

Highway 252/I-94 Equity and Health Neighborhood Advisors: Meeting #3

Date and Time: Tuesday, October 26, 2021, 5:00pm-7:00pm

Location: North Regional Library (1315 Lowry Ave N, Minneapolis, MN) / Zoom

Action Items:

- Affirm EHA focus areas and research questions
- Advise MnDOT on engagement of marginalized communities along the Hwy 252/I-94 corridor
- Advance measures for use in the evaluation of EHA effectiveness

Attendees

EHNA Members Present

1. Akia Vang
2. Tara McCarthy
3. Nahid Khan
4. Jim Wynne
5. Shanna Woods
6. Darryl G. Sannes
7. John Wexler
8. Michael Svard

Project staff

1. C. Terrence Anderson, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.
2. Nissa Tupper, Minnesota Department of Transportation.
3. Jerome Adams, Minnesota Department of Transportation.
4. Dale Gade, SRF Consulting Group.
5. April Crockett, , SRF Consulting Group.
6. Lacey Kaare, SRF Consulting Group.

Meeting Notes

Initial thoughts since the last meeting:

Participants were given a chance to voice their thoughts. Thoughts are listed below:

- Bring the community together/ connectivity through community based green spaces, etc. instead of having the highways split community in half. Ex: overpasses, greenways.
- Project alternatives are limited to highway expansion and/or conversion to freeway. Other alternatives have not yet been considered- consider shifting to more of a local road system like E River Rd vs just highway expansion. If the alternatives only show highway expansion options, is the role of the EHNA to determine which of the alts is most effective?
 - Rethinking is happening for Rondo (St Paul), why is that kind of thinking not being used in this project? Because of highways/ freeways, this community has been split into 5 smaller communities- negatively affecting livability. History of harm to North Minneapolis and SE Brooklyn Center communities being cut off from the river, and this project should include facilities to include this benefit to the community. A history presentation can address some of this.
- Mentions of the Mpls and Brooklyn Center city sessions and Monroe Elementary and discussions with their different representatives.
 - Star Tribune on October 18th: Roads are safe but need work. Minnesotans are stuck in traffic 55% of the time. We need to work more on transit which will reduce congestion and air pollution. This article and responses resonated on the importance of improving transit.
- Hoping on intersection on commerce, community, and safety. Safety is the first priority, some solutions are simple and some are complicated. Commerce is important, but at what cost? How are our conversations in this group being used in in decision-making? Having more of a connection and transparency about the process would go a long to ensuring we're not just an ornament.
- Northtown One is in bankruptcy and considering redevelopment. How does that influence transit in the corridor? Walkability needs attention and improvement. Free Eazy-Pass for these residents since these are their local roads? Wondering what are the needs of the community vs what are the needs of the corridor?
- The EHNA needs to describe health and equity issues. MnDOT then creates alternatives to see if we can address those. The EHNA is not designing the project.

- Should also consider engaging with the kids. This was also a comment from Stairstep.

New questions based on presented data:

Team walked through slideshow on environmental indicators and the measures that are associated with each indicator.

- Physical and environmental health: particles from tire wear. EPA doesn't have a requirement on number of particles, can we research and find how this affects health?
 - Measure noise and air pollution, including measure things we are not required to measure (i.e., light and noise pollution, tire wear impacts on environment).
 - To consider: If electric cars are heavier than traditional, more wear and tear on the roads?
 - Emphasis on mental health. Driving slower/ not on highway can be much less stressful mentally. Consider reducing speed on highway 252.
- Consider wildlife and river ecosystems. The narrow area is not enough.
- Cultural health: artwork and creative ways to include in design. Sculptures, different languages, and artwork could influence mental health.
- SHAPE 2018: how the data is interpreted is important. Rarely vs Often. Rarely could be grouped together with Never.
 - SHAPE 2018: time of day? One-car access and schedules? Bus routes or bus cost? There are so many possible causes for the transportation issues. From transportation usage standpoint: is there value in asking major employers of their "return-to-work plan" and how that will affect traffic? Water run-off to river, light pollution, noise pollution. Do noise and light affect migration patterns? Ease of access to the neighborhood/roadways, not just through the neighborhood.

EHA Focus Area

Activity – What stands out to you in this information? What else would you like to know about transportation's impact on equity and health in the project area?

- Safety: (MN Dept of Health slide on accidents) there are other community-based causes and crime happening that have nothing to do with the highway design. Behavior-based, require a change in behavior.

Targeted Engagement of Marginalized Communities

C Terrance opened a discussion on how MnDOT should engage marginalized communities in the Why 252/94 project? How can MnDOT make this engagement as successful as possible? Keeping in mind, marginalized communities are not always BIPOC, can be marginalized based on other characteristics.

Below are the thoughts of the EHNA members that participated in the discussion:

- Consider places of worship, apartment communities, Brooklyn Park engagement series that have presenters, Isaac Walton League, Tater Days: Brooklyn Park, Earl Brown Days: Brooklyn Center, elementary schools, high school.
- Food shelves, libraries, community leaders such as refugee aid groups, multiple interactions with the community so there is opportunity for thought on answers, making sure listening is the priority, making sure information can be interpreted.
- Engaging communities when people are gathered, kids should be included in this process – they are not often included. Can it be presented in a class? They are not normally included: this is going to be their world; they should have an opinion too. Creates conversation with parents when they bring it home. Kids would have a whole different approach to problems. Radio programs and stations. Example: Hmong community doesn't tend to watch tv...news comes from within the community or on the radio. CCX: local television.

Action Items

- Continue to involve the public and create materials with accessible information