

Rethinking I-94 Phase 2 Community Leaders Meeting (Meeting 12)

Date: 12/28/2021 (10:00 am – 11:30 am)

Location: Zoom Meeting

Participants: **See List Below**

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome

- WSB welcomed attendees and provided overview of agenda and meeting objectives.

2. Project updates provided by the Rethinking I-94 Team.

- Schedule - Sheila Kauppi (MnDOT) presented an updated project schedule.
 - The schedule is intended to alleviate confusion and provide clarity on where the project is in the process.
 - Based on the updated schedule, the draft scoping document will be out for formal review in summer of 2022. Construction is not anticipated until 2026 or beyond.
 - The overview included a discussion on how there are currently projects along the corridor in the construction process that are outside of the current effort or have been approved prior to the Rethinking I-94 effort.
 - Community Leaders Feedback
 - John Levin (Hamline Midway Coalition Transportation Committee): Asked when is the official comment period on the purpose and need, goals, evaluation criteria, and project limits?
Response: MnDOT stated that the project is currently in early review for the purpose and need, goals, evaluation criteria, and project limits. The official comment period begins with the release of the scoping document (anticipated summer 2022). The scoping document will include the purpose and need, goals, evaluation criteria, and project limits plus the alternatives.
- PAC Meeting – MnDOT provided a summary of the December 10, 2021, PAC Meeting.
 - Overview of the Federal Legislation update provided by MnDOT Commissioner Anderson Kelliher
 - Summary of the bipartisan infrastructure bill provided by Wendall Meyer (FHWA)
 - During PAC update on funding, it was clarified that the funding source for new infrastructure has not been passed/approved by Congress.
 - MnDOT shared the PAC meeting announcement that the draft Purpose and Need is being updated and will be out for formal public comment later in 2022.
 - John Levin (Hamline Midway Coalition Transportation Committee) requested the ability to review prior to formal release.

- Reconnect Rondo – Keith Baker, Executive Director of Reconnect Rondo, provided an update on ReConnect Rondo.
 - Brief introduction to the effort and how the project is progressing.
 - Overview of community engagement efforts that Reconnect Rondo has been pursuing:
 - Twelve one-hour virtual sessions centered on housing and economic development.
 - Met with other partners, including the NAACP.
 - Held several sessions in September at the Rondo library open house.
 - Hosted “meet the executive director” sessions with 5-10 people each to listen and ask questions of Keith.
 - Had 400+ people come to their booth at the Selby Jazz Festival.
 - Highlighted an effort to engage and partner with the High School for Performing Arts. They will have 7-10 internships that will be part of Rondo Radio and will include podcasts about the possibilities of this project.
 - Reconnect Rondo is looking to hire a couple of roles to support their continued and expanded engagement efforts.
 - It was stated that Reconnect Rondo is in a positive place and that they need to continue building awareness.
 - Reconnect Rondo is looking at the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, MnDOT and the Met Council as partners in this effort. They felt that the agencies need to be held accountable, but they are all connected together in the overall Reconnect Rondo process.

3. Community Leaders outreach activities

- WSB introduced this section as a new effort to hear lessons learned from the Community Leaders on ongoing activities for feedback on the project, including what works and what challenges they face with community engagement.
 - Keith Baker, Executive Director of Reconnect Rondo, provided updates and highlights from their recent efforts.
 - Discussed the current process of establishing their team and capacity for public engagement efforts.
 - Highlighted that it is hard to get to possible resolutions without the community accepting the healing and apology.
 - Stated that trust needs to be established so that the community can understand the point of view of the agencies and understand the jurisdictions of the entities involved.
 - Called for the need to keep these entities as partners.
 - Stated that the difficulty in messaging by MnDOT is likely a result of them trying a different approach to public engagement with the Rethinking I-94 effort.
 - John Levin (Hamline Midway Coalition Transportation Committee) asked if MnDOT is going to respond to the community letter.
 - MnDOT stated that they are currently reviewing the letter and taking the comments presented into account.
 - Debbie Meister (Neighborhoods First!) stated that they need to know how MnDOT is actually Rethinking I-94.

- MnDOT stated that they are considering a multitude of items. MnDOT had committed to an engagement process that is different than before and that they could be better at sharing successes. MnDOT also stated that they need to be better at sharing items that they are committed to doing with the project.
- MnDOT stated that overall, they are looking at this project beyond just the pavement. They cited the Livability Framework effort that came out of MnDOT listening to the concerns they heard in Phase 1.
- MnDOT shared that they are not only talking to technical experts on transportation but also to policymakers on issues that are outside of transportation.
- MnDOT stated that with this effort, they have chosen to take on larger goals and look holistically at the area, not only at concrete and steel (the roadway).
- WSB asked if there is any additional information needed from MnDOT to assist with education and information gathering efforts being carried out by the Community Leaders.
 - No response

4. Recent and upcoming Rethinking I-94 outreach activities

- WSB provided an update on public engagement activities.
 - Community Conversations, survey, and open house online have collected many letter/email submissions.
 - School faculty outreach: received responses from K-12 school faculty regarding issues and changes they would like to see.
 - Working to get student congress involved. Looking to start in 2022.
 - Received survey responses from Saint Anthony Park community and freight haulers.
 - Community Conversations: 87 total comments were received. These comments had common themes, including speed and overflow of highway traffic onto side streets.
- WSB provided an overview of the main themes that arose from comments received to date via website, emails, and open house.
- MnDOT discussed the Livability Framework and how it is included in the evaluation process and is not considered a separate process.
 - FHWA added that the messaging could be better so that the public could see how Livability is being addressed in the process.

5. Community Leader questions/comments

- Barb Thoman (Union Park District Council) – Stated that they had sent a Union Park letter in May 2020, and they are concerned that purpose and need items are not reflecting their concerns. Their concern is that those items are not going to be in consideration with what this project ends up being. They would have much greater comfort if their concerns were incorporated into the Purpose and Need as a primary concern for the project.
 - Keith Baker (Reconnect Rondo) stated the difficulty that MnDOT is having articulating the process is problematic and that the difficulty may point to how MnDOT is trying a new engagement process with the Rethinking I-94 effort.
 - MnDOT asked if Livability is reflected in the Purpose and Need, what would the final action be?
 - Barb Thoman (Union Park District Council) – Stated that having watched this process in the past, it has only resulted in more roadways and lane miles, and not more modal options. She feels that if the Purpose and Need stays as it is now, that they will not see

anything that they have not seen in the past. She asked that the project not consider adding a MnPASS lane. She would like to see conversion of an existing lane to HOV and a design that requires 55 mph or less. She would also like to see a design where freight can still move but is not an intrusion on the neighborhoods (i.e., noise). She would like to see Cretin Ave bridge allow for safe crossing. She ultimately says they have been trying to communicate concerns but have not seen changes in documents.

- Debbie Meister (Neighborhoods First!) – (Responding to MnDOT question) Stated that she wants MnDOT to really look at a boulevard and to look at removing the freeway. She also wants to see climate concerns and VMT reduction as a primary concern so that the project does not have the same old same old. She does not feel MnDOT is committed to rethinking if those items are not a higher priority. She feels MnDOT needs to look at noise and air and their effects. She stated that the documents have not had a change in the Purpose and Need and if it does not change, then we will see the same old same old.
 - MnDOT stated that Commissioner Anderson Kelliher indicated that MnDOT will be modifying the Purpose and Need.
- Sheldon Mains (Seward Redesign, Inc) – Stated that MnDOT is stuck with a bureaucratic process. He was involved with the first phase of Rethinking I-94 and his concern is that MnDOT is burning out the public. He requested that MnDOT be specific on their intent for engagement. He stated that people need to get onto other things and the neighborhood has other items of importance. He feels that MnDOT needs to be concerned about burnout with this much engagement.

6. Next Steps

- 2022 meetings
 - The Rethinking I-94 team is looking into changing the frequency of the PAC and the Community Leaders' meetings as it heads into 2022.
 - WSB asked the group for feedback on holding Community Leaders' meetings every other month in 2022. There was general consensus that the group was okay with this schedule rather than monthly meetings.
- WSB will continue with engagement and outreach efforts.

Next Meeting

Date: February 22, 2022

Time: 10:00 – 11:30 am

Location: Zoom Meeting

Community Leaders Meeting Participants

Community Leaders

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Baker	Keith	ReConnect Rondo
Berger	Scott	Union Park District Council
Clapp-Smith	Merritt	Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board
Frank	David	Prospect Park Association
Hinz	Catherine	Lexington-Hamline Community Council
Johnson	Glen	Elliot Park Neighborhood
Juliff	David	Be Civil – ReConnect Rondo
Levin	John	Hamline Midway Coalition Transportation Committee
Mains	Sheldon	Seward Redesign, Inc
Meister	Debbie	Neighborhoods First!
Nelson	Theresa	Move Minnesota
Palmer	Jonathan	Hallie Q. Brown Community Center
Pickett	Jamila	Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood
Pratt	Greg	
Thoman	Barb	Union Park District Council
Weinhagen	Jonathan	Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce

Guests

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Gottfried	Jason	Hennepin County Transportation Planning
Mazzitello	John	Ramsey County
Stark	Russ	City of Saint Paul

FHWA/MnDOT/Consultant Staff

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Chavez	Mike	WSB - consultant
Cho	Joanne	WSB - consultant
Goff	William	MnDOT
Hamilton	Brad	WSB - consultant
Hauf	Austin	WSB - consultant
Jeff	Gloria	MnDOT
Kauppi	Sheila	MnDOT
Knutson	Cyrus	MnDOT
Rank	Hannah	MnDOT
Lindberg	Mark	MnDOT
Schuring	Katie Haun	MnDOT
Thomsen	Hans	WSB – consultant
Varney	Anna	FHWA
Washington	Lyssa	4rm+ula – consultant
Ziegler	Mikaela	WSB – consultant