

Polk County Public Works
5885 NE 14th Street
Des Moines, IA 50313

Mail to:

How You Can Participate

- Mail public comments to:

Polk County Public Works
5885 NE 14th Street
Des Moines, IA 50313
- Attend the Public Information Meeting on November 27, 2007 at the Polk County Senior Center (Park Fair Mall: 2nd Avenue and Euclid, Des Moines)
- Review project documents on the project website
- Call Polk County Public Works with questions (515) 286-3705

Alternative Locations for Project Information:

- Polk County Public Works
5585 NW 14th Street
Des Moines, IA 50313
- North Senior Center
100 E. Euclid Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50313
- Polk County Board of Supervisors Office
111 Court Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50309

<http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/publicworks/Pages/nw26.aspx>

NW 26th STREET / MORNINGSTAR DRIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROJECT NEWSLETTER

Issue 1

Fall 2007

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for NW 26th Street officially began on Oct. 13, 2006 with Federal Register publication of a Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Iowa Department of Transportation, and Polk County are joint lead agencies in the preparation of the EIS for NW 26th project. The proposed project consists of three elements:

- 1) Expansion of existing NW 26th Street from two to four lanes (IA 415/Oralabor Road to I-35/80)
- 2) New road alignment connecting NW 26th Street and Euclid Avenue
- 3) Interstate 35/80 interchange at NW 26th Street

The study area for the NW 26th Street project is shown in blue on the left. The study area also includes modified no-build alternatives on Merle Hay Road, Beaver Avenue, 6th Avenue, and 2nd Avenue. Impacts of build versus no-build alternatives are currently being studied and will be documented in the EIS with measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts.

This newsletter is the first issued for the project, with additional newsletters to be released throughout the project planning process.

NOVEMBER PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

Tuesday, November 27, 2007, 5:30 – 7:30 PM
Polk County Senior Center
Park Fair Mall, 2nd Avenue and Euclid, Des Moines

The meeting will be a forum for public review and comment on potential build and no build alternatives for the proposed NW 26th Street action. Exhibits of the alternatives and study progress will be available at this meeting. Please plan to attend this meeting so your opinions will be heard, and to help shape this important piece of Polk County's future. If you are unable to attend, please visit the project website for meeting handouts and project information.



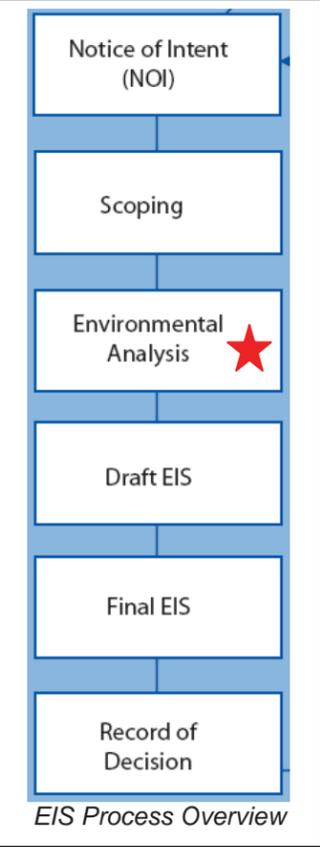
<http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/publicworks/Pages/nw26.aspx>

Draft Project Purpose and Need Statement

The purpose of the proposed NW 26th Street corridor and interchange is to safely and efficiently accommodate existing and projected regional traffic and Des Moines metropolitan area growth by:

- Linking U.S. 6/Euclid Avenue and IA 415 to a continuous M.L. King regional transportation corridor
- Reducing existing and projected local street system traffic congestion, and enhance traffic operations
- Providing regional transportation system access to accommodate and support planned metro area growth
- Enhancing traffic safety on the local street network
- Reducing out-of-distance travel

For the complete draft purpose and need statement, please visit the project website: <http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/publicworks/Pages/nw26.aspx>



PROJECT STATUS

The proposed NW 26th Street EIS follows the NEPA process. A brief outline of major work tasks within the NEPA process is shown to the left.

PROJECT SCOPING: The scoping phase of the EIS process involves collecting input regarding the proposed project from regulatory agencies, member governments, the community, and others. Scoping continues throughout the NEPA process.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS: The NW 26th EIS work has progressed to early identification of potential impacts to biotic communities, threatened and endangered species, bicycles and pedestrian facilities, socioeconomic factors, environmental justice, wetlands, and more.

WHAT'S NEXT: Build, no-build, and modified no-build alternatives have been identified for the NW 26th Street area. The November Public Information Meeting will be vital for collecting public opinion regarding build and no build alternatives. The Build and No-Build alternatives will later progress into the identification of specific build alternatives. *Specific alternatives will be reviewed for potential impacts after the alternatives are presented for public review and comment, tentatively in June 2008.*

INITIAL PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING SUMMARY: April 23, 2006

An initial public information meeting for this project was held on April 23, 2006. The meeting introduced the project purpose and need statement, and the study area boundaries, and was a public forum for this information. A great variety of positive and negative public comments were elicited from the public meeting; an overview of comments is below.

Summary of Initial Public Information Meeting Comments

- Project would reduce traffic on local streets
- Interchange would reduce travel distance
- Better access to softball and baseball on Morningstar
- The first project to be constructed should be the connection to Euclid
- Do not want traffic on M.L. King increased
- The Des Moines River greenbelt should be protected
- Project could encourage urban sprawl
- The proposed action could increase trash and pollution
- Proposed action could be detrimental to trails at crossings
- Project could increase traffic noise within natural areas and trails
- New transit lines should be added as an alternative to new road construction
- Suburban homeowners near Ankeny are against increased vehicle noise, reduced wildlife and additional urbanization

AGENCY SCOPING MEETING: September 26, 2007

An agency scoping meeting for this project was held on September 26, 2007 at Snyder & Associates in Ankeny. The agency scoping meeting is a formal coordination process, which determines:

1. The range of issues to be studied
2. Significant resources related to the proposed action

The focus of the meeting is to gather agency concerns and information about project area resources. The scoping meeting is held early in the NEPA process to use agency input as project progresses so as to make informed decisions. An overview of project methodologies was presented, and a preliminary geotechnical analysis of the study area to identify potential construction constraints. The scoping meeting resulted in various agency comments, including:

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE): Suggested the study area should be expanded to Merle Hay Road and 2nd Avenue so the potential alternatives would not be limited to Federal-owned land along the Des Moines River. USACE stated they would be unable to issue a wetlands permit for the project unless it was demonstrated that alternatives were considered that would avoid or minimize wetland impacts. As a result, the study area was expanded.
- USACE stated the Des Moines River corridor is an avian migratory corridor and requested this statement be included in the EIS.
- Iowa DNR stated it was concerned about the loss of greenspace in the metro region.

As a result of the scoping meeting, the project area was expanded. A revised NW 26th Street study area map is available on the project web page.