

# Rethinking I-94 Phase 2 Community Conversations

Date: 11/16/2021 (6:00pm-7:00pm)

Location: Zoom Meeting

## Presentation Summary

### Presenters:

Brad Hamilton (WSB)

Sheila Kauppi (MnDOT)

Gloria Jeff (MnDOT)

### 1. Introduction and welcome

### 2. Agenda

- a. Welcome
- b. Project overview and schedule
- c. Study process
- d. Livability
- e. Project limits
- f. Draft statement of goals
- g. Draft project needs
- h. Draft project purpose
- i. Conversation

### 3. Project Schedule

- a. Sheila Kauppi emphasized that MnDOT wants to hear from all voices of people who use the corridor
- b. The virtual open house started mid-summer
  - i. People can view and comment on the draft documents
- c. The project schedule is long - it is a journey, and we are early. We are currently in phase 2. We started in 2016. We are not thinking of construction projects until 2026 or later.
- d. Phase 1: Community engagement was from 2016-2018
  - i. There was a healing ceremony 2016
    1. MnDOT committed to be better
  - ii. We asked people what is important to communities through surveys, community conversations, meetings etc.
  - iii. Communities were interested in issues beyond the freeway
  - iv. MnDOT asked how do communities learn and make decisions?
    1. MnDOT is still learning the answers to these questions and this framework is the basis for phase 2
  - v. Communities wanted to be consulted early and often

- vi. Community members want their values and visions to be reflected and designs
- vii. On our website we have a tab called 'Phase 1' where people can read more about it
- viii. We committed in 2016 to work differently and that we would listen

#### 4. MnDOT's roles

- a. Leader – issues related to the I-94 itself
  - i. Our primary mission is to oversee the highway system
    - 1. Includes pavement and bridges
- b. Partner – issues or situations that cross over agency disciplines or missions
  - i. Local roads that might connect to a MnDOT roadway or a bridge that goes over the highway
- c. Facilitator – Issues not under MnDOT control but can assist for the broader health of communities
  - i. This is important because people are interested in things beyond the freeway

#### 5. Study process

- a. We have not made any decisions yet
  - i. We are very early in the project
    - 1. The earliest projects may start in 2026
- b. Transparency takes a lot of time
- c. Information and feedback from phase 1 helps inform phase 2
- d. We are committed being transparent and incorporating feedback
  - i. There are several pathways that this project will take
    - 1. Pathway 1
      - a. Transportation improvements
      - b. Set forth a vision for the I-94 corridor
        - i. Transportation purpose and need
        - ii. Evaluation criteria
        - iii. Alternatives
    - 2. Pathway 2
      - a. Livability framework
        - i. Sense of place
        - ii. Equity
        - iii. Economics
        - iv. Connections
        - v. Health and Environment
  - ii. Scoping Document
    - 1. MEPA
      - a. Very high level look at I-94
      - b. What are access interchange alternatives?
      - c. Where are entrances and exits?
  - iii. Tier 1
    - 1. Livability
  - iv. Tier 2
    - 1. This is where we will have a program of projects

## **6. Livability**

- a. Livability is very important to the project
  - i. We created this division to help guide the project
- b. Livability is not a singular concept
  - i. Livability is utilizing transportation services and facilities to achieve goals
  - ii. Looks at neighborhoods and communities as a whole
- c. 7 elements that were identified in phase 1
  - i. Health and Environment
  - ii. Economics
  - iii. Sense of Place
  - iv. Safety
  - v. Equity
  - vi. Connections
  - vii. Trust
  - viii. These guide what the metro district does with transportation projects
- d. MnDOT hosts Livability Workshops and writes papers on those workshops
  - i. Community members and their designated leaders are constantly in consult through monthly workshops focused on individual pillars
    - 1. Host conversations, surveys about the pillar what it means to them etc
    - 2. This will help us create balanced solutions

## **7. Project limits**

- a. Between highway 55 (Hiawatha) and Marion Street in Saint Paul
  - i. 35K residents
  - ii. 24k employers
  - iii. 1300 businesses

## **8. Draft statement of goals**

- a. MnDOT wants to do things differently
  - i. We are prioritizing the wellbeing of those who live work and play along the corridor
  - ii. Enhancing mobility and safety on and along the corridor
- b. Livability framework is incorporated into draft statement of goals
  - i. Health and Environment
  - ii. Economics
  - iii. Sense of Place
  - iv. Safety
  - v. Equity
  - vi. Connections
  - vii. Trust

## **9. Draft project needs**

- i. Safety
- ii. Bridge condition
- iii. Retaining wall condition
- iv. Pavement condition
- v. Mobility

- vi. Drainage condition
- vii. Noise wall condition
- viii. Safety on intersecting streets
- ix. Walkability/Bikeability
- x. Drainage Capacity

#### **10. Draft project purpose**

- i. Improve asset conditions of I-94 bridges, pavements and supporting infrastructure
- ii. Enhance safety for people and goods on, along, and across the I-94 corridor
- iii. Improve the mobility of people and goods on, along and across the I-94 corridor.

#### **11. Draft evaluation criteria**

- a. Alternative proposals will be measured against the following draft criteria:
  - i. Project needs
  - ii. SEE Impacts
  - iii. Project goals and livability pillars

## **Conversations**

Comment: Access from highway 280 to 94 Westbound is a death trap so that is my highest priority for fixing

MnDOT Response: We are looking at that area – we are looking into whether we have the need to work on this area. That need is captured via the safety aspect of our draft documentation. We are looking at the corridor as whole to see if we can improve it for everyone

Comment: I think that it is very important to think clearly about where we are going to be in the 10, 20, and 50 years. This is a once-in-50 years opportunity and we need to think about climate change. We need to be mindful of innovations such as electric cars, other future innovations that we may not know about. Not cutting up neighborhoods like Rondo and Saint Anthony Park, we need to have people on bikes for climate change.

Comment: It is clear that there has been a lot of harm that has been created by I-94 and other highways, I'd like the highway not to be added to, but improved biking walking and rolling connections.

Comment: The image of sense of place is not correct, it doesn't fit the community. We live in multifamily housing. Changing existing lanes to transit lanes doesn't go far enough, we need to reduce the number of lanes that cars can use on I-94. This project should help reduce VMT and I don't see that as a priority here. What does mobility mean? It seems like here it only means single occupancy vehicles.

Comment: What are the project limits? What is determine the project limits? Are there future projects slated for other areas? There are areas outside the areas that are being overlooked for things like sound.

MnDOT Response: The limits were determined by what was standalone sections of the roadway. MnDOT just did an interchange improvement at the 35/94 interchange. The termination at Marion due to there are other issues at 35E interchange. This was determined as the independent section of 94. Concerns were raised by Minneapolis and St Paul of portions of 94 outside of the 94. As a result, there are independent studies

Comment: Pollution, noise and air, danger to people who are not in vehicles are all negative externalities of the highway. We need to think about a future getting away from cars – EVs are not without blame. I'd love to see the highway turned into a boulevard.

Comment: How much power does the city of Saint Paul and its citizens have?

MnDOT Response: We have people who work for public works and met transit working with us. There is a Policy Advisory Committee meeting that happens regularly that is comprised of people from city governments including mayors and councilors and county commissioners.

Comment: I agree with people who want to remove lanes and make things more safe for bikes and pedestrians. What would it be like if there were no cars or trucks on I-94? Could we put vehicles somewhere so that the main thoroughfare is for bikes and pedestrians? We should reduce VMT.

MnDOT Response: For truck corridors, are you thinking of an already existing road or a new road? Where should the trucks go?

Comment: Truck traffic will not look the same as it does in 20 years. We could put trucks underground or in tunnels. Maybe we will not have trucks. We need to have infrastructure for new innovations.

Comment: The trucks could go on 494/694. We have warehouses on that ring already. They could deposit at warehouses and then bring things into the city as needed.

Comment: I agree with the previous comment. Remove on and off ramps on I-94 including 6<sup>th</sup> street, this can reconnect the historic grid and reduce impacts of division of the highway.