

Rethinking I-94 Phase 2 Community Leaders Meeting (Meeting 13)

Date: 2/22/2022 (10:00 am – 11:30 am)

Location: Zoom Meeting

Participants: See List Below

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome

- WSB provided welcome and outline of agenda

2. Updates from the Rethinking I-94 Team

- MnDOT provided a summary version of the project history presented at the PAC Meeting. The presentation covered the following items:
 - MnDOT primary responsibility – preserve and repair bridges, walls, and pavement; with the goal of enhancing mobility, safety, and inter-connectivity.
 - Outcomes of Phase 1
 - Livability initiative
 - MnDOT’s roles in the project from the NEPA process to the Livability initiative
 - Overview of the project timeline to date
 - Overview of the current draft need and purpose and its development
 - Overview of the next steps
 - Outlined process for revising goals, purpose and need, and evaluation criteria.
- Questions from Community Leaders:
 - Question asked about the work and outreach that was done on the reconnect Seward and Cedar Riverside Communities project and not seeing those efforts reflected in MnDOT’s summary or plan.
 - Rethinking I-94 Team member shared that those ideas will be part of the alternatives process but are not part of the Purpose and Need work currently being undertaken. Some pieces, such as safety and crossings, have been incorporated.
 - Question/comment stating that it appears that whatever isn’t in the Purpose and Need isn’t being evaluated in the first pass, so the communities will only be left with the bad options that will be further evaluated. In this process, the community will only be looking at the best of the worst alternatives.

- MnDOT representative shared that what MnDOT has done with the Livability Framework is not only what MnDOT has authority to do but looking to partner with others who do have the ability to work on the items identified by the community, such as affordability. MnDOT needs to and will continue to follow the statutory process, including recognizing and incorporating the comments we have received while also recognizing that federal dollars are tied to transportation and existing categories of funding.
- Rethinking I-94 Team member stated that MnDOT is constrained on the items to be reflected in the Purpose and Need and going through the NEPA process. We need to follow those requirements to be a viable project for federal funding. However, MnDOT has gone beyond the NEPA process to bring in partners to meet and work on other community needs.
- Question asked if the overall set of alternatives to be developed will be constrained by the Purpose and Need document since there is a concern the alternatives are constrained by this process. Further stated that it would be helpful if MnDOT would provide statutes that are constraining them. Further stated that this situation was encountered on another similar project with the Light Rail and the legal constraints were able to be loosened to be able to meet community needs.
 - Member of Community Leaders group stated that it is his belief the Minnesota practice may differ from the way it is done in other states and that MnDOT is doing what it can based on how it interprets policy.
 - FHWA representative stated that in review of other projects, the Purpose and Need in other communities is very similar to what has been developed here. What has been set up has gone through higher levels of the Federal Highway Administration and is consistent with how the policy is applied in other states. FHWA doesn't currently have guidance on the flexibility of new regulations tied to new funding mechanisms and federal dollars; however, FHWA has a process to prepare guidance once the regulations are finalized. The land bridge that was used on I-70 in Colorado for example came out of mitigation for the proposed projects impacts, not the Purpose and Need.
- (Meeting Chat) Questions centered on what was the legal framework and regulations that was restricting some of the items from the community engagement being reflected in the purpose and need.
 - MnDOT stated that they would send education materials to the community leaders that discusses the regulations.

ACTION ITEM: Rethinking I-94 Team will send educational materials on regulations to community group members.

3. Section 106 Review Process Update

- Update provided on the status of the Section 106 (cultural resource) studies.
 - Overview of engagement and 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
- Study is looking to identify past and present gathering places, buildings, activities, and people that have shaped the neighborhoods around I-94. Asked community leaders specific questions.
 - Islamic places of worship prior to 1960s?
 - Where are past LGBTQ+ gathering places?
 - a. Townhouse Bar
 - Where did Daniel Walter Hardy live?
 - What drew the Native American community east from Chicago Avenue?
 - How did the neighborhood react to the construction of high rises?
 - a. Dissertation at the University of Minnesota that addresses the question of “How did the neighborhood react to construction of high-rise apartment buildings west of Cedar Avenue”
- Hallie Q Brown Community Center representative shared that the focus of the center changed after the highway construction and adapted to provide support for the new community impact.

ACTION ITEM: MnDOT will send out questions to specific community members on targeted Section 106 input.

4. Community Leaders outreach activities

- Question asked if there is any additional information needed from MnDOT to assist with education and information gathering efforts.
 - No comments

5. Next steps

- Schedule review - MnDOT will be revising the schedule.
- 2022 meetings reschedule – Community Leaders agreed to canceling April meeting and have next meeting on June 28, 2022.
- Continued outreach and engagement.

Next Meeting

Date: June 28, 2022

Time: 10 am – 11:30 am

Location: Zoom Meeting

Community Leaders Meeting Participants

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Baker	Keith	ReConnect Rondo
Berger	Scott	Union Park District Council
Jetkot	Megan	Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood
Juliff	David	Be Civil - Reconnect Rondo
Levin	John	Hamline Midway Coalition Transportation Committee
Ludtke	Spencer	Hallie Q. Brown Community Center
Mains	Sheldon	Seward Redesign, Inc
Meister	Debbie	Neighborhoods First!
Nelson	Theresa	Move Minnesota
O'Brian	Sarah	Hamline Midway Coalition
Pickett	Jamila	Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood
Thoman	Barbra	Union Park District Council
Thompson	Pat	Saint Anthony Park Community Council

FHWA/MnDOT/Consultant Staff

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Atwood	Stephanie	MnDOT
Austin	Lisa	MnDOT
Barnes	Melissa	MnDOT
Chavez	Mike	WSB - consultant
Chiglo	Jon	WSB - consultant
Corkle	Jack	WSB - consultant
Goff	Bill	MnDOT
Hamilton	Brad	WSB - consultant
Hampton	Torri	MnDOT
Jeff	Gloria	MnDOT
Kauppi	Sheila	MnDOT
Rank	Hannah	MnDOT
Thomsen	Hans	WSB - consultant
Varney	Anna	FHWA
Ziegler	Mikaela	WSB - consultant

Guests

Last Name	First Name	Organization
Cox	Colin	
Isaacson	Brian	Ramsey County
Mazzitello	John R.	Ramsey County
Palmer	Jonathan	
Pfeiffer	Dan	MnDOT Consultant
Xiong	Faith	MnDOT Consultant