

Highway 252/I-94 Environmental Impact Statement

PAC Meeting 9

Meeting Summary

September 27, 2022 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Attending Members and Staff

(45 Panelists)

Senator John A. Hoffman (District 36)

Representative Michael Nelson (D40A)

MnDOT – Deputy Commissioner Kim Collins, Jean Wallace, Michael Barnes, Jerome Adams, April Crockett, Aaron Tag, Christina Perfetti, Nissa Tupper, Jim Skoog, Muzamil Ibrahim, Sheila Kauppi

Brooklyn Park – Mayor Lisa Jacobson, Council Member Xp Lee, Jesse Struve, 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 – Anna Schmiel (staff to Commissioner Jeff Lunde (District 1), Carla Stueve, Jason Staebell

Metropolitan Council – Chair Charlie Zelle, Council Member Reva Chamblis, Tony Fischer

Metro Transit – Victoria Dan, Arman Rajaeian, Adam Harrington

University of Minnesota Center for Urban and Regional Affairs – C. Terrence Anderson

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

New Publica – Marc Valencia

Isthmus Engineering – Mary Karlsson

SRF Consulting – Jono Cowgill, Justin Sebens, Leif Garnass, Marie Cote, Khani Sahebjam, Brett Danner, Don Demers

HDR – John Griffith

Bolton & Menk – Marcell Walker, Scott McBride

General public

(16 attendees)

Brendan McCarthy, Darryl Sannes, David Mulla, Delane Cleveland, Gloria Jeff, Indred Alexander, James Soltis, Linda Kussman, Nahid Khan, Peter Wagenius, Tara McCarthy, TJ Ryan, 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)

MnDOT is anticipating releasing the draft Scoping Decision Document in early 2023 for public comment.

Acknowledge public is concerned about Scoping Decision Document based on review allowed by MnDOT inadvertently posting an early draft of the Scoping Decision Document on a working site that was accessible to the public and was accessed by the public.

Roll call

Housekeeping Reminders

1) Project Schedule (Justin Sebens, Consultant Team)

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

2) Project and Purpose/Need (April Crockett, MnDOT)

a) Project objectives

3) Equity and Health Assessment (C Terrance Anderson)

a) Deputy Commissioner Collins acknowledges the significant effort and emotional labor EHNA members are investing and the damage to trust caused by the inadvertent release of the early draft Scoping Decision Document.

b) C Terrance Anderson provides overview of EHA Goals, Timeline, Process

c) PAC discussion

i) CM Chamblis – Requests timeline slide be shown. When will draft SDD be shared for public review?

(1) Project Team Response: Early 2023

ii) CM Xp Lee – Will the slides be shared following the meeting?

(1) Project Team Response: Slides will be posted by Wednesday morning (9/28), if not sooner.

4) Scoping Public Comment Period (Aaron Tag, MnDOT; Justin Sebens and Brett Danner, Consultant Team)

a) Overview of Public Scoping Comment Period Engagement Purpose and Objectives

i) Providing a 60-day comment period in contrast to typical 30-day public comment period.

b) Scoping Decision Document development process and timeline

- c) Public Scoping Comment Period
- d) Resources Available to PAC Members
- e) Help us spread the word
- f) Key Takeaways
- g) PAC Reflection
 - i) CM Lee – Is it correct the SDD will only recommend a 6 lane freeway option? Will a 4 lane be recommended?
 - ii) Deputy Commissioner – No decisions, no alternatives have been selected.
 - iii) CM Lee – very interested in seeing a 4 lane highway option be one of the main choices along with a 6 lane option.

Open Comment Period – 15 minutes

- Tom Kouri – Draft SDD was 233 page document version 2.4 dated June 2022. There is extensive work that has gone into this by many people. But the EHNA group has not been informed that MnDOT is only looking at 6-lane freeway alternatives with unsafe interchanges. Our analysis is showing other alternatives are safer and contribute to different project objectives. Understanding that purpose of public SDD will be to comment on recommendations. What has happened to the alternatives previously considered? What is MnDOT going to do to allow the other alternatives to move forward?
- David Mulla – MnDOT is using a Purpose and Need statement that is narrowly focused on transportation issues. It highly prioritizes alternatives that increase traffic numbers and minimally decreases transit travel times between Brooklyn Park and downtown Minneapolis. Purpose & Need needs to change to add safety, health and environmental criteria.
- Nahid Khan – I want to comment on the property impacts of constructing a 6-lane freeway. A 6-lane freeway project will encroach on, devalue homes, and will displace large numbers of residents. In our analysis, based on MnDOT data, the 6 lane project will impact up to 148 houses, disproportionately affecting BIPOC owned properties, 11 businesses, and 2 churches. Also will eliminate two park and ride locations and two bus stops. Will impact two neighborhood parks and Mississippi River Regional Trail. Highly inequitable impacts on working class and people of color and harmful to our communities. Alternatives with other benefits must be considered. Requests MnDOT eliminate 6-lane freeway alternatives.
- Linda Kussman – I want to applaud folks from our neighborhood. I don't know if MnDOT understands how many people the speakers represent who noted concern about the concerns on 6-lane freeway.

Written Comments

Provided via the Q&A feature during the meeting.

- Nahid Khan - The "Scoping Document & draft Scoping Decision Document" version 2.4 dated June 2022, with comments by MnDOT reviewer BG dated July 2022 was not an early version. It was version 2.4; this means there was a version 2.3, 2.2, 2.1, 2.0, all the version 1s back to 1.0 and then previous partial drafts. It is a long (over 200 pages), polished, detailed, complete and very mature version, clearly written during and prior to the April and May community open houses and public comment period. It was not an "early" draft. See for yourself at the Highway 252 Safety Task Force web site where we have posted a copy.
- Nahid Khan - Please recap which PAC members are present.
- Nahid Khan - What is the earliest date of the release of the Notice of Intent?
- Nahid Khan - "people" and "goods" are euphemisms: it means "cars" and "trucks".
- Nahid Khan - the pollution from exponentially increased air pollution from vastly increased vehicle numbers and speeds negates any supposed public health improvements; rather they negate and worsen public health.
- Nahid Khan - the draft SDD version 2.4, dated June 2022 was complete from the MnDOT project team's end.
- Nahid Khan - there is a ton of research showing the public health harms of freeway pollution. use it.
- Nahid Khan - Speaking as a member of the Equity and Health Neighborhood Advisors for the Equity and Health Assessment for this project: MnDOT appointed an Equity and Health Neighborhood Advisors (EHNA) group, and informed them that they would be able to provide input on project alternatives. Yet the draft Scoping Decision Document (SDD) version 2.4 from June of 2022 stated that all project alternatives except the 6-lane freeway would be eliminated from further consideration. The EHNA group has not yet and is not expected to provide input on project alternatives until October or November, and a summary of their input in EHNA Report #3 will not be completed until several months thereafter. MnDOT is planning to send out the draft SDD for review to cooperating and participating agency partners in November. This means that EHNA's input on project alternatives (as summarized in Report #3) will not appear in the draft SDD before it is sent out for review by cooperating and participating agency partners.

We can only conclude from this set of facts that MnDOT's engagement with EHNA was never intended to and will never influence MnDOT's decision

- Nahid Khan - Let's face it, the community engagement and public comment is just PR to show the agencies that it was done, not to have any actual impact or make changes except possibly minor symbolic ones
- Nahid Khan - In EHNA meeting #7 in June, I said I thought that the work as presented then was "radical"; I withdraw that assessment, given that the draft SDD version 2.4 dated June

recommends elimination of all project alternatives but the two 6-lane freeway alternatives (with or without Toll Lanes / EZPass).

- Nahid Khan - The April and May Community Open Houses sprung a lot of information upon the community and public at large for the Hwy 252 part of this project, but left out any details on I-94. We still have little to no information on I-94. We have not had enough time as a community to learn more about the project design alternatives, discuss them, get our questions answered and have community discussions about what is going on. Then your project team immediately had the draft SDD version 2.4 dated June prepared shortly afterwards, meaning the Community Open Houses were just PR, as a show that other projects other than 6-lane freeways were supposedly being considered. This is all very unethical.
- Nahid Khan - The agency review is nothing more than rubber stamping whatever is recommended by the draft SDD that the MnDOT project team sends to the agencies: i.e. the 6-lane freeway design alternatives, which is the predetermined outcome from the start of this Hwy 252 / I-94 project Environmental Review, and the very same as the preferred alternative in the previous Hennepin County led Environmental Assessment that was failed and closed out by the Federal Highway Administration - MN Division without a report, in early 2020. And the recommendations of the prior reports going back to 2016. There has never been any other project on the table but the conversion of the Hwy 252 expressway to a 6-lane freeway.
- Nahid Khan - Basically, this whole process is totally biased towards getting the 6-lane freeway with Toll Lanes through this Environmental Review, and then the federal NEPA EIS.
- Nahid Khan - It is really sad that there are so few PAC members present. What are you doing to ensure they are present and engaged in this process?
- Nahid Khan - The PAC member attendance at the June PAC meeting also was extremely low.
- Tom Kouri - Purpose and Need - MnDOT's narrow transportation-focused Purpose and Need statement is being used to eliminate project alternatives that are safer, less polluting, healthier and more equitable than the 6-lane freeway that MnDOT is pursuing. It doesn't fulfill several of the Project Objectives mentioned in today's PAC meeting. For years, the public has been asking that MnDOT develop a Purpose and Need statement that places the highest priority on safety, public health, environmental protection and equity. This has not happened. MnDOT's single-minded focus on replacing Hwy 252 with a 6-lane freeway through Brooklyn Park (BP).
- Nahid Khan - When are you posting this presentation to the project web site? You have a very bad track record of posting PAC meeting materials to the web site. It is not at all timely. The meeting presentation and meeting summary is posted less than a week before the NEXT meeting, that is, two or more months after the meeting took place. The date of PAC meetings is posted only about 2 weeks in advance; the days and times seem to be constantly shifting and are inconsistent.
- Nahid Khan - Why are the PAC meetings not speaking up?
- Brendan McCarthy - Since the start of this project in 2014 the former mayor of Brooklyn Center and a council member ignored what the public said or even wouldn't let the public speak about their concerns with the elimination of the safe interchange and how dangerous the interchange

at 66th is and would be. In 2015 the ultimate access point for Brooklyn Center that actually met state and federal safety requirements was eliminated and the only access was the extremely dangerous and damaging to the Mississippi National Park Critical area with interchange at 66th. The interchange at 66th doesn't even come close to meeting safety requirement (people will die and crash rates will increase). From 2014 we have asked for crash rate comparison between the interchange at 66th and what was the Brooklyn Centers ultimate access point at 70th. This distrust has been developed through the entire EA and EIS process. How much of the taxpayers \$ has been spent to misinforming or actual providing false information to the public, city councils?

- Nahid Khan - MnDOT's narrow transportation-focused Purpose and Need statement is being used to eliminate project alternatives that are safer, less polluting, healthier and more equitable than the 6-lane freeway that MnDOT is pursuing.

For years, the public has been asking that MnDOT develop a Purpose and Need statement that places the highest priority on safety, public health, environmental protection and equity. This has not happened.

We conclude that MnDOT's Purpose for the Hwy 252 project is in reality to spend funds that have already been allocated by Hennepin County and other sources for the construction of a 6-lane freeway (during the previous Hennepin County led Environmental Assessment, which was failed and closed out by the Federal Highway Administration - MN Division, in early 2020). Hennepin County made an unprecedented decision between July 2020 and January 2021 to hold those funds beyond the normal one year to five years, to 2026, when they expect / plan for Hwy 252 to be converted from expressway to free

- Nahid Khan - The upcoming Public Comment on the draft SDD will only be focused on issues such as whether or not a 6-lane freeway should have pay lanes, and which intersections should be converted to interchanges.

We wish the Public to be able to consider and comment on alternatives other than a 6-lane freeway that would perform better on safety, health, environmental and equity criteria.

- Nahid Khan - The draft SDD version 2.4 from June 2022 indicates that MnDOT is not planning to allow any alternatives to be considered in the EIS that might score better than a 6-lane freeway on issues of safety, equity, health or environment. This is a shocking development that indicates MnDOT's lack of attention to public input or concern for safety, equity, health and environment.
- Nahid Khan - MnDOT has conducted a glaringly superficial assessment of equity, health and environmental impacts that ignores the impacts of a 6-lane freeway on air pollution, ground water, greenhouse gases, and human health. A 6-lane freeway performs poorly when these criteria are adequately considered, yet because of a narrow focus on transportation goals, this is the only alternative MnDOT is planning to consider in the draft SDD. The public deserves to have alternatives in the SDD that perform better than the 6-lane freeway on pollution, health and equity.
- Nahid Khan - Traffic-induced air pollution currently kills a total of 44 people who have asthma or COPD every four years in North Minneapolis (NM), BC and BP. This is 7 times the number of

people currently killed in crashes on Hwy 252/I-94 over the same time period. The number of traffic-induced respiratory-related deaths and adverse health for residents and school children at Monroe and Evergreen Elementary Schools will increase greatly if a 6-lane freeway is built, and this is a fatal flaw. The 6-lane freeway alternative should be eliminated because of this fatal flaw.

- TJ Ryan - How is safety being addressed without including Minnesota Public Safety e.g. Highway Patrol having a stronger presence in this area to address safety concerns as an alternate method to modifying 252?
- Nahid Khan - Construction of a 6-lane freeway will encroach on, devalue and lead to seizure of many properties along Hwy 252 in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park, displacing large numbers of residents. Direct property impacts will occur at up to 148 houses (disproportionately affecting BIPOC occupied properties) and 2 apartment buildings, 11 businesses, and 2 churches. It will also eliminate 2 park and ride locations and 4 bus stops for the Metro Transit express bus route to downtown Minneapolis, while impacting 2 parks and the West Mississippi Regional Trail, which is located in the Mississippi River National Park in Brooklyn Center. I would ask that you drop 6-lane freeways entirely.
- Nahid Khan - These have highly inequitable impacts on the majority low-income, working class and people of color cities, and are harmful to our BIPOC communities. Alternatives more equitable than a 6-lane freeway should be considered in the draft SDD.
- Nahid Khan - We wish the draft SDD to recommend alternatives other than a 6-lane freeway that would perform well on safety, health, equity and environmental criteria. In fact, I urge you to drop the 6-lane freeway project alternatives entirely.
- Nahid Khan - The MnDOT STAC itself recommends a moratorium on building and expanding highways and freeways. Sustainable Transportation Advisory Council.
- Nahid Khan - Please be very timely on PAC meetings and posting materials. Be transparent, open and accountable to taxpayers.

Adjourned at 3:30 pm

Next PAC Meeting

The next PAC meeting will be held in early 2023.