

# Highway 252/I-94 Environmental Impact Statement

## PAC Meeting 7

### Meeting Summary

**March 24, 2022 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

Opening Remarks and Roll Call – 10 minutes (MnDOT)

Attending Members and Staff

**Colie Colburn, Legislative Assistant for Senator Chris Eaton (D40)**

**Representative Michael Nelson (D40A)**

**MnDOT – Deputy Commissioner Kim Collins, Jerome Adams, April Crockett, Aaron Tag, Kent Barnard, Tim Sexton, Nissa Tupper**

**Brooklyn Park – Mayor Lisa Jacobson, Council Member Xp Lee, Council Member Terry Parks, Council Member Susan Pha, Jeff Holstein**

**Brooklyn Center – Mayor Mike Elliott, Mike Albers**

**City of Minneapolis – Bethany Turnwall (Staff to Council Member Ellison), Katie White, Julieann Swanson**

**Hennepin County – Carla Stueve, Jason Staebell**

**Metropolitan Council – Council Member Reva Chamblis, Tony Fischer**

**Metro Transit – Adam Harrington, Victoria Dan**

**Federal Highway Administration – Wendall Meyer, Anna Varney, William Lohr**

**Fairhope Consulting – Kaade Wallace**

**New Publica – Marc Valencia**

**Transportation Collaborative & Consultants – Craig Vaughn**

**Isthmus Engineering – Mary Karlsson**

**SRF Consulting – Jono Cowgill, Leif Garnass, Brian McLafferty, Britt Berner, Matt Hanson, Becky Krugerud, Brett Danner, Don Demers**

**General public – Alex Burns, Christina Perfetti, David Mulla, Indred, Jackie Douglas, John Griffith, KayeAnn Mason, Marcell Walker, Michael Svard, Nahid Khan, Nancy Barthold, Scott McBride, Tara McCarthy, Tom Kouri**

The Highway 252/I-94 project team conducted a presentation to the Policy Advisory Committee which included the information below. For additional details on the topics below, please see the presentation posted on the project website.

## Opening Remarks

### Welcome, Housekeeping, and Introductions (Kim Collins, MnDOT)

- a) Deputy Commissioner and MnDOT Chief Administrative Officer – Joined MnDOT 18 years ago after serving in private sector; Started as case manager in office of Equity and Diversity; attorney in Chief Counsels Office; Director of Civil Rights; Family calls MN home and lived most of life as resident of MPLS.

Roll call

### Housekeeping Reminders

#### 1) History of the Project and Purpose/Need (April Crockett, MnDOT)

- a) Project background on previous studies of the corridor
- b) Overview of the environmental review process
- c) Draft project purpose statement
- d) Project objectives
  - i) Discussion

(1) PAC – No questions or comments from the group

#### 2) Project Schedule (Leif Garnass, Consultant Team)

- a) Current project schedule. Scoping document period is through spring of 2023.

#### 3) Equity and Health Assessment Update (Nissa Tupper, MnDOT)

- a) Equity and health assessment recent activity
  - i) Clarified EHA's role as independent, community driven assessment of Hwy 252/I-94 EIS
  - ii) Drafted Equity and Health Baseline Conditions Report
  - iii) Met with Equity and Health Neighborhood Advisors and scheduled EHA engagement activities
  - iv) Review of EHA purpose and methods
  - v) Review of EHA activity timeline during scoping decision document (SDD)
  - vi) EHA's role in SDD
  - vii) Findings of EHA baseline conditions report

(1) Health

(2) Transportation

viii) Upcoming EHA engagement, goals, methods, questions, and planned events

b) Discussion

i) PAC

- (1) Mayor Mike Elliott – Thanked the project team for the update. The Mayor highlighted that the report underscores many of the issues with the project, especially the racial inequity. Brooklyn Center is the most diverse City in the area and Brooklyn Park is similar. The Mayor noted that the Brooklyn Center 252 Task Force was organized to ensure the issues are evaluated deeply. The Mayor noted that the Purpose statement must include improving the health, equity, and environment. If that isn't done, this project will be business as usual.
- (2) Mayor Mike Elliott – Noted that Brooklyn Center has a population that is 67% people of color. The Mayor pointed out that white drivers are more likely to drive a vehicle and drive alone. It is clear who would benefit from this project while the people of color living in the corridor are most likely to use public transit. This project will benefit one set of people while grossly impacting the health and wellbeing of people historically harmed by highway projects. The mayor explained that if we do not look at alternatives to highway expansion, we are doing nothing different than we have done historically. Finally, the Mayor highlighted that the time for Equity is now.
- (3) Mayor Jacobson – The Mayor asked what happens after community is engaged.
- (4) Mayor Jacobson – The Mayor stated that the targeted engagement list has specific organizations associated with Brooklyn Park that are not located in Brooklyn Park.
  - (a) MnDOT will follow up with Mayor Jacobson outside the PAC meeting to refine the list.
  - (b) Kaade Wallace – Mentioned that the team is working closely with Josie, Shanna, and their community engagement team.
- (5) Council Member Chamblis – The Met Council Member reiterated her agreement with the need to make sure the project has the right locations and making sure there is a good demographic disaggregated list represented of the organizations. Council Member Chamblis explained that she would like to have a discussion about the list to share that disaggregated data.
  - (a) MnDOT will follow up with Council Member after the meeting.
- (6) Council Member Susan Pha – The Council member mentioned the need to explain how input is used. The Council member emphasized that on this project it is important to communicate what was heard, respond to what was heard, and translate feedback to show how it is affecting MnDOT decision-making. This is essential to building community trust. The Council member noted that people are not currently attending community engagement events because they do not trust their input will be valued and incorporated.

4) Environmental Review Update (Leif Garnass, Consultant Team)

i) PAC

- (1) Mayor Mike Elliott – The Mayor thanked the project team for the presentation and for considering alternatives to highway expansion. The mayor noted that it is incredibly important to have this conversation. These potential alternatives are more in alignment with what equity in transportation and environment looks like. The Mayor hopes these alternatives will be treated in at the same level of detail as the highway expansion alternatives, and stated that it was time other communities bear a heavier burden of impacts. The Mayor relayed that a constituent who lived in the corridor had three children who were regularly in the hospital with health issues, which resolved themselves after the family moved out of the corridor. Finally the Mayor stated that other communities in the United States are not advancing highway alternatives, and that Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg affirmed this in a recent conversation with Mayor Elliott.
- (2) Council Member Parks – The Councilmember stated that she lives on east side of 252. She has received several calls from neighbors on west side of 252 who are being told they will lose their homes. The Council member wanted to know - Are other PAC members hearing this? Has the team gotten that far into the study?
  - (a) MnDOT is not at this point in the study and decision-making process.

5) Public Engagement Update (Craig Vaughn Marc Valencia, Consultant Team)

i) PAC – No questions or comments from the group

6) PAC Open Comment Period

- a) Collins – What have you been hearing from your communities? Is what we’ve presented today consistent with what PAC members have been hearing? Do you believe we are working to connect with Community in the right space and ways?
- b) Council Member Susan Pha mentions hearing concerns from residents about Highway 252 safety, interim safety measures, environment, equity. It would be great to see the specific list of comments so PAC members can see specific concerns and help MnDOT be sure all issues are being addressed. Gives a thank you Highway 252 Task Force, faith groups, non-profits, and stakeholders for your involvement and for your help in identifying specific issues that are not being addressed.
- c) Council Member Chamblis – The Met Councilmember mentions that this is a corridor-wide project from Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center, and Brooklyn Park and we’re not hearing from all of those areas in a balanced manner. How can we be sure we’re getting input from everyone; Brooklyn Park and Minneapolis do not have community-based Task Force like Brooklyn Center. The Met Councilmember also noted that it is important to get input from communities that would be affected by the traffic impacts of the new alternatives.
- d) MnDOT will follow up after the PAC meeting to discuss.
- e) Council Member Parks – Noted that he is hearing from Brooklyn Park. He lives on 252 and that’s what he is hearing about from his neighbors. Agrees that the team is not hearing from north side of Brooklyn Park nor Champlin.

7) Next PAC Meeting – June 2022

- a) Collins – Is the group comfortable moving this meeting to a hybrid option (in-person with a call-in option)?

- b) Mayor Mike Elliott – Virtual continues to make sense at this point, especially given another subvariant gaining speed in rates of infection. Hybrid has its own challenges because people in the room have the meeting geared toward them as compared to people on the phone who are forgotten.
- c) Council Member Parks – Prefers hybrid.
- d) MnDOT will solicit feedback from the PAC prior to the June meeting.

## Open Comment Period – 15 minutes

- Nahid Khan - I live in Brooklyn Center, member of TH 252 Task Force, member of ENA. Here is what I want to say, the 252/94 project is an opportunity to think outside the box of mid-20th century thinking about highway expansion. We need to put people first, especially BIPOC community, not cars and trucks. It is a travesty to double heavy truck traffic in the 252 corridor. It is important to put environment first.... Protect Mississippi River and address climate issues by reducing VMT ... reduce vehicle numbers and speeds... real avenues for community engagement at all levels from revising purpose and need statement and forward through completion of the EIS process.
- Jackie Douglas - I have lived in BP in my current neighborhood for 50 years. Real concerns... all the meetings I've attended early on and the things about freeways and interchanges. Ridiculous to talk about three interchanges in 5 miles, more crashes. Took a bus from West River Road to downtown and have not seen mass transit addressed in this process. It just seems that mass transit is not in existence. As we've heard from the PAC, people in this corridor travel by transit. It seems like this project is for people who live in other areas, not in the corridor itself. There is nothing in the purpose statement that addresses this. The feedback I get and hear is MnDOT is leaning toward an expressway or freeway. We need to think of other options.
- David Mulla - I am really beginning to see some alternative thinking that is more in line with Mayor Elliott and what Nahid was talking about. As recently as January PAC meeting, that was not the case 6 lane expressway – air pollution and property impacts. Welcome change. I would like to say MnDOT still is not completely on the same page as Hennepin County with regard to VMT. We know a 6-lane freeway with an additional 22 million vehicles would increase VMT, whereas Hennepin County has a goal of 20% reduction in VMT. The reason VMT is important.... People dying because of asthma... Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths fails because it does not include indirect deaths caused by air pollution

## Written Comments

Provided via the Q&A feature during the meeting.

- Nahid Khan - The project Purpose and Need statement was developed without any public involvement, discussion, input or community engagement. This situation needs to be rectified.
- Tom Kouri - MnDOT's Purpose statement is to: "improve the safe and reliable movement of people and goods." Why hasn't MnDOT added as a primary need to: "improve the health, equity and environment associated with the project?" These affect safety of life due to the movement of people and goods.

- Nahid Khan - The Hwy 252 and I-94 Project is an opportunity to think outside the box of mid-20th century thinking about building freeways and expanding to freeways. It's the 2020s; we need to put people first, especially the residents of the three majority BIPOC communities through which this project goes, not cars and trucks. It is a travesty to be planning to turn Hwy 252 into a heavy freight truck route through an almost entirely residential area. Besides safety, health and wellbeing of the people first, we also need to put the environment and ecology first, as well as community livability, connectivity and cohesion first, as well as general equity. We must protect the Mississippi River and address climate change issues, by reducing vehicle miles traveled significantly through rethinking the premises of this project entirely (increasing vehicle numbers and speeds). There must be real avenues for community engagement at all levels to impact this project from revising Purpose and Need onward at all stages.
- Nahid Khan - There must be full openness, transparency and accountability, and full information disclosed in regard to questions posed. There also needs to be a complete record of the PAC meetings, including transcripts and video recordings. Same for all the public events.
- Tara McCarthy - I am very happy to see MnDOT is looking at the additional elements including a transit corridor, local collector and a 4 lane low speed expressway these elements would be closer to meeting what our communities need for this project : Reduced crashes to average or better - No or minimal property seizure - Reduced air, noise, ground vibration, light and heat pollution - Reduced salt, tire particulate, metal brake dust, water and soil pollution - Protection of Mississippi River area - Connectivity/expansion for local bus routes, bike trails and pedestrian traffic. The 252/I94 project NEEDS to benefit the communities of Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park and No Minneapolis.
- Tom Kouri - MnDOT's TAC evaluations of traffic travel time between Hwy 610 and downtown Minneapolis show that a 6-lane freeway is only one minute faster than a 4-lane freeway. Why does the marginally better travel time (lower congestion) rate more highly in MnDOT's process for selecting project alternatives than the vastly improved safety of the marginally slower travel time alternatives that were not recommended for the draft Scoping Decision Document?
- Nahid Khan - Please compare the Hwy 252 and I-94 Project web pages with the Rethinking I-94 Project web pages; there is a huge difference in terms of information provided about the projects and capturing of public comments. The Hwy 252 and I-94 Project needs massive upgrading in terms of full information.
- Nahid Khan - Regarding property seizures for the freeway alternatives, the TAC meeting presentations clearly show areas and details about property seizures. It is disingenuous to state that those details and that information is not available. We at the Highway 252 Safety Task Force have obtained all the TAC meeting presentations and material through January 2022 meetings, and these clearly show such details and information. We have presented this information to the Brooklyn Park City Council through the good offices of Susan Pha, BP CC member.
- Nahid Khan - Reducing speed limits down to 35 mph on Hwy 252 would be a good idea to reduce traffic numbers and speed so as to reduce harms to people and environment, especially in the Mississippi River area.
- Nahid Khan - Improving transit connections and routes between Brooklyn Center/Park/North Minneapolis with Fridley, Columbia Heights and NE Minneapolis must be a priority. Including with the Fridley Northstar station.

- Nahid Khan - Who are the organizations who are conducting the community engagement events and work? Please disclose who they are and how they are doing this work.
- Nahid Khan - Won't the destructive history of earlier MnDOT freeway projects in Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) neighborhoods in the Twin Cities be repeated in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park with the 6-lane freeway alternatives? In particular, adverse impacts on affordable housing, respiratory disease, and access to public transit will increase with a 6-lane freeway alternative, relative to better alternatives such as the 4-lane freeway alternatives, a 6-lane expressway with multiple permanent safety improvements, and a parkway/boulevard option.
- Nahid Khan - I would like to see all the public comments fully recorded from these PAC meetings, all public education events from 2021, plus all the statements in full by PAC members, in the meeting summaries. My 3 comments from the Oct. 7, 2021 PAC meeting do not appear in the meeting summary.
- Nahid Khan - I also would like to see a full transcript of Mayor Elliott's statement from the Jan. 27, 2022 PAC meeting included in the meeting summary of that PAC meeting.
- Nahid Khan - I would like to see a full transcript of Mayor Mike Elliott's statement and comment recorded in the meeting summary.
- Nahid Khan - Since only variations of the 6-lane freeway project alternatives have moved forward to the Scoping Decision Document, it seems that the EHNA group and the EHA Process work is very limited in its scope and impact. I am a member of the EHNA group and essentially I think that our role is going to merely be to assess what are the least inequitable and least unhealthy of the 6-lane freeway project alternatives, which have been the predetermined outcome of this EIS process, given that they were already the MnDOT preferred alternative in the EA, and are already funded. Therefore, I ask, what really is the value of this work for determining what is best for the residents of Brooklyn Center, who are going to bear the brunt of the harms of this project, followed closely by the residents of our neighbors to the north and south, in Brooklyn Park and North Minneapolis.
- David Mulla - Asthma deaths due to traffic-induced PM2.5 particles in North Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park are already very high (28 people/yr). How much will these respiratory pressures on these BIPOC communities worsen if a 6-lane freeway is built with 22 million more cars and freight trucks annually? Won't people west or east of 252, in particular, have more respiratory hospitalizations and deaths with a 6-lane freeway? People affected include children at Brooklyn Center High School, Evergreen and Monroe Elementary schools, apartment dwellers (Riverwood, Melrose, Georgetown Park, River Glen, Evergreen Park), people exercising at parks (Firehouse, Evergreen, Riverdale), bike trails (Mississippi River Trail) and businesses (e.g. Topgolf). Furthermore, won't biking, walking, and exercising near a 6-lane freeway be unhealthy due to air pollution? It is not equitable to increase the health burdens on residents by building a 6-lane freeway with 22 million more cars and freight trucks annually.
- Nahid Khan - There is a lot of research that shows that air pollution from highways and freeways not only NEGATES any health benefits from walking, bicycling, rolling, and any outdoor exercise, but that doing any of these outdoor activities within at least one mile of highways and freeways further harms the health of people doing so.

1) Adjourned at 2:40 pm

## Next PAC Meeting

The next PAC meeting will be June 27, 2022.