



# Hwy 252/I-94 Equity & Health Assessment (EHA) Equity and Health Neighborhood Advisors -- Meeting #9

Tuesday, September 13, 2022 | 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm  
North Regional Library - 1315 Lowry Ave N, Minneapolis, MN 55411  
Zoom Meeting ID: 940 3814 8352 | Passcode: 379240

## Attendees

### **EHNA members:**

1. Akia Vang, North Minneapolis resident
2. Darryl Sannes, Brooklyn Center resident
3. Jim Wynne, Brooklyn Center resident
4. John Wexler, Brooklyn Park resident
5. Michael Svard, Brooklyn Park resident
6. Nahid Kahn, Brooklyn Center resident
7. Sherri Orr, North Minneapolis resident
8. Tammy McLemore, Brooklyn Park resident
9. Tara McCarthy, Brooklyn Center resident

### **Staff and consultants:**

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

## Notes

### 1. Introductions

### 2. Draft Scoping Decision Document (SDD) Version 2.4 discussion

- C Terrence Anderston facilitated discussion between EHNA members and MnDOT staff about the release of the Scoping Document & Draft Scoping Decision Document Highway 252/I-94 Corridor Report Version 2.4 in August.

EHNA questions and discussion of release:

- I arrived half an hour early to today's meeting to talk and it is clear to me that for staff, this is your job, but for us, it's our lives. The report caused me a lot of pain. Everything I have been doing and the time I have spent coming to meetings for five years is for nothing.
- The Highway 252 Safety Task Force have been challenging MnDOT for five years, and doing an amazing job of making sure that this project is healthy and equitable for all communities involved. We saw the SDD in August. It's not just a working document. Confused how posting this document could be a fluke? It's disingenuous to present the SDD to agency partners without public input incorporated. It's a process without integrity. If decisions have been made and we're wasting our time, just let us know. You're at the MnDOT table and we're not. This is what we get. If this is a place to just check a box and our feedback is not going to have any impact, just tell us.
- And this public engagement process is not just to appease EHNA members. It's everyone you've spoken with. All the broader public engagement that happened earlier.
  - MnDOT is not taking this lightly. There were a lot of internal conversations these past few weeks. The ENHA is a new process for MnDOT and trust at the core of this process. I am sorry for the pain that we have caused with the release of the draft SDD. Nothing can change this. We understand that trust is lost and that you can't trust what we say. EHNA and community input on the alternatives in the SDD will be incorporated in January 2023 as part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process that MnDOT has to follow for the Hwy 252/I-94 Environmental Health Assessment (EHA).
- The draft SDD is a 200-page document. It's version 2.4. I don't trust that changes are likely to be made on the alternatives when it's so far along already.
  - MnDOT can't share with community members what has changed in the draft SDD, but we can say that all project alternatives are still at play.
  - A lot of people need to review the draft SDD before it goes public, including a variety of agency partners. There will be changes. MnDOT leadership is also very interested in the EHNA process since it's the first of its kind at MnDOT, and they want to hear your feedback on the alternatives.

- Who is writing the draft SDD report? Who will review it?
  - The cooperating agencies will review the document, including Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), City of Brooklyn Park, City of Brooklyn Center, City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and others.
- It feels so backwards. None of the health and equity parameters most important to the EHNA are included in the draft SDD. Why would MnDOT build a project with only six-lane alternatives if they knew a project partner was not going to approve it?
- Either MnDOT has not communicated well what EHNA feedback can influence or our expectations for what we can influence is beyond the actual scope of the EHNA. Is it a misunderstanding on our part about what our input means to MnDOT? Are we misunderstanding where we can have input on the process?
- When I heard about the draft SDD, it was a punch to gut. MnDOT has been untruthful and misleading. The only time I got the truth was when I spoke with a MnDOT surveyor on West River Road. He said it's going to be a six-lane freeway and all the public engagement is for show. Health and equity is how MnDOT can mitigate the effects of a six-lane freeway. The last 2 weeks have been very painful and depressing.
- I feel very disappointed. I am very passionate about active transportation and feel passionately about having input on improving active transportation in my community. It's hard to rebuild trust when the trust is broken. I feel disappointed for the people and communities that we're representing.
- It saddens me to think our time isn't considered precious by MnDOT. I'm dealing with some major unexpected health issues. It is difficult to listen to the lack of integrity. MnDOT is just going to do what they want to do. I don't see how we're taken seriously.
- Who wrote this version 2.4? It's not an early version. It implies that there was 2.3, 2.2, etc. People say "do your upmost through official channels. But those channels are there to make you think you can do something, but you can't." This whole system is infused with inequity. We have no power. MnDOT has power. MnDOT has the power of eminent domain. What are people going to do when they get a letter that they need to move out? The original Met Council 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) had no mention of the Hwy 252/1-94 project. The update to the TPP in 2018 had the first mention of it. The justification for the project was to build MnPASS lanes, now E-ZPass lanes, as a new revenue stream for MnDOT. There was not even a mention about congestion. It's an appalling inequity that revenue is the justification. And realistically, it means only four-lanes for local people, not six-lanes, because people from Brooklyn Center won't use the E-ZPass lanes when they're only traveling a couple of exits. It saves only 1-4 minutes of driving time. If you need to, leave 1-4 minutes earlier. This smacks of highway colonialism. It's a method of extracting land and wealth from communities of lower levels of power.
- I want to see a specific list of agencies and staff who will be reviewing the SDD.

- To move forward, the EHNA needs to get their questions from today and the letter that was sent to MnDOT answered. We can't move forward without that. If it's more of the same, then why are we doing this? EHNA questions for MnDOT include:
  - Who wrote the draft SDD version 2.4?
  - Who read it before EHNA saw it in August?
  - Who will review the SDD? The agencies and names of staff.
    - The cooperating agencies and staff are listed in the [Coordination Plan](#) on the website (if you need the Coordination Plan in an alternative format, contact [ADArequest.dot@state.mn.us](mailto:ADArequest.dot@state.mn.us)).
  - Can we see the previous drafts of the SDD from 1.0 to 2.4?
  - Can you clarify how the EHNA is part of this process? Are we a partner agency or member of the public? How will Report 3 be used? Can the SDD process be slowed down so Report 3 can be included in the SDD that goes to partner agencies?
  - Can we revisit the purpose and need statement of the Hwy 252/I-94 project to include EHNA health and equity priorities? The focus of the purpose and need is very restrictive, and I don't see how health and equity will have role in that. No community engagement was conducted when the purpose and need statement was written.
  - Can we get a timeline of the Environmental Review? Why did it begin in May 2020? Why did FHWA fail the Environmental Assessment (EA)? Why did MnDOT not spend any time reflecting on the EA before beginning the Environmental Review?
- Is this a tactic to get EHNA members to say we don't want to be involved? And then MnDOT can do whatever?
  - I wouldn't be here, representing MnDOT, if I didn't believe in this process and think your feedback was valuable. As an agency, we can't get ahead of the NEPA process.
  - The draft SDD was on an internal server between MnDOT on the engineering consultant. That server was mistakenly posted publicly. This was a mistake and not a tactic to make EHNA members quit this process. Version 2.4 is the latest version. The consultant is working on next version. It was published on an internal server and no other agencies have reviewed it.
    - Was it a mistake to drop all alternatives except for the six-lane alternatives?
- Advocacy is about anger. Enough angry people can make a change.
- This has been very informative. Hang in there EHNA. I have to leave the meeting, but I would like to be contacted by leader.
  - Project staff will follow up after the meeting.
- I have ideas and feedback for the [Hwy 252/I-94 project website](#). I can send an email with my ideas.
- The MnDOT and project staff here are carrying a message for others. The people accountable need to be accountable to us. Maybe the MnDOT decision makers need to come down here and answer questions.

- Want to reiterate the sentiments of other EHNA members. I will not be able to make the rescheduled October EHNA meeting. Why was the meeting rescheduled?
  - The meeting was rescheduled to provide project staff more time to get the meeting materials together. Because the August EHNA meeting was rescheduled for now, we lost a month to get the October materials ready.

### **3. Wrap up and MnDOT's commitments to EHNA members**

- C Terrence wrapped up the meeting and shared MnDOT's commitments to respond to EHNA members. MnDOT is committing to:
  - a. Answering EHNA members questions from today's meeting and in the letter. We will send the questions out to EHNA members so you can see what we're responding to.
  - b. Reconsidering the structure of the EHNA to provide more accountability and transparency.
  - c. Requesting that MnDOT leadership present to the EHNA and answer further questions.
  - d. If we do these things well and members want to stay involved in the EHNA, we will work with you to reorganize and reschedule the upcoming meetings.