

Dane County Exec: Budget explores widening highway M along Lake Mendota, funds construction of new off-road trail linking Waunakee with Middleton

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Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced that nearly \$3.5 million in his 2018 budget will go toward studying the expansion of Highway M to four lanes, resurfacing a portion of Highway Q, and accelerating development of the North Mendota Bike Trail. As the fastest growing county in the state, vehicle counts on Highway M have increased and planned development in the area in the coming years is expected to result in an even greater number of motorists using the once rural road.

“As our communities and economy grow, we must to work to make sure our roads are safe and can effectively move commuters and commerce,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. Parisi noted while the total cost of widening Highway M to four lanes could run in excess of \$50 million, 56% of all of Wisconsin’s job growth is happening in Dane County and reliable transportation is key to that continued vitality.

The County Executive’s budget funds the \$2 million study and preliminary design of what a new Highway M will look like, with four lanes from County Highway Q in Middleton to just west of Highway 113. The study will also look at reconstructing

the intersection of Highway K and M, to better accommodate traffic and improve safety.

The Executive's budget also includes \$700,000 as the county share of a \$1 million project to resurface Highway Q from Oncken Road to Meffert Road in the Town of Westport. Bike lanes will be included in the resurfacing project. Throughout both projects, special attention will be paid to preserving the integrity and quality of the parkland and water resources in the area.

In addition, Parisi's budget includes \$750,000 - the county's largest allocation to date - to kick-start development of the much anticipated North Mendota Trail. This off-road trail aims to one day link Waunakee with Middleton, providing safe biking and walking recreation as the area grows. In partnership with the Town of Westport, the money in the budget will help toward construction of a 1.5 mile stretch of the North Mendota Trail, crossing Highway M and Six Mile Creek and heading into Governor Nelson State Park. When complete, the North Mendota Trail will connect Schumacher Farms County Park in Waunakee with Lake Mendota County Park in Middleton.

The County Executive's 2018 budget includes over \$14.5 million in county highway resurfacing and reconstruction, emphasizing the importance of infrastructure as Dane County continues to grow. He has invested over \$55 million in highway construction projects since first taking office in 2011.