

Hwy 316: Turning concerns into solutions

Project background

- [Hwy 316 Improvements Project](#)
- In 2014, the Minnesota Legislature mandated that the Minnesota Department of Transportation conduct a speed study on all 55-mph highways.
- In 2015, MnDOT completed a speed study on the full length of Hwy 316, including both the 55-mph section and the lower speed sections in the city of Hastings.
- As the speed increase message was being shared, the elected officials in the area introduced legislation language that would have prohibited MnDOT from changing speed limits on the roadway.
- In an effort to remove the legislation language, MnDOT committed to reviewing the roadway with a future project scheduled for fiscal year '21.
- The pavement on Hwy 316 from the junction at Hwy 61 to just south of Tuttle Drive in Hastings has outlived its useful life and is anticipated to be replaced in 2021.
- MnDOT is studying other corridor improvements that could be made at the same time to help with safety and traffic flow for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Public engagement challenge

- MnDOT identified this as a preservation project with a single trail addition when it was initially scoped internally.
- The project team understood the history in this area, knew that further review with the city and public was needed. MnDOT started a large engagement effort in January 2018 to understand and document the public's concerns with the roadway, and come up with different concepts to help address the public's concerns.
- MnDOT asked for the public's concerns with Hwy 316 at the first open house. The top four concerns heard included speed, access, safety and bike/ped connections.
- The public's number one concern was vehicle access. This concern, when reviewed with current traffic counts, was based on a 1-hour-per-day timeframe during the PM peak. The intersections operate at an overall level of service (LOS) A for the whole day.

Public engagement tool

- MnDOT partnered with the city of Hastings and HDR Consulting to reach out to the public to better understand the concerns associated with Hwy 316.
- Outreach efforts included:
 - Four city council meetings
 - Three open houses
 - One online comment map
 - One online open house
 - Two business meetings
- Tools used:
 - Hastings Star Gazette
 - Hastings radio station
 - Hastings Public TV
 - City website
 - City Facebook
 - MnDOT Facebook
 - MnDOT Twitter
 - MnDOT website

- The outreach efforts helped shape the needs and objectives of the corridor evaluation, and allowed MnDOT to target the concepts to best meet the concerns heard from the public.
- In December 2018, the city council selected and unanimously approved the preferred concept.

Key takeaways

- MnDOT completed both internal and external engagement for this project, which has come a long way in one year. On Jan. 1, 2018, MnDOT had a preservation scope, which included minimal input from the public. On Dec. 3, 2018, the city of Hastings Council unanimously provided support for the recommended concept. The draft concepts went through a robust internal engagement process to ensure the designs met MnDOT needs, and would be approved if reviewed during the layout process. MnDOT is currently moving forward with design and the city is looking for additional funding since there is a funding gap.

Level of engagement: involve

- The concepts presented to the public gave them a chance to weigh in on the future of this roadway and its impact on their lives. There were a couple of hiccups along the way, but in the end, the recommended concept received unanimous support from the Hastings City Council.
- Typically, preservation projects don't include much, if any, public outreach. This project changed all of that and completely drove the outcome, resulting in project buy-in from the public and businesses.

Caveat

- This level of involvement took a lot of time and resources, both by MnDOT and HDR. The hard work has been well received, but understanding the team's availability will help ensure success.

Quote

- "MnDOT was not listening to react, we were listening to collaborate and to come up with solutions to the concerns heard from the public." - Kirsten Klein, MnDOT Metro public affairs coordinator

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Keywords

- Multiple community concerns, involve, roundabout, trail, speed, speed limit, context sensitive design, MRT, Hwy 316, Hastings, Dakota County.

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