and the high speed ramps are best suited for this type of interchange.



Moving forward

Scott Stevenson, left, with AECOM and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, answers Merlin Kenitzer's questions about the Interstate 39/90 expansion plans during a public hearing on Wednesday night at the Beloit Public Library.

“We would like to commend the Department of Transportation for a long and drawn out process of almost 15 years to arrive at this point,” Haynes said. “We are looking forward to the increased safety and increased transportation opportunities that the reconstruction of I-43 and I39/90 entails.”

Threinen, who lives on Field Crest Court, which is right near the interstate, said the current plan would “decimate” the neighborhood.

“I only have one home,” she said. “The noise level on 81 and 43, that whole area, is going to affect us. Not only is it going to affect us personally, but our property values for many of us will plummet. I know everyone likes nice roads, but don’t we like nice homes? Don’t we like nice neighborhoods in Beloit? This project will ruin that area. Please think twice.”

Trewyn, who lives on East County Road X near one of the roundabouts on Hart Road by I-43, said he would prefer the stoplights at the Freeman Parkway and Milwaukee Road intersection would change with the use of a camera rather than by a timer and loop system.

“The loop system later at night doesn’t work very well,” Trewyn said.

He also talked about the roundabouts containing decorative stone in the middle, and has noticed that trucks coming through the area can displace the stone creating a safety hazard for vehicles.

After the public hearing Brad Lawver, president of the I-90 Business Corridor Group, said the group’s concerns have generally been alleviated. He said the Freeman Parkway and Ford Street realignment is something that’s been needed for a long time.

“It’s going to make it a lot more friendly for city and travelers,” he said. “I think we are all pretty happy.”

Lawver said the group’s two biggest concerns were possibly adding in more roundabouts on Gateway Boulevard, which WisDOT has ruled against, and ensuring there is enough signage along the interstate to inform drivers of the businesses in Beloit.

“The city has really been helping us out (with the signage),” he said. “I think if we have concerns they will come to bat for us.”

Mike Preboske, project manager for AECOM, one of the companies working with WisDOT on the interchange designs, said the final environmental document is set for completion in March, and another public information meeting will be held sometime in 2016.

Real estate acquisition will begin sometime in 2016 and go into 2017, and WisDOT is expected to finalize the interchange plans by 2017. Construction will begin in late 2017 and continue into 2018 and 2019, Preboske said.