

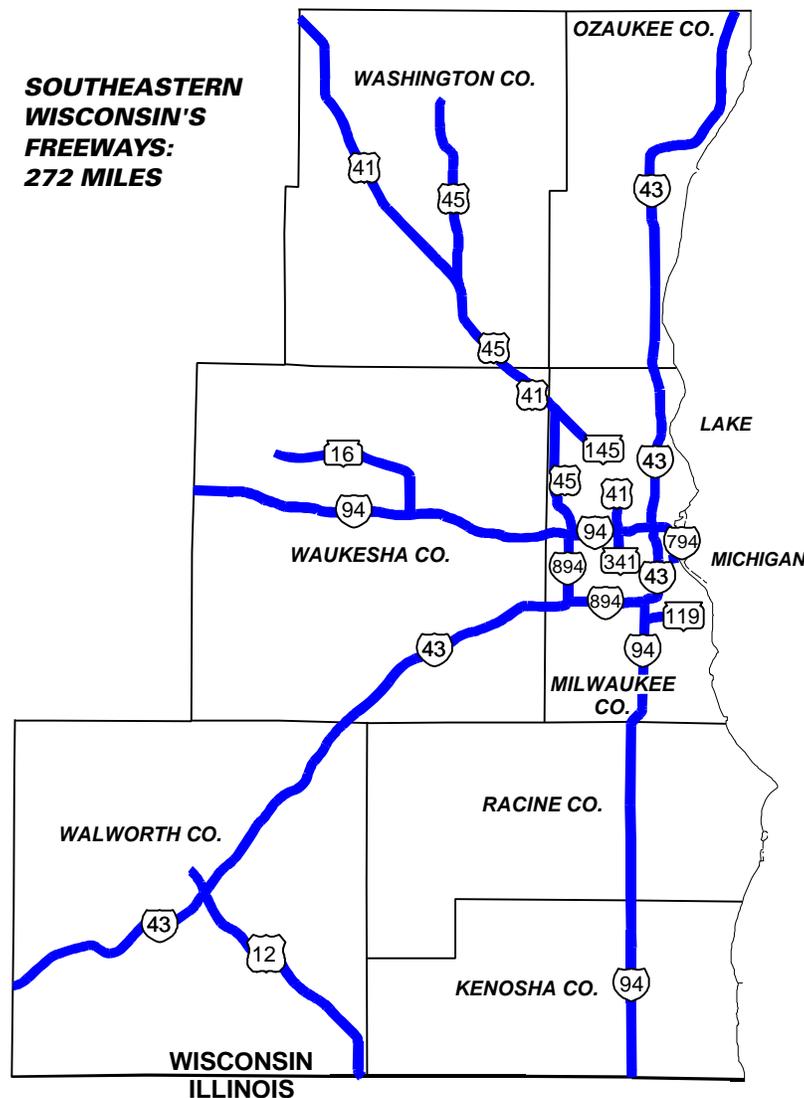
# SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN REGIONAL FREEWAY SYSTEM RECONSTRUCTION STUDY



## Introduction

A major study of the regional freeway system is underway. The study recommendations and resulting actions will affect Southeastern Wisconsin's economy and quality of life for many years. There is an emerging need to reconstruct many of our freeways over the next two decades. Once constructed, they will need to last and provide efficient service to and beyond the middle of the 21st century.

Some of the most heavily traveled freeway segments and interchanges are approaching the end of their economic and functional lives. Resurfacing efforts have become inefficient and disruptive. They will occur with greater frequency and offer lesser service life with each undertaking. Traffic safety is a concern, as are the obsolete design of many freeway stretches and increasing traffic congestion.



Concerns such as these support the thorough, system-wide evaluation of the Region's freeways that is now underway. The goal is to achieve a consensus on the actions to be taken when the freeway system is rebuilt.

This newsletter will help introduce key issues regarding the Freeway Reconstruction Study. Look inside for a glimpse of what is happening, some early findings, and parties that are working together on the study.

## Public Involvement

Involving the public to achieve widespread understanding, broad participation, and a strong consensus is a goal of the Freeway Reconstruction Study. The following items have been targeted:

- A series of five newsletters, this being the first
- Public meetings and community outreach activities
- County Board and other legislative body presentations
- Briefings of State legislators
- Brochures and news releases
- Study Advisory Committee (listed inside)

Please feel free to contact us for further information, to offer comments, or to request a briefing or presentation.

## Direction of the Study

Simply put, the Freeway Reconstruction Study is a system-wide evaluation of freeways in the Region. It will result in a reconstruction plan. As a whole, our freeways are heavily used, under designed, regularly congested, and increasingly unsafe. With most segments already 25-40 years old, substantial reconstruction will be required in the first quarter of this century.

Planning for the future freeway system in the Region is an involved and complex process. The study will analyze the freeway system both as a whole and segment-by-segment. The need for reconstruction, and necessary timing, will be evaluated for each freeway segment. The study will also review the amount and type of travel carried by each segment. Deficiencies of the freeway system and each segment will be investigated in terms of:

- physical design deficiencies
- traffic safety problems
- traffic congestion

The study will consider the freeway system traffic congestion that may be expected even if regional land use and transportation plans are fully implemented, and additional measures are implemented which go beyond those plans.

Alternatives for rebuilding the freeway system will be considered, and the resulting plan will recommend whether each freeway segment should be rebuilt using:

- existing specifications
- minor redesign
- substantial redesign
- substantial redesign and additional traffic lanes
- removal and replacement with surface arterials

The latter option is currently underway for the Park East Freeway terminus. There, the elevated freeway spur is to be replaced by an at-grade surface arterial street.

The study may also consider the construction of new freeway segments. Rebuilding to existing specifications would merely renew the functional life of a freeway segment in "as is" condition regarding traffic capacity and safety.

Freeway deficiencies that could be corrected with redesign include substandard entrance and exit lane lengths, inadequate shoulders and side clearances, difficult curves and grade changes, the reduction of through traffic lanes at major interchanges, and left hand on- and off-ramps.

An example of short freeway segments recently reconstructed with various improvements is IH 43 in the vicinity of Silver Spring Road in Milwaukee County.

## Resurfacing versus Reconstruction

One might well ask, "Haven't we just rebuilt some of our freeways...why do it again?" Although many travelers have experienced construction zones on area freeways in recent years, these have generally been *resurfacing* or rehabilitation projects, not reconstruction projects.

Resurfacing of a highway replaces or covers over the top of the road. But it does not improve the underlying base pavement or

## MARQUETTE INTERCHANGE AND HOAN BRIDGE

Fixing some freeway segments like the Marquette Interchange cannot wait. Heavy use and advanced aging have taken a toll at this convergence of IH 43 and IH 94, requiring immediate attention. Preliminary engineering work is now progressing so that reconstruction of the interchange can occur from about 2004 through 2007.

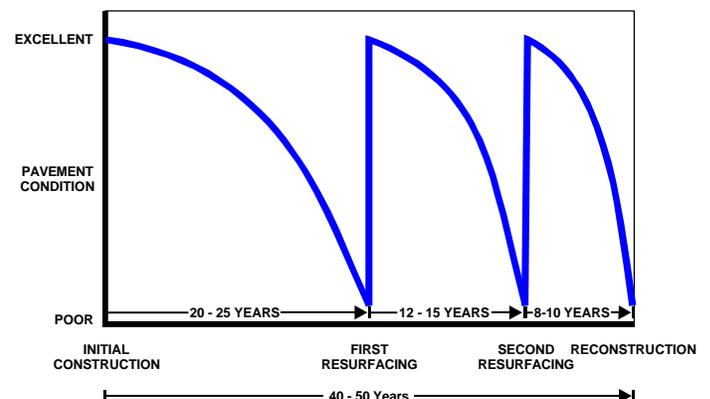
The Freeway Reconstruction Study is working with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and its Marquette Interchange planning team to jointly review alternatives. The Regional Study will examine the entire freeway system, coordinating with the efforts to redesign and reconstruct the Marquette Interchange.

The recent failure of the Daniel Hoan Bridge is unfortunate, as is the now critical need to examine repair alternatives for this segment of IH 794. In a dramatic way, the Hoan Bridge underscores the finite nature of transportation facilities and the need to plan for eventual replacement.

stormwater drainage system. While extending the useable life of a highway, there is a limit to the number of times pavement can be resurfaced. Each overlay lasts a shorter period before the highway needs to be resurfaced again. That is because the deteriorating base pavement affects each new overlay. Moreover, resurfacing does not significantly address problems of design, safety, and congestion such as exist on the Region's freeways today.

The *reconstruction* of a highway means that the actual base pavement and stormwater drainage system will be replaced. Reconstruction is considered after decades of use and deterioration, to where resurfacing is no longer practical. Reconstruction is initially much more expensive and disruptive than a single resurfacing, but over the long run, reconstruction is less expensive and disruptive than continual and increasingly more frequent resurfacing. Because the freeway system, upon its reconstruction, will have a service life of 40 to 50 years, it is important to determine now which segments of the freeway system should incorporate an improved design or additional traffic lanes. Reconstructing the freeway system "as is" now, and then retrofitting and reconstructing the freeway system 10 to 20 years from now to address design, safety, and congestion problems would be a waste of public resources. Deciding wisely for the future is at the heart of the Freeway *Reconstruction* Study.

### TYPICAL FREEWAY PAVEMENT LIFE CYCLE



## Importance of the Study

The regional freeway system will be expensive to reconstruct, and it will probably only be done once over the next 40 to 50 years. So, it is important to consider the critical role freeways play in daily travel—and daily life—in Southeastern Wisconsin:

- Freeways are a special type of divided arterial street and highway with full control of access including grade separations at all intersections.
- Freeways allow the highest traffic speeds—50 to 65 mph.
- A freeway can handle about 2.5 times the traffic of a standard surface arterial street or highway with the same number of traffic lanes.
- At only 272 miles, freeways comprise about 3 percent of all streets and highways in the Region. But they carry nearly 33 percent of all vehicle traffic, and 30 percent of all travel in the Region.
- Freeways are essential to many transit and car-pooling alternatives. The Region's 20 rapid transit bus routes rely upon the freeway system to provide fast, efficient service.
- The freeway system forms an important link in inter-regional travel. It carries over 20 million truck trips and 40 million automobile trips annually through Southeastern Wisconsin, and between our Region and the rest of the State.

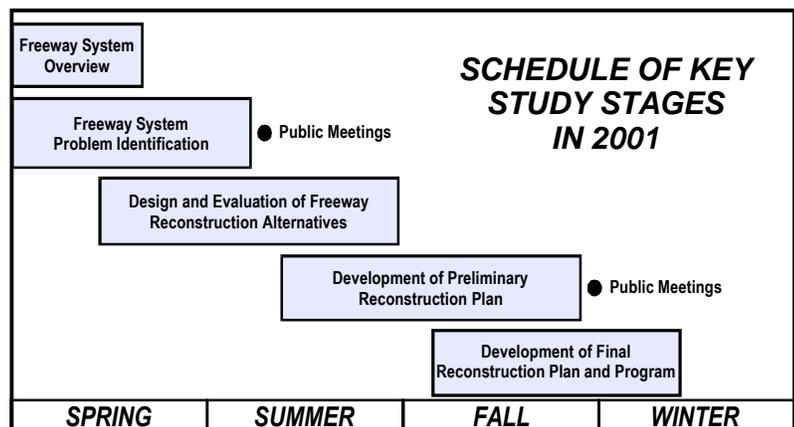
## The Principal Responsibilities

The Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation requested that the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SEWRPC) lead this planning effort aimed at achieving a consensus on how best to rebuild the regional freeway system. The Commission is the official areawide planning agency and the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation planning in the seven-county Region. Assisting the Commission with engineering consulting services for the study is the Milwaukee firm, HNTB.

Guiding the study is an Advisory Committee composed of elected and appointed local officials, representatives of Federal and State Departments of Transportation, the business and labor communities, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, broadly representing environmental interests.

The Advisory Committee's recommendations will be reported first to the County Boards and County Executives in the Region. Each County's position on those recommendations will be determined. The matter will then rest with the Regional Planning Commission which will make final recommendations to the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

<b>FREWAY SYSTEM ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP</b>	
William R. Drew Chairman	Vice-Chairman, SEWRPC
F. Thomas Ament Kathryn C. Bloomberg Frank Busalacchi Roger Caron	Milwaukee County Executive Mayor, City of Brookfield Secretary/Treasurer, Teamsters Local 200 Executive Director, Racine Area Manufacturers & Commerce
James T. Dwyer	Chairperson, Waukesha County Board of Supervisors
Theresa Estness Leslie J. Fafard	Mayor, City of Wauwatosa Director, District 2, Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Daniel M. Finley William K. Fung	Waukesha County Executive Wisconsin Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, U. S. Department of Transportation
Jean M. Jacobson Allan K. Kehl Kenneth J. Leonard	Racine County Executive Kenosha County Executive Director, Bureau of Planning Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Gloria L. McCutcheon	Southeast Regional Director Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Kenneth F. Miller	Chairperson, Washington County Board of Supervisors
Allen L. Morrison	Chairperson, Walworth County Board of Supervisors
John O. Norquist Karen Ordinans	Mayor, City of Milwaukee Chairman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Betty Pearson	Executive Vice-President, West Bend Chamber of Commerce
Marvin E. Pratt Dale J. Richards Philip J. Sherer	President, City of Milwaukee Common Council Mayor, City of Oak Creek Executive Director, Transportation Development Association of Wisconsin
Tim Sheehy	President, Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce
Katherine L. Smith	Chairperson, Ozaukee County Board of Supervisors
James G. White	1st District Supervisor Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
Thomas H. Buestrin (Ex-officio)	Chairman, SEWRPC



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## Merging into the Freeway Study

The Regional Freeway System Reconstruction Study is a crucial step in planning for Southeastern Wisconsin's future. Thus, widespread involvement is desired.

This first study newsletter is being distributed to the SEWRPC *Newsletter* mailing list, plus all local elected officials in the Region. If you would like to directly receive Freeway Reconstruction Study mailings, please let us know. If you have obtained this newsletter from a literature rack or had it passed on to you, please notify us if direct receipt is desired. We would be happy to keep you informed.

An electronic version of the newsletter and other related materials will be posted on the worldwide web this coming April. It would be helpful to know your e-mail address—especially for mailing list additions—so that you can receive materials promptly while postage expenses and paper consumption are minimized. Please feel free to contact us at [freewaystudy@sewrpc.org](mailto:freewaystudy@sewrpc.org) or (262) 547-6721 for these purposes. Thank you.



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