

# Hwy 252/I-94 Equity & Health Assessment (EHA) Equity and Health Neighborhood Advisors -- Meeting #7

Tuesday, June 21, 2022 | 5:00pm to 7:00pm  
North Regional Library - 1315 Lowry Ave N, Minneapolis, MN 55411  
Zoom Meeting ID: 927 7187 0511 | Passcode: 001068

## Attendees

### **EHNA members:**

1. Akia Vang, North Minneapolis Resident
2. Alvin Killion, Good News Baptist Church (GNBC), North Minneapolis
3. Darryl Sannes, Brooklyn Center Resident
4. Jack Lucas, Morrison Baptist Church, North Minneapolis
5. Jim Wynne, Brooklyn Center Resident
6. John Wexler, Brooklyn Park Resident
7. Michael Davenport (in place of Rozenia Hood Fuller), GNBC, North Minneapolis
8. Michael Svard, Brooklyn Park Resident
9. Nahid Kahn, Brooklyn Center Resident
10. Pastor Steve Michaels, GNBC, North Minneapolis
11. Renee Lucas, Morrison Baptist Church, North Minneapolis
12. Tammy McLemore, Brooklyn Park Resident
13. Tara McCarthy, Brooklyn Center Resident

### **Staff and consultants:**

1. Aaron Tag, MnDOT
2. Allison Bell, Bellwether Consulting
3. Brian McLafferty, SRF
4. C Terrence Anderson, CURA
5. Marie Cote, SRF
6. Nissa Tupper, MnDOT
7. Rebecca Lieser, Bellwether Consulting

## Notes

### 1. Introductions

### 2. Rebecca Lieser presented the findings from EHA Report #2: Equity and Health Priorities

- The EHA engagement team collected community feedback on the health and equity focus areas identified in Report #1 between April 15-May 6, 2022.
- The EHA engagement process focused on engaging and listening to historically underserved communities living within half a mile from Hwy 252/I-94 in North Minneapolis, Brooklyn Center, and Brooklyn Park.
- People were engaged through a survey and 15 in-person activities (canvassing and pop-ups)
- 412 people provided feedback during the engagement period. 329 of those people live within the project area, and 153 participants (47%) identify as BIPOC.
- Key takeaways from BIPOC participant feedback:
  - Many are concerned that expanding Hwy 252/I-94 will increase traffic, air pollution and increased respiratory issues in communities adjacent to Hwy 252/I-94.
  - Many identified safety as an equity and health priority, with particular attention given to vulnerable users – elderly, youth, people with disabilities, and people with a low income that may not have safe options for walking, biking, and rolling in the project area.
  - BIPOC respondents highlighted the importance of job access, food options, and green space to healthy lives and equitable communities.
  - Many stressed the importance of ensuring local communities are not unfairly burdened by changes to Hwy 252/I-94 that primarily benefit commuters.

#### EHNA questions and discussion of Report #2 findings:

- Did we have a way of finding out how people learned about the survey? Did they mark if they found out from canvassing?
  - No
- How do these numbers of BIPOC responses compare to the overall population?
  - Pretty close – can get you the detailed numbers.
- Did we ask if people were renters or owners?
  - No
- Add in property impacts findings that I-94 through North Minneapolis and Brooklyn Center took out a lot of properties, as did 252. Not just one time, it was also when it was expanded. That took out a lot of properties. Direct history in the project area not long ago.
- Access to destinations isn't really part of this project. For example, MnDOT can't decide if a grocery store goes into a certain location.

- MnDOT can influence it though and work with partners.
- Access is about the destination but also whether you can get to it in a reasonable time.
- Add in report findings for access that Brooklyn Center is a food desert and there is a lack of pharmacies.

### 3. **Brian McLafferty presented on the Hwy 252/I-94 EHA criteria**

Hwy 252/I-94 EHA criteria are statements of how to advance equity and health through the Hwy 252/I-94 project and will align with research and engagement documenting health and health inequities in Hwy 252/I-94 communities.

- The equity and health criteria are divided into three categories:
  - Natural environment: air quality, water quality, connection to nature
  - Choice and opportunity: access to destinations, transportation options
  - Community: safety and security, neighborhood impacts, sense of belonging
- The EHA criteria will evaluate if the project alternative:
  - Supports equity and health, as defined by the criteria statement (+)
  - Does not support equity and health, as defined by the criteria statement (-)
  - Negligible or unknown contribution to equity and health, as defined by the criteria statement (n/a)

#### Discussion:

- These are radical evaluation criteria that you don't usually see.

#### 4. Small group discussion

- EHNA members were divided into small groups to discuss:
  - What equity and health priorities did you notice from EHA engagement?
  - Given these priorities, how do you think the EHA should assess equity and health impacts?

#### Small group 1 discussion:

- Category: Community
  - Safety & security too broad a priority; should narrow the focus to traffic safety
    - Criteria should look at fatal and serious injury crashes under each alternative.
    - Assessment should be data-driven
    - Criteria should assess whether the alternative improves critical crash rate to better than average – limiting crashes relative to baseline not good enough
    - Also need to consider changes in critical crash rate off the highway due to changes in highway access points
    - Neighborhood impacts is really about who bears the benefit and burdens of the project.
    - Criteria under this priority should look across all the other impacts and compare the regional vs community distribution of benefits and burdens
- Category: Natural Environment
  - Air quality is a priority
  - Criteria should assess whether the project alternative improves air quality (remediate past harm)
  - Noise is a priority and should be added
  - Traffic (broadly) is an impact to both community and the natural environment. Criteria could assess changes in traffic volume under community impacts.
  - Heat islands caused by concentrations of pavement (also a community and natural environment impact)
- Category: Choice and Opportunity
  - Highway 252 acts as a barrier between people and destinations.
    - Basic idea is to assess whether project alternatives make it easier for people without cars to get where they need to go

#### Small group 2 discussion:

- Category: Community

What health & equity priorities did you notice from engagement?

- Safety for walkers/bikers
- More neighborhood traffic a concern
- Increased vehicle emissions a concern; could alternatives decrease emissions?
- Connectivity and local access important for sense of community
- MSP2040 and other local or regional plans guiding future of housing and business development and road networks
- Transit frequency & transit access to key destinations more important than just bus stops
- Eminent domain a concern for sense of community
- Aesthetics/cleanup can help enhance sense of community and pride
- Noise walls can be a positive in some locations and a negative in others (i.e., losing backyard space and trees for a wall)
- When thinking about access, need to also consider parking (access for people who need to drive to parks, destinations)
- Community centers and public gathering spaces important for sense of belonging and community
- Surprised that schools did not come up in the Report #2 findings
- Consider winter/poor weather for transportation modes
  - Given the priorities, how do you think the EHA should assess equity and health impacts?
- Access (distance) to public gathering spaces/community centers by walking/biking/driving/transit
- Improve safety for walkers/bikers/drivers
- Decrease traffic crashes with walkers and bikers in neighborhood and crossing Hwy 252
- Alternative cohesiveness with regional/local plans
- Alternative that minimizes eminent domain/least amount of property acquisition
- Alternative that is best or easiest for long-term maintenance/clean up
- Minimize impacts to schools/students walking
- Alternative that increases walkers & bikers – when you see people out, generally means safer community
- Alternative that reduces accidents
- Alternative that reduces vehicle emissions

- Alternative with the shortest walking/biking distance to parks/trails
- Alternative that reduces cut through neighborhood traffic
- Alternative that maintains parking
- Alternative that maintains bus stops/park & rides (good frequency and destinations more important than the number of bus stops)
- Consider changes to the connectedness of the walking/biking trail system adjacent to and crossing highway and on local roads near the highway

Small group 3 discussion (online):

- Category: Natural environment
  - Add category for noise and light pollution
  - Need to add an inventory of the natural environment (this might have already been done)
- Category: Community
  - Need to break out safety into distinct categories (crime, access to facilities for non-cars, etc.)
  - Need to assess better wayfinding, signage, and lighting
- Category: Choice & opportunity
  - Break out access to destinations in to separate criteria

## 5. Aaron Tag presented on the Hwy 252/I-94 project alternatives

- The Hwy 252/I-94 alternatives can be divided into three categories:
  - Change Hwy 252 to be a freeway (like Hwy 100)
  - Keep Hwy 252 as a highway with signals, with roads intersecting at the same level
  - Change Hwy 252 to operate as a local road (like E River Rd)

EHNA discussion of the Hwy 252/I-94 project alternatives:

- Is Highway 252 an expressway? It's vague to say "keep it a highway". There is a lot of confusion in these terms. What are we talking about?
  - Highway is an umbrella term for expressway and freeway. MnDOT is moving toward using highway instead of the other two more technical terms to simplify it for the public. Freeway is 4 to 6 lanes with grade-separated access and an expressway is 4 to 6 lanes with at-grade access. Hwy 252 is currently an expressway.
- Noble is a local road that has access to 610. Couldn't you make it a local road but keep the access to 610? Shouldn't that option still be on the table?

- Suggest have an option that doesn't sever that connection but controls it. Differentiate it.
- There's an identity issue because of the name (University Ave and Central Ave). These are also expressways but they are seen as different from Hwy 252, more like a local road.
- It almost feels punitive. "It could be worse, we could do this."
- I-94 is also part of the scope. We need concrete examples from that. Let's remember those areas as well. Need a set of alternatives for I-94 too.
- Heard that MnDOT is considering getting rid of the 4th St. access in downtown altogether?
  - Have not heard of that.
- Could the Blue Line Extension be on I-94? Is that even on the table? Where would that alternative stand versus the other alternatives for the Blue Line?
- It could be one of the recommendations of this group.
- Probably not Blue Line, but it could be another transit line.

#### **6. C Terrence Anderson discussed next steps**

- Project staff will update Report #2 with feedback from the EHNA.
- Project staff will follow up with the EHNA on the notes from the small groups to let people have a chance to weigh in on the other criteria categories
- EHNA members should let project staff know what info do you need when we come back to meet in August?
  - Projected vehicle volume on each alternative, and also the connected local roads.
- Next EHNA meeting is August 9, 2022.