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MIC looks toward safety on East Second Street

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About 22,000 vehicles travel the 4.4-mile stretch along East Second Street.

Ever increasing use of the state highway that creates the city street has the Metropolitan Interstate Council looking for ways to manage access to the corridor.

The plan would include verifying traffic in the area, comparing traffic patterns with future land uses and identifying safety problems for vehicles and pedestrians.

“We have to first look at the needs now and then look at the needs long-term,” said Ron Chicka, MIC director.

The information the MIC must gather includes traffic counts, crash rates and information about speed rates on the corridor.

“The information that we gather will define the extent of the recommendations,” Robert Herling, project leader, said.

In order to gather the information, the MIC has located 82 points of access along East Second Street. These points include intersections, residential driveways and business access points. According to Herling, as the number of access points on a road increases, it creates more turning movements, which can lead to more traffic and crashes.

However, the MIC is not looking at completely revamping the stretch of road. In fact, if possible, the planning agency would rather improve the existing access points as a means to save money. Options such as putting in medians or painting the roadway differently could help increase safety and minimize the crash rates.

The MIC continues to work with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, which owns the highway. WisDOT has provided the MIC with a number of reports, including crash data between 2004 and 2006.

Not just a vehicular study, the MIC will also look into the safety of cyclists and pedestrians who try to cross the busy corridor. The Osaugie Trail already has been used as a means for walking and biking along the corridor, but the MIC hopes to make it easier for pedestrians to walk across the corridor.

Future land use also plays an important part in the access points of the corridor. The possible Murphy Oil expansion is one of the “potential future land uses” that could affect the changes that could be made to the corridor. The MIC has begun to work with owners of businesses along the corridor so they can better understand how businesses could be affected by any changes.

Chicka estimates the project is nearly one-quarter of the way completed and hopes that it will be approved in eight to 10 months. Once approved, the project will then be turned over to the city where funding will need to be accumulated.

“We are really trying to find the key component that would make this area safer and hone in on what the city will back.” Chicka said.

Another thing that the MIC is looking for is input from the public. The MIC has already met a number of times with city officials but MIC staff are looking for input from residents of Superior and others who use the roadway as well.

The MIC hopes to speak to the community at a number of public venues about the plan, but times and dates are undecided.

More information on the East Second Street Access Management Plan can be viewed online at www.dsmic.org. People can submit comments at the Web site.