

# Community Leaders Meeting

Rethinking I-94 Phase 2

June 22, 2021

# Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Project Updates
3. Reconstruction corridors across the country
4. Section 106 introduction
5. Livability update
6. Next Steps

# Overall Project Schedule



## Environmental Process



**We Are Here**

Schedule subject to change

# Project Timeline

# Today's Objectives

- Share what others are doing on major freeways in urban areas
- Introduce Section 106
- Provide an update on MnDOT's Livability initiative

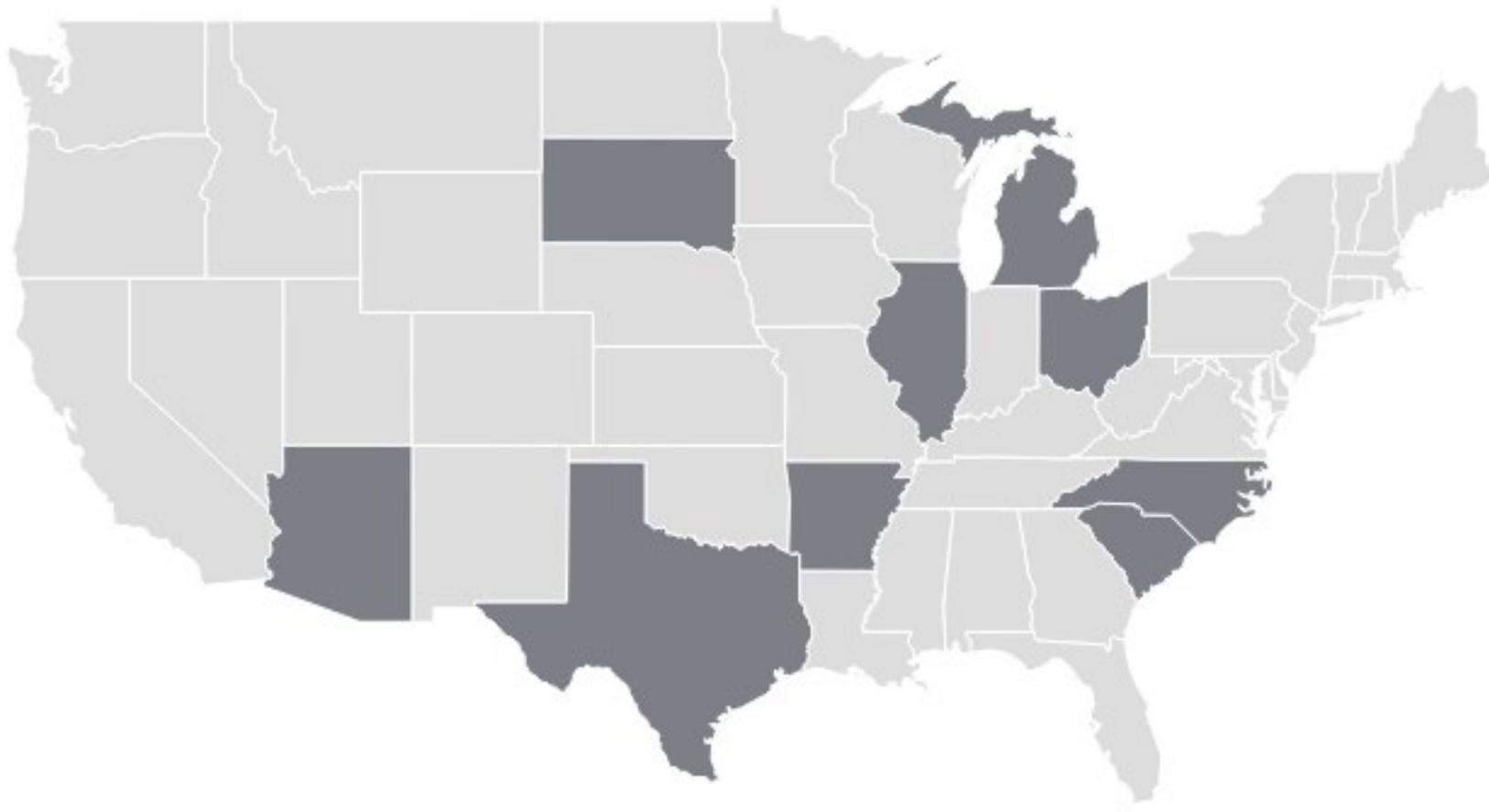
Other  
Urban  
Corridors

Nationwide Scan

# Nationwide Scan of Reconstruction Project Experience

Gloria Jeff, AICP | Livability Director, MnDOT Metro District

# Methodology



# Key Findings

- Reconstruction projects are increasingly becoming the norm for DOTs and MPOs across the country.
- FHWA, local governments and elected officials, and community groups (residential and business) are important stakeholders to engage.
- Most of the projects were very urbanized and had few environmental requirements. The impacts tended to be human rather than natural.
- Few, if any, participants identified innovative or creative funding mechanisms for their projects.
- The more public engagement, the better. It cannot be one-size-fits-all, as communities with a history of governmental distrust might not feel comfortable attending large public meetings.
- The public is smart, and often knows or will come to the same conclusion about the problems that need to be addressed. They might even have innovative or creative solutions.
- Say what you mean and mean what you say. Realistic timelines and an outline of project scope demonstrate your commitment to authenticity and respect toward the community.

# Project Overview

- **Arkansas DOT:** 30 Crossing is a 7-mile reconstruction and capacity improvement project through downtown Little Rock and North Little Rock scheduled for completion in 2024-2025.
- **Maricopa (AZ) MPO:** The study area for the “Spine” Corridor Master Plan/PEL was a 31-mile corridor for the reconstruction of I-10 and I-17 through central Phoenix. Planning efforts began in 2014 and a PEL Statement was signed in March 2018.
- **Illinois DOT:** The corridor was a 13-mile east-west oriented eight-lane divided limited access section of the Eisenhower Expressway from Mannheim Road in Hillside to Racine Avenue in Chicago.
- **Michigan DOT:** The I-375 freeway is about one-mile long and connects I-75 directly to Jefferson Avenue in Detroit. The project is currently in the environmental phase, and the planned reconstruction will take the corridor from a depressed freeway to an at-grade boulevard.

# Project Overview

- **North Carolina DOT:** The corridor is a 1.2-mile section of Business 40 through downtown Winston-Salem that carries 80,000 cars per day. There are 11 bridges in that 1.2-mile corridor.
- **Ohio DOT:** The Opportunity Corridor is a planned boulevard in the Cleveland area that will run from East 55<sup>th</sup> Street at I-490 to East 105<sup>th</sup> Street in University Circle.
- **Ohio DOT:** The Columbus Crossroads project alleviated the biggest safety and congestion issues along the I-70/I-71 downtown corridor.
- **South Carolina DOT:** The I-526 Lowcountry Corridor (LCC) is a 23-mile connection that bridges the Charleston region. Original construction of the interstates dissected environmental justice communities and the proposed improvements would impact them again.

# Project Overview

- **South Dakota DOT:** The I-229 Major Investment Study was an offshoot of the 2010 decennial study, which found that South Dakota will begin experiencing congestion issues on the mainline in Sioux Falls (a new issue in the state).
- **South Dakota DOT:** The goal of the I-190 corridor project in Rapid City was to study one interchange (Silver Street) and determine improvement options.
- **Waco (Texas) MPO:** The study corridor was a 7-mile section of US Business 77 that traverses through the cities of Waco, Bellmead, and Lacy Lakeview in Texas. The MPO studied the corridor in 2016-17 and concluded a boulevard redesign was warranted.

# Where Are You in the Project Lifecycle?

- **30 Crossing (AR):** The project started in 2014 with a PEL, and they are currently doing a NEPA re-evaluation after completing an EA and selecting a design build team in January 2019.
- **Eisenhower Expressway (IL):** They have a record of decision and final EIS. They spent \$40-50 million on a pump station but the rest of the project is on hold due to lack of funding.
- **I-375 (MI):** They started the EA in 2017 and are working on the documents now.
- **Business 44 (NC):** The project has been completed.

# Where Are You in the Project Lifecycle?

- **Opportunity Corridor (OH):** The third phase of construction is underway and scheduled to be completed in 2022.
- **Lowcountry Corridor (SC):** Planning started in 2010, and they are now prepping to start the EIS since “One Federal Decision” means they are on a tight timeline.
- **I-229 (SD):** The primary study is done and now they are doing interchange-specific studies.
- **I-190/Silver Street Interchange (SD):** The new interchange is built.
- **US Business 77 (TX):** The first phase of the project is under construction.

# Lessons Learned and Recommended Practices

- There are never too many meetings. The more you talk to people the more appreciative they are, regardless of the sentiment of their comments.
- Be able to talk about what you're here for and why without being defensive.
- Learn how to talk about large and complex projects in a digestible way. You might have to explain what reconstructing to modern design standards means because the public will ask, "You mean it's not safe now?"
- Communities might not be on board with the project even if you have buy-in and agreement from stakeholders and the data supports it. If you have initial opposition, there is still value in continuing the conversation, reminding them that there is an issue (structural, safety, etc.), and inviting them to be part of developing a solution.

# Lessons Learned and Recommended Practices

- Use the Met Council as much as you can, along with FHWA (and their resource center) and elected officials like mayors.
- Planning is the best phase to undergo big project course changes.
- As early as possible in planning, connect with community leaders to build those relationships for down the road when you are doing outreach.
- Ask the public to sign in when you hold meetings so you can send out postcard notifications with the same branding as was used in the meeting.

# Conclusions

- The goal of public engagement should be that the public speaks while the DOT listens. Repeated engagement throughout the project lifecycle maintains a connection with the community.
- Ensure you can speak to the project in a digestible way without overwhelming the public.
- Identify and connect with community leaders early on in the project to lend credibility to your message as you do outreach.
- Faith-based communities are a strong way to engage with minority residents.
- Meet communities where they naturally gather, even if that is at the library, grocery store, or community center.
- Branding can generate awareness for the project.

# Conclusions

- Generate before and after pictures, models, and other visuals to help the public see what the project can do for the community.
- Creative solutions to address community impacts, such as on-the-job training and recreation center expansion, can be funded with traditional construction dollars as part of mitigation.
- Think about ways you can help the community that aren't directly tied to the project but can fall under mitigation (e.g., increasing drainage capacity in a low area).
- Partner with other entities, such as cities or non-profits, that can bring additional funding for aesthetic enhancements.
- This project can set the tone for how MnDOT is perceived by the community for future projects.

# Project Websites

- [30 Crossing \(AR\)](#)
- [The “Spine” \(AZ\)](#)
- [Eisenhower Expressway \(IL\)](#)
- [I-375 \(MI\)](#)
- [Business 40 \(NC\)](#)
- [Opportunity Corridor \(OH\)](#)
- [Columbus Crossroads \(OH\)](#)
- [Lowcountry Corridor \(SC\)](#)
- [I-229 MIS \(SD\)](#)
- [I-90/Silver Street \(SD\)](#)
- [US Business 77 \(TX\)](#)

# Questions?

Gloria Jeff - Metro District Livability Director

# Section 106

## Introduction

# Section 106

- Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires federal agencies to consider the effects on historic properties of projects they carry out.

# Section 106

1. Identify consulting parties
  - Consulting parties may include state or tribal historic preservation, local governments, federally recognized Native American tribes, and historic preservation organizations
2. Identify historic properties
3. Assess effects
4. Agreement on a resolution
  - Memorandum of Agreement or Programmatic Agreement documenting measures to resolve adverse effects

# Section 106

- Section 106 public engagement led by MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit (CRU) and separate consulting team

# Section 106

## Two Groups

1. Consulting Parties
2. Community members within 1/4-mile of the study area

## Engagement Goals

- Provide inclusive, effective, and transparent engagement opportunities for consulting parties and the public to engage and provide input on the historical findings.
- Gather information about the significant historic resources and events, traditional cultural properties, and others to expand on information obtained during the literature search.
- Keep the consulting parties and the public informed about the Section 106 process.

# Section 106

## Consulting Party Engagement Strategies

- Conduct individual/small group discussions with Consulting Parties
- Conduct consultation coordination meetings with Consulting Parties to review materials

## Community Engagement Strategies

- Participate at NEPA/MEPA public meetings
- Virtual listening session/focus groups with multicultural groups in the study area.

Schedule: Summer 2021 – Spring 2023

## Section 106

- The Rethinking I-94 project is early in the Section 106 process and is currently developing a historic context, engaging with interested parties, and identifying historic properties.
- If you have information on historic properties or would like additional information on the Section 106 process for the Rethinking I-94 Project, contact Stephanie Atwood Hatzenbuhler at [stephanie.atwood@state.mn.us](mailto:stephanie.atwood@state.mn.us)

# Livability Workshops

Gloria Jeff, AICP

June 22, 2021

Community Leaders

# What is Livability?

- ***Livability*** is using the quality, location, and type of transportation facilities and services available to help achieve broader community goals.

# Why Livability is a matter for MnDOT

People in communities:

- Are interested in issues beyond the highway.
- Value involvement early and continuously and need accurate, timely information.
- Want their values and visions to be reflected in MnDOT project designs and decisions.

# Why Livability is a matter for MnDOT

- ✓ MnDOT Goals statement calls for meeting the needs of businesses and residents of Minnesota through transportation
- ✓ Transportation moves people and the economy. It contributes to folks' ability to enjoy, prosper and use the resources that make Minnesota a place for folks to come.
- ✓ Partnerships with stakeholders is how MnDOT achieves successful outcomes. MnDOT sees success as a two way flow. MnDOT can also contribute to the success of its partners and stakeholders.

# Livability Workshops

# Economic Vitality Workshop Summary

- Highlights of breakout sessions
  - Healthy sustainable economy is where there are small businesses owned by and serving the local community
  - Use of the 15 minute City model for planning decisions
  - People over profit
  - Keep wealth in the community
  - Integrate climate action into economic growth to ensure no further harm

# Key Takeaways of “Sense of Place” Workshop

- Improving a community’s visual quality and aesthetic appearance
- Assuring and embracing multi-cultural aspects of a community through “sense of place” measures
- Restoring the community’s “economic engines” through creating small business opportunities
- Use the right a way by acknowledging and describing a community for its’ visitors

# Key Takeaways of “Sense of Place” Workshop

- Reducing emissions to improve air quality and which will improve physical and mental health
- Improving the community’s walkability and other multimodal use
- Figuring how to use right-of-way to build towards a more sustainable future

# Key Takeaways of “Safety” Workshop

- There is a need to calm traffic at ramp intersections and frontage roads along I-94.
- MnDOT may want to consider opportunities to narrow and reduce the right-of-way in areas adjacent to residential neighborhoods.
- In the high traffic and pedestrian usage areas (Snelling, Lexington, Cedar Riverside, etc..) should consider larger design and overdesign of pedestrian sidewalks and facilities.
- Integrate Context Sensitive Solutions into planning for safety integrations. One size does not fit all (considering urban vs. rural, commercial district vs. neighborhood, etc.)

# Upcoming Workshop – Public Health and the Environment

- Public Health and the Environment
  - June 24, 2021 10 am – Noon
- July activities
  - One on One conversations with the various represented organizations
  - Seek ideas, concepts, actions related to long term trustful relationships
  - Initiate review of DRAFT papers
  - Draft Papers to be presented to appropriate MnDOT internal committees and the Rethinking I-94 Committees

# Discussion!

Gloria J Jeff [Gloria.Jeff@state.mn.us](mailto:Gloria.Jeff@state.mn.us)

# Next Steps

Next Community Leaders Meeting: 07/27/2021

Time: 10:00 AM