

Highway 252/I-94 Environmental Impact Statement

PAC Meeting 1

Summary

October 21, 2020 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

Invited Members and Staff

Hennepin County: Mike Opat (Commissioner), Jason Staebell (Project Manager)

MnDOT: Margaret Anderson Kelliher (Commissioner), Michael Barnes (District Engineer), Jerome Adams (Project Manager), April Crockett (Area Manager), Chris Hoberg (Area Engineer), Erik Baxstrom, Kim Collins (Civil Rights)

FHWA: Wendell Meyer (Division Administrator), Anna Varney

State of Minnesota: Representative Melissa Hortman, Representative Michael Nelson, Representative Samantha Vang, Representative Fue Lee, Representative Raymond Dehn, Senator John Hoffman, Senator Chris Eaton, Senator Bobby Joe Champion

Metropolitan Council: Councilmember Reva Chamblis, Councilmember Robert Lilligren, Adam Harrington (Metro Transit)

Cities: Councilmember Dan Ryan (Brooklyn Park), Councilmember Lisa Jacobson (Brooklyn Park), Councilmember Terry Parks (Brooklyn Park), Councilmember Phillippe Cunningham (Minneapolis), Councilmember Jeremiah Ellison (Minneapolis), Mayor Mike Elliot (Brooklyn Center), Curt Boganey (Brooklyn Center), Jason Stroebel (Brooklyn Park)

SRF: Bret Danner, Todd Pllum, Craig Vaughn

Meeting Summary

1. Introductions & Opening Remarks
 - a. Chair Mike Opat, Hennepin County Commissioner, welcomed the group and provided an overview of the meeting. He added moving forward Margaret Anderson Kelliher, MnDOT Commissioner would be committee chair. Commissioner Anderson Kelliher Charlie Zelle, Metropolitan Council Chair also gave opening remarks.
2. Goals of the Project
 - a. A recap of the goals of the project were provided to the group:
 - i. Reduce injuries and fatalities along the highway;
 - ii. Improve biking and walking on and across the freeway and support reliable transit;
 - iii. Ensure a final project is consistent with local planning and compatible with the road network;
 - iv. Minimize the acquiring of property;
 - v. Achieve equitable, social, environmental and economic outcomes.
3. MnDOT: Increasing Diversity in Construction

- a. The group was given an overview of the MnDOT workforce initiative and program goals. A review of workforce planning components was also provided along with a discussion on how a plan for the project might be developed. Components include:
 - i. Project information sessions for workforce stakeholders;
 - ii. Develop curriculum for trainees to target industry labor needs;
 - iii. Host recruiting events that target women, minorities and disadvantaged persons;
 - iv. Target job training and employment opportunities to communities along the corridor.
 - b. The group asked if the demographic and workforce data could be broken down to micro-ethnic groups.
- 4. Environmental Process & Schedule Update
 - a. The group was provided an update on the environmental process and changes to schedule for the final document. Changes that impacted the schedule included:
 - i. Create of a transit feasibility study;
 - ii. Justification of pedestrian and bicycle safety as a primary need of the project;
 - iii. Updates made to the travel demand forecasts based on approved comprehensive plans.
- 5. The group was also provided an overview of the environmental review decision-making process.
 - a. The project is currently in the first step which includes:
 - i. Identifying alternatives to be studied, with particular focus on engaging the public on alternatives they would like to see considered
 - ii. Identifying evaluation process and criteria
 - iii. Identifying any significant environmental impacts or “fatal flaws”
- 6. Transit Feasibility Study Update
 - a. The group was provided an update on the transit feasibility study. The study was undertaken after concerns from community members regarding transit service after the project were raised. A previous study was completed by Metro Transit in 2014.
 - b. The new study will explore benefits and costs of BRT along the highway, as well as improvements to the local and express bus service.
 - c. The study is analyzing four concepts for transit around the highway, and how transit would connect to other routes:
 - i. Concept A – Station-to-Station BRT along I-94 and I-694 to Maple Grove Transit Station (Highway Transitway Corridor Study)
 - ii. Concept B – Station-to-Station BRT along I-94 and Hwy 252 to Northtown Transit Center
 - iii. Concept C – Capital improvement (in-line or on-line station) along I-94; connecting local and/or express service improvements
 - iv. Concept D – Local and express service improvements.
 - d. The group asked if any of the alternatives be converted to Light Rail Transit but LRT would require an entirely new environmental process and study.
- 7. Public Engagement
 - a. The group was provided an update on public engagement to date and what engagement over the next six months could be. Through past engagement, it was determined that there was general support for conversion of Highway 252 into a six-lane freeway. Other input received included:
 - i. Incorporation of bike and pedestrian improvements

- ii. Concern over air and noise quality
 - iii. Concern over West River Road reconnection
 - iv. Freeway access locations
 - v. The addition of transit improvements
 - vi. Mixed support for MnPASS Express Lanes
 - vii. Affirmation of heavy traffic along the highway
 - b. The Environmental Impact Statement takes into account feedback from the community and partners, and plans out and records engagement activities.
 - c. A review of engagement methods was presented, along public engagement over the next six months. This would include implementing a public engagement plan, fliers, presentation to city councils and online educational webinars for the public to learn about various aspects of the project.
- 8. PAC Questions and Comments
 - a. The group was offered the opportunity ask questions and add comments.
- 9. Open Comment Period
 - a. The public was provided two minutes each to provide comments to the committee.