

# Rethinking I-94 Phase 2 Community Leaders Meeting (Meeting 16)

Date: 7/18/2023 (4:30-6:00 p.m.)

## **In-Person Attendance Option:**

MnDOT Central Office

*Conference Room G13 and G14*

*395 John Ireland Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55155*

## **Virtual Meeting Option:**

Zoom Webinar

## **Meeting Summary**

### **1. Welcome**

- Melissa Barnes (MnDOT) welcomed the group, introduced the presenters, and gave an overview of the meeting content and logistics.
- Sheila Kauppi (MnDOT) started the process of introductions for Community Leaders, MnDOT staff, and consultants. She also provided an overview of the agenda items.
- Mike Hughes facilitated the meeting administration and etiquette. There will be an opportunity for questions and comments during the presentation. Reviewed protocol for asking questions or making comments.
  - Reviewed courtesies to think about during the meeting and to be mindful of others in the room or participating via Zoom.
  - Addressed the transportation purpose and need statement. Explained why it is written and how other items are incorporated via the Statement of Goals.

### **2. Schedule**

- Sheila shared the project schedule to show where the project has been, where it currently is and the anticipated timeline. Reviewed Phase 1 community engagement and that we are currently in Phase 2. The Scoping phase is expected to go through June 2024. The alternatives will be high level and at this point there is not a preferred alternative. The Tier 1 EIS process is expected to take place summer 2024 – 2027. Alternatives will be evaluated in

more detail as part of the Tier 1 EIS. This will determine the overall vision for the corridor and will include a visual quality analysis. The Tier 2 environmental documents will occur from 2027 and forward. By design this process is not intended to be quick, but to carefully consider feedback and alternatives.

### 3. Alternatives

- Jack Corkle (WSB) explained the draft alternatives development process. Public input was gathered, and testing was completed at a high level to understand some of the general implications of different options. Workshops were held with project committees. Roadway and transit ideas were combined into alternatives. Several roadway ideas were dismissed, and three alternatives were added based on stakeholder feedback. Key takeaways were shared regarding potential impacts of alternatives that increase or reduce capacity. Additional detail work will come at the Tier 1 EIS level. MnDOT is aware that each alternative will have tradeoffs that will need to be balanced in the evaluation process.
  - Jack noted the No Build alternative needs to be carried forward as part of the environmental requirements.
  
- Jess Karls (WSB) shared information on the draft alternatives and what was taken into consideration when creating them. The project team is working to understand where there are challenges and gathering feedback from people who use the corridor or are impacted by it. Additional alternatives can be added, and alternatives can be modified based on feedback.
  - General Maintenance, Maintenance A, and Maintenance B
    - General Maintenance is the No Build alternative.
    - These alternatives do not change the existing lane configuration of the freeway.
    - Maintenance B would involve replacement of the existing infrastructure to current standards and extension of bus shoulders between downtown Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul.
  - At-Grade – A
    - Removal of the existing freeway and replacing it with an at-grade roadway featuring dedicated bus rapid transit (BRT) lanes in the center with three stops.
  - At-Grade – B
    - Removal of the existing freeway and replacing it with an at-grade roadway featuring dedicated bus rapid transit (BRT) lanes on each side of the roadway with three stops.
    - The biggest difference from At-Grade – A is the location of the bus rapid transit (BRT).

- Local/Regional Roadways – A
  - A separation into two roadway systems, providing a separate local traffic roadway and freeway space for through trips.
  - The local system provides transportation options for local traffic, while the regional system offers limited access for regional traffic and includes transit on the shoulder.
- Reduced Freeway – A
  - Rebuilding the existing freeway to include two general purpose lanes and one managed lane (E-ZPass express lane) with bus rapid transit (BRT) in each direction.
  - The BRT system could include up to three strategically placed stops along the managed lane.
  - Transit Options: No transit stops (Transit – 0); 1 transit stop at Snelling (Transit -1); or 3 transit stops at 25<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Ave, Snelling Ave, and Dale St (Transit -3).
- Reconfigure Freeway – A
  - Rebuilding the existing freeway to include three general purpose lanes and one managed lane (E-ZPass express lane) with bus rapid transit (BRT) in each direction.
  - The BRT system could include up to three strategically placed stops along the managed lane.
  - Transit Options: No transit stops (Transit – 0); 1 transit stop at Snelling (Transit – 1); or 3 transit stops at 25<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Ave, Snelling Ave, and Dale St (Transit – 3).
  - A major difference from the previous alternative, is that an additional lane would be added.
- Expanded Freeway – A
  - Rebuilding the existing freeway and adding one managed lane (E-ZPass express lane) with bus rapid transit (BRT) in each direction.
  - The number of lanes will vary throughout the corridor.
  - The BRT system could include up to three strategically placed stops along the managed lane.
  - Transit Options: No transit stops (Transit – 0); 1 transit stop at Snelling (Transit – 1); or 3 transit stops at 25<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> Ave, Snelling Ave, and Dale St (Transit – 3).
- Expanded Freeway – B
  - Rebuilding the existing freeway to include the current lane configuration plus an additional general-purpose lane and adding a shoulder along the entire corridor for a transit lane in each direction.
- There is currently not a preferred alternative.

#### 4. Questions/Comments on Alternatives

- Andy Singer: Would the at grade A & B have the same footprint as the current freeway? Is MnDOT willing to give up any of the land if the highway footprint shrinks?
  - Melissa Barnes (MnDOT): These designs are not to scale. These are generalized cross sections. By design these are not to scale as alternatives are being discussed. In general, MnDOT does not want additional land on their hands. Sometimes there is a need to keep it. Other potential uses of right of way will be discussed later in the process.
  
- Alice Roberts Davis: There are specific managed lanes. Is there an opportunity to think about managing all the lanes? To make it a toll road.
  - Melissa Barnes (MnDOT): Not going to comment on what can/ can't be done. Appreciate the mention of this idea.
  
- Alice Roberts Davis: Are future employment and other factors taken into consideration?
  - Melissa Barnes (MnDOT): Regional model used for testing roadway ideas assumes growth that is accounted for in comprehensive plans.
  
- Alex Burns: Excited and encouraged about the at grade option. Would like to see different variations of it. Our Streets has heard from community members that turning I-94 into at-grade roadway with below grade transit would be helpful. Could an underground subway with the at grade roadway be an option? Are these the renderings that are going to be in the MnDOT public engagement survey? If so, would like to encourage MnDOT to use a scale to make it easier for folks to imagine.
  - Melissa Barnes (MnDOT): These are the renderings that will be used for public engagement, they are not to scale by design. More details will be provided later in the process.
  
- David Juliff: Does at grade assume the full removal of the Mississippi River bridge? Has the Livability Framework been part of the development of alternatives?
  - Melissa Barnes (MnDOT): With at grade, the Mississippi River bridge would still be there. The Livability Framework was considered in developing the alternatives and will be used to evaluate the alternatives.
  - Sheila Kauppi (MnDOT): Clarified that if the road was at grade, the river bridge may need to be reconstructed—it is not clear at this time.
  
- Amanda Duerr: Are there implications with USDOT for moving from an interstate to an at-grade roadway—can that be done? For the business community, there would be concerns about creating a bottle neck with the commerce that goes through Minneapolis and St. Paul. I-94 is a vital artery.
  - Melissa Barnes (MnDOT): I-94 would no longer be designated as an interstate if it were turned into an at-grade facility. The road also may not be owned by the state at that point.

- Hallie Q. Brown Member: Keep the community in mind. This is a corridor utilized for people to travel to work, school, and events. The Twin Cities are unique in that we are two cities that are connected by I-94 and there needs to be consideration of traffic into the neighborhoods. The Rondo Community's homes were stolen, and eminent domain was used to decimate the community. If you fill in the highway and put in a smaller street, the results of this would hurt those that have built their lives and businesses around the freeway.
  
- Barb Thoman: The alternatives talk a lot about a managed lane. Outside of peak times they can be used by anyone so adding these would really be like adding general purpose lanes. We need to think about the growth in the communities around I-94. Heard a lot at yesterday's meeting that this project must meet what has been adopted as the purpose and need. We need to be reminded of the purpose and need statement for this project. Frustrated and not satisfied with changes to the purpose and need. Also, the state could still own an at-grade road.
  
- Jonathan Palmer: Want to make sure we are keeping in mind the people who are going to be affected by this. Don't see any way that decreasing the highway will decrease congestion. We are unique in having the Twin Cities in this corridor. Two separate cities function in their own ways but need this corridor to get between each other. The traffic will go somewhere and most likely to the neighborhoods. It's important to think about the impact when this freeway was built. Homes were taken away from the Rondo community. If you fill in the highway, that says everything that the community has experienced was for nothing. We have come so far to build connections and community. The impact of removing it will be as destructive, if not more. Think of the cost on the people who actually live in the communities, who are not well off and who need their car to travel to more than one location and to work.
  
- Sarah Anderson: Members of Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) have not seen the alternatives yet. Concerned about burden that would be placed on businesses, that rely on the freeway to be successful, including small and BIPOC-owned businesses. They rely on individuals coming downtown to participate and support their businesses. If we go to at-grade and lose the highway designation from the federal government, do we lose the funding? Will this add more burden to the local taxpayers?
  - Melissa Barnes (MnDOT): Confirmed there would likely be less federal funding coming in and the spread of funding responsibility would be different.
  - Sheila Kauppi (MnDOT): Good question. This is something we need to be looking at. For example, if it's not state-owned, does the city or county have the resources and how would they be impacted by cost of maintaining the road.
  
- Ben Shardlow: Agrees that access to destinations will be top of mind for many people. Will narrowing the freeway one way or another create development opportunities? There is traffic calming happening everywhere in our region—to narrow roads so they are less of a barrier in neighborhoods. How long does it take a pedestrian to cross? What are the

conditions? Are there buildings that make it feel like a shorter crossing? As a region, we need to understand the development opportunities created by narrowing I-94 and other impacts. Have a concurrent analysis of development and within the benefits-cost analysis it is important to consider what the economic benefits could be.

- Scott Berger: Sees I-94 as a barrier. Is interested in being able to safely cross the freeway as a pedestrian. Sees the renderings and feels that it ignores pedestrians. The scale is very important when communicating to the public.
- Mary Morse Marti: The highway today causes numerous health problems and there are many schools that sit along the highway. Have been losing property taxes that were destroyed by the highway decades ago. Businesses are not going to come back unless the value is captured from an at-grade roadway option. Wants these items to be top of mind all the time for everyone.
- Hugo Bruggeman (question asked via the Zoom chat): Could you add a rendering of the cross streets. And how each alternative impacts the type and number of cross streets. This will drive discussion with local communities.
  - Kaylee Tracy (Rapp Strategies): Thank you for your question. We'll do our best to answer it at the appropriate time.
- Hugo Bruggeman: The freeway is like another river, and it creates a barrier. Communities in each city see each other very little because of it. It creates a problem for accessibility for local people. A lot of traffic is created by people doing local trips. Believes MnDOT has done studies that have compared local and regional users of I-94. Did not recall what the study was called or where it could be found. It is good to know the traffic patterns and impacts for both. The study should compare regional and local traffic users. Important to consider the communities north and south of the freeway.

## 5. Public Engagement

- Renee Raduenz (MnDOT) Explained that MnDOT is committed to reaching out to the community, working together and gathering feedback. Thanked the group for their assistance so far with community events and reiterated that MnDOT wants to participate and hear from the community.
- Alyssa Kruzel (MnDOT) Reviewed community events that have been done so far. Most recently have been letting folks know that alternatives were coming. Shared a list of events that MnDOT currently is scheduled to participate in. MnDOT continues to explore new events as well and is willing to hear about more events so they can have a presence.
- Renee Raduenz (MnDOT) shared upcoming neighborhood and council meetings where MnDOT will be presenting. Also shared that business outreach is on the schedule and a goal

to do more 1:1 business outreach. Explained that MnDOT will be releasing an online survey. Shared the list of digital and print outlets being leveraged to spread the word about the survey in a wide variety of mediums. Materials continue to be translated to make them more accessible. The Let's Talk Transportation webpage has been updated recently for community members to visit for the most up to date information. Reviewed next steps in terms of partnering and upcoming public meetings.

## 6. Questions/Comments on Public Engagement

- Alex Burns: When do you plan to have the survey go live?
  - Renee Raduenz (MnDOT): Plan to have survey go live tomorrow.
- Unknown Commenter: Event suggestion: Union Park District Peanut Butter and Jam.
- Unknown Commenter: Are you planning to talk with schools to get feedback from the kids?
  - Renee Raduenz (MnDOT): Yes, hoping to collaborate with the schools in this process.
  - Alyssa Kruzel (MnDOT): Planning to collaborate with schools in both Minneapolis and St. Paul.
- Unknown Commenter: National Night Out is coming up. This is a great way to get to places near the highway and along the corridor.
- Sarah Anderson: Would love for MnDOT to come and speak to her members.
  - Renee Raduenz (MnDOT): Will follow up with her after the meeting.
- Katherine Hinz: What other groups are giving feedback? Are there other groups like the Community Leaders and the Policy Advisory Committee?
  - Melissa Barnes (MnDOT): There are elected officials on the PAC, technical committees, business owners (more informally), Community Leaders and general public opinion.

## 7. Closing Remarks

- Melissa Barnes (MnDOT) Thanked everyone for joining and for all the input. MnDOT aims to meet quarterly with the Community Leaders, with the next anticipated date in the fall.

## Next Meeting

Date: Fall 2023, TBD

Time: TBD

Location: Zoom Meeting

## Community Leaders Meeting Participants

Present	Last Name	First Name	Organization
x	Juliff	David	Be Civil – Reconnect Rondo
Virtual	Anderson	Sarah	Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA Greater Minneapolis)
Virtual	Magee	Rev. Frenchye	Camphor Memorial United Methodist
	Oglesby	Rev. Dennis	Camphor Memorial United Methodist
	Fure	John	Capitol River Council
	Schroeer	Will	East Metro Strong
x	Johnson, Wako	Glen	Elliot Park Neighborhood
	Delaney	Will	Franklin Area Business Association (FABA)
x	Palmer	Johnathan	Hallie Q. Brown
Virtual	Nelson	Jenne	Hamline Midway Coalition
x	Hinz	Catherine	Lexington-Hamline Community Council
	Golemo	Alexa	Macalester-Groveland Community Council
Virtual	Bruggeman	Hugo	Macalester-Groveland Community Council
x	Ludtke	Spencer	Macalester-Groveland Community Council
Virtual	Shardlow	Ben	Minneapolis Downtown Council & Downtown Improvement District
	Hausladen	John	Minnesota Trucking Association
	Barobs	John	Move Minneapolis
	Orth	Tiffany	Move Minneapolis
Virtual	Nelson	Theresa	Move Minnesota
x	Letang	Baba	Neighborhood Development Center
x	Morse Marti	Mary	Neighborhoods First!
	Crary	David	North Loop Neighborhood Association
	Merrifield	Diane	North Loop Neighborhood Association
Virtual	Lucas	Krista	Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC)
x	Burns	Alex	Our Streets Minneapolis
Virtual	Frank	David	Prospect Park Association
Virtual	Baker	Keith	ReConnect Rondo
x	Thompson	Pat	Saint Anthony Park Community Council



<b>Present</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
x	Duerr	Amanda	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce
x	Singer	Andy	Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition
x	Peaslee	Deidra	Saint Paul College
x	Hestness	Andy	Seward Redesign: Redesign Inc
x	Mains	Sheldon	Seward Redesign: Redesign Inc
x	Thoman	Barb	Union Park District Council
x	Berger	Scott	Union Park District Council
x	Roberts-Davis	Alice	University of Minnesota
	Starr	KJ	West Bank Business Association
	Kons	Lisa	Minnesota Safety Council

### **Additional Meeting Participants**

<b>Present</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Virtual	Norsten	Dana	ReConnect Rondo
Virtual	Dougherty	Jennifer	ReConnect Rondo
x	Atkins	KC	Hennepin County

### **FHWA/MnDOT/Consultant Staff**

<b>Present</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Virtual	Varney	Anna	FHWA
Virtual	Kauppi	Sheila	MnDOT
x	Kruzel	Alyssa	MnDOT
x	Lopez	Ricardo	MnDOT
x	Barnes	Melissa	MnDOT
x	McCartney	Molly	MnDOT
Virtual	Krueger	Christine	MnDOT
x	Austin	Lisa	MnDOT
x	Goff	Bill	MnDOT
x	Raduenz	Renee	MnDOT

<b>Present</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
x	Bell	Broderick	MnDOT
x	Earp	Ryan	WSB
Virtual	Kazmierczak	Chevelle	WSB
Virtual	Mills Ford	Noel	WSB
x	Karls	Jessica	WSB
Virtual	Corkle	Jack	WSB
Virtual	McElroy	Karli	WSB
Virtual	Hauf	Austin	WSB
x	Oyaas	Sean	Rapp Strategies
Virtual	Tracy	Kaylee	Rapp Strategies
Virtual	Mitts	Meredith	Rapp Strategies
x	Hughes	Mike	Hughes Collaboration