Tier 1
Final Environmental Impact Statement
Executive Summary

Description of the Proposed Action

Brown County, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) are the Lead Agencies on a project to improve east-west travel in the southern portion of the Green Bay metropolitan area.

The study area generally comprises the area between I-41 on the west to I-43 on the east, within the City of De Pere and the Towns of Rockland, Lawrence, and Ledgeview (see project location map on Page iv). The project termini are the intersection of County F and County EB on the west and the intersection of County X and County GV on the east.

Project History

In 2006, Brown County began public and agency outreach, and in 2008, the Lead Agencies issued a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The purpose of and need for the project were developed, alternatives were analyzed, and extensive outreach was conducted to gather public and local government input. In 2011, agency coordination culminated in state and federal agencies concurring on the need for the project, the initial range of alternatives to be studied, and the alternatives to be retained for detailed analysis.

In 2012, the NEPA process paused while operational impacts of a new interchange on US 41, now I-41, were assessed. Around that same time, federal requirements were clarified that required construction funding sources be identified before NEPA approval could be finalized. Based on this, FHWA recommended that the study transition to a Tier 1 EIS. In late 2019, the Lead Agencies resumed the NEPA process and published a revised Notice of Intent to prepare a Tier 1 EIS in the Federal Register.

If the Tier 1 Final EIS and Record of Decision selects a corridor for improvements, then as funding becomes available to construct sections of the project, subsequent Tier 2 environmental documents will be prepared to evaluate the design, cost, and impacts of a specific alignment. No construction will directly result from completing this Tier 1 EIS, since Tier 2 environmental documents would be required before construction occurs. Tier 2 documents may be an EIS, Environmental Assessment, or Categorical Exclusion, depending on the nature and extent of potential impacts for each individual project.

Following the Tier 1 process, Brown County plans to complete a conceptual design to look at the whole corridor and understand how individual projects may be sectioned out by independent utility for Tier 2 documents. Further, the study area for each Tier 2 document may be larger than the construction limits to better understand impacts from the project. Brown County will engage the public, tribes, local governments, and resource agencies when additional studies begin and will continue coordination throughout the Tier 2 process.

Purpose of and Need for the Project

The purpose of the project is to identify the most appropriate improvements for addressing existing east-west transportation demand and demand that will be generated by the planned development in the southern portion of the Green Bay metropolitan area. The project is needed to:

- Address congestion in the vicinity of the existing Fox River bridges.
- Accommodate existing and planned land use and future travel demand generated by planned development.
- Reduce travel time by improving east-west connectivity.
- Address higher-than-average crash rates and safety issues in the vicinity of the existing Fox River bridges.
The need for the proposed action is demonstrated through a combination of factors that include project history, regional/local transportation and land-use planning, congestion on existing Fox River bridges, travel times resulting from travel indirection, and safety issues. Section 1, Purpose of and Need for the Project, discusses these factors in detail.

**Alternatives**

A preliminary range of alternatives was developed in the context of regional and community plans and with input from local officials, suggestions from the public, and state and federal resource agencies. Alternatives were presented to the public and were assessed to determine their environmental impacts and the extent to which they fulfill the purpose of the project. The initial range of alternatives considered were:

- No Build Alternative
- Transportation system management
- Transportation demand management
- Improve existing roads
- 11 routes for a new roadway and Fox River bridge

After three screening steps, the No Build Alternative and two routes, Corridor Alternative 1 and Corridor Alternative 2, remained under consideration and were evaluated in detail in the Tier 1 Draft EIS.

- Corridor Alternative 1 would begin at County EB (Packerland Drive) and pass through the existing I-41 interchange. It would continue along County F (Scheuring Road), cross the Fox River 1.5 miles south of the Claude Allouez Bridge, and continue along County X (Heritage Road). The route would end at County GV (Monroe Road).

- Corridor Alternative 2 would begin at County EB (Packerland Drive) in the Town of Lawrence and continue southeasterly along a new alignment to connect to a new full-access interchange on I-41. This alternative could include a collector-distributor system between the new I-41 interchange and the existing County F interchange; this decision will be evaluated further in Tier 2 studies. The route would continue east on Southbridge Road and Red Maple Road, cross the Fox River 2.5 miles south of the Claude Allouez Bridge, and continue along Rockland Road. At the intersection of Rockland Road and County PP (South Broadway), the route would continue northeasterly on new alignment and end at the intersection of County X (Heritage Road) and County GV (Monroe Road).

After identifying the alternatives to be considered in detail, the Lead Agencies sought input from the public, local governments, tribes, and state and federal resource agencies and evaluated the impacts and operational benefits of the No Build Alternative and Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2. The Lead Agencies identified Corridor Alternative 2 as the Preferred Corridor Alternative. Corridor Alternative 2 would likely provide better safety and travel-time benefits than Corridor Alternative 1, every local government in the study area supports Corridor Alternative 2, and it has strong support from the public.

Section 2, Alternatives Considered, discusses the alternatives development and screening process in detail.
Environmental Impacts

The Corridor Alternatives in this Tier 1 document are broad 500-foot-wide corridors rather than detailed alignments. The 500-foot-wide corridor is the area expected to contain Tier 2 detailed alignment alternatives. This width allows for engineering design flexibility and potentially shifting the roadway alignment to avoid impacts during subsequent Tier 2 studies. Within this 500-foot-wide corridor, a working alignment was developed in order to estimate representative physical impacts that could occur if the South Bridge Connector is constructed within a selected corridor. The working alignment is 125 to 150 feet wide based on the anticipated roadway cross-section (note that this is conceptual and subject to change based on Tier 2 analysis).

At the Tier 1 EIS level, the environmental impact analysis relies on published data on environmental resources rather than project-specific field investigations. Detailed field investigations would occur if and when Tier 2 analyses advance, prior to potential construction.

The Lead Agencies assessed the impacts of the No Build Alternative and Corridor Alternatives 1 and 2 on a wide range of socioeconomic and environmental resources. Resource impacts were estimated using the working alignments, unless otherwise noted. In general, Corridor Alternative 2 is anticipated to have greater impacts than Corridor Alternative 1:

- **Relocations:** Corridor Alternative 1 could displace 4 to 6 residences and up to 2 businesses, and Corridor Alternative 2 could displace 10 to 16 residences and 3 to 5 businesses.
- **Farmland:** Corridor Alternative 1 could affect 13 to 23 acres of farmland. Corridor Alternative 2 could affect between 47 and 78 acres of farmland, mostly along I-41 and west of I-41 where a new interchange and connection to County EB would be built.
- **Wetlands:** Corridor Alternative 1 could impact 5 to 8 acres of wetlands, and Corridor Alternative 2 could impact 12 to 20 acres of wetlands.
- **Water Crossings, Floodplains, and Floodways:** Corridor Alternative 1 crosses four streams/rivers (Ashwaubenon Creek, Fox River, an unnamed stream, and East River), two floodplains, and four floodway areas. Corridor Alternative 2 crosses three streams/rivers (Ashwaubenon Creek, Fox River, and East River), one floodplain, and three floodway areas.
- **Noise:** There are approximately 300 noise-sensitive receptors within 500 feet of Corridor Alternative 1, and approximately 250 noise-sensitive receptors within 500 feet of Corridor Alternative 2.
- **Cultural:** There are 2 potential archaeological resource sites within the 500-foot corridor for Corridor Alternative 1 and 5 potential archaeological resource sites within the 500-foot corridor for Corridor Alternative 2. There is one known architectural historic property within 500 feet of Corridor Alternative 2.
- **Parks and Trails:** Corridor Alternative 1 could impact one park and crosses the Fox River State Trail. Corridor Alternative 2 could impact two parks and crosses the Fox River State Trail.

Section 3, Existing Conditions, Impacts, and Next Steps, discusses these impacts in more detail.

Public Involvement and Agency Coordination

The Lead Agencies have sought input from the public and local, state, tribal, and federal agencies throughout the study. An open house public involvement meeting was held in December 2019 and had over 250 attendees. Project materials were provided online in March 2020 as part of a second public involvement event in lieu of an in-person meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two public hearings were held in July 2020 following the publication of the Tier 1 Draft EIS: a virtual online hearing and an in-person hearing. Meetings have also been held with local officials, resource agencies, and residents.
The Draft EIS was available for review and comment until August 3, 2020. During the availability period, the Lead Agencies received comments from five agencies, one municipality, the Oneida Nation, and the public. While comments varied, and there was support for multiple alternatives, the majority of commenters supported Corridor Alternative 2, the Preferred Corridor Alternative. The following were the most commonly heard comments from the public:

- Support for the project or a specific alternative (Corridor Alternative 1, Corridor Alternative 2, or an alternative previously eliminated)
- Concerns for impacts to environmental resources from Corridor Alternative 2
- Specific property impact concerns
- Concerns about traffic noise
- Concerns with impacts to Old Plank Road
- Cost concerns or request for cost analysis
- Traffic volumes concerns

Section 4, Public and Agency Coordination, summarizes coordination undertaken throughout the study process, and provides information on the public hearings and comments received during the Draft EIS availability period.

Information about the Tier 1 Final EIS

The Tier 1 Final EIS includes information presented in the Tier 1 Draft EIS, which was approved by FHWA on June 12, 2020, for distribution to Cooperating and Participating Agencies and the public. This Tier 1 Final EIS responds to comments on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, summarizes input received as a result of the public hearing and availability of the Draft EIS for review, and includes revisions, additions, or changes since the Tier 1 Draft EIS publication. Except for Appendix I and the Record of Decision, new or revised material in the Tier 1 Final EIS is highlighted in yellow. Sections 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, and Appendix E, G, and H contain new or revised information. Appendix I is new since the Draft EIS; it contains no yellow highlights. The Record of Decision is also a new document; it contains no yellow highlights.