

# Olson Memorial Highway Multimodal Study

## PAC Meeting 2

### Meeting Summary

**October 5, 2023 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

#### **Attending Members and Staff**

(18 Panelists)

**MnDOT** – Mark Linderberg, Mike Barnes (PAC chair), Christina Perfetti, Mike Samuelson, Jesse Johnson, Sheila Kauppi

**State of Minnesota** – Representative Esther Agbaje (PAC member), Alexis Varner (Aid to Senator Bobby Joe Champion)

**City of Minneapolis** – Bethany Turnwall (Policy Aid to Council Member Jeremiah Ellison), Ethan Fawley

**Hennepin County** – Dan Soler

**Metropolitan Council** – Nick Thompson (representative for Council Member Yassin Osman), Joe Widing

**Minneapolis Park Board** – Not present

**SRF Consulting** – Pat Corkle, Stephanie Falkers, Jono Cowgill, Chris Brown

**SDK Communications** – Stephanie Devitt

#### **General public**

(21 attendees)

Joe Bernard, Benjamin, Jolene Johnson, Carly Ellefson, Judy Johnson, Nich Thomas, Meghan E Hill, Jim Henricksen, Andrea, Gustave Steward, Jim Henricksen, Connor Carrol, Nahid Khan, H Jiahong Pan, Kyle Jones, Andrea, Charles Doss, Brian Anderson, Alex Burns, Yasmin Hirsi, Bethany M Nimmer

The Olson Memorial Highway Multimodal Study project team conducted a presentation to the Policy Advisory Committee which included the information below. For additional project information, please visit the project website.

### Opening Remarks

Welcome, Housekeeping, and Introductions (Mike Barnes, PAC Chair, MnDOT)

PAC members introduced themselves:

- Representative Esther Agbaje

- Alexis Varner, aid to Senator Bobby Joe Champion
- Bethany Turnwall, policy aid to Council Member Jeremiah Ellison
- Nick Thompson, representative for Council Member Yassin Osman

1. Study and Corridor Update - 10 minutes

PAC Reflection

Bethany Turnwall – Good to hear that some safety elements have been installed. Feedback from city residents has been regarding other possible safety enhancements (art, bike lanes, speed reduction).

- *Mike Samuelson responded noting that MnDOT will see how the current changes might improve safety. Art and painting might be limited by federal rules, etc., but checking.*

2. Purpose and Need Engagement Review and Summary – 20 minutes

PAC Reflection

Bethany Turnwall – We have also been hearing from constituents the desire to include “repair historic harms” as part of the purpose and need to create a corridor that is walkable, vibrant, and connected.

Representative Agbaje – What can be done to improve the safety of the roadway.

3. Corridor Needs and Evaluation Criteria – 30 minutes

PAC Reflection

Representative Agbaje – Is there a preview of graphic showing the roadway improvements?

- *Mike S. responded that MnDOT has made some interim improvements and that full roadway design alternative will be presented to the PAC in early 2024.*

Representative Agbaje – What is the timing of improvements (interim versus full improvements)?

- *Mike S. responded that the timeline is yet to be established. Everything could be installed all at once or in smaller sections depending on funding.*

4. Upcoming Engagement – 10 minutes

5. Opportunity to Address PAC Members, Public Comment – 15 minutes

- Andrea – The Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan is currently in appeals. How does that influence this process and what are we basing the pedestrian volumes upon as the plan is in flux?
- Connor – Minneapolis resident (Kingfield, used to live in the area). It is very hard to get around by bike and bike, difficult with high vehicle speeds. He suggested the use of dedicated bike infrastructure, including bike lanes, along the corridor. He noted that he is learning more about the history of displacement.
- Nick – North Minneapolis Resident and youth community member. Olson Memorial Highway currently has a dangerous environment for pedestrian crossing. A student was hit by a speeding car (Summit OIC)

and a desire to see improvements in this area has been expressed - crosswalk murals, slowing speeds, etc.

- Brian – Area resident. Olson Memorial Highway is a highway and has concerns about changes to the roadway. Desire to keep a four-lane roadway and to add a turn lane from Penn towards Downtown Minneapolis. The speed limit could be decreased, but mindful of the number of lanes. Consider the compatibility of uses when thinking about future development.
- Nahid Kahn – Served on the equity and health neighborhood advisors for 252/I-94 project. The EHA was a worthwhile endeavor for the process, thought it included issues. Would the PAC members be interested in learning more about the EHA's role with the 252/I-94 project and consider forming a similar committee for the Olson Memorial Highway Multimodal Study.
- Bethany – Mobility along the corridor is a priority for employees using the highway to get to work. This is not a pedestrian priority road in its current state.
- Jolene – Resident of Heritage Park. There has been a variety of discussion and comments (disagreed with the previous comment). Pedestrian safety is a key issue for this corridor. This is where we live and we want to be safe while we move in our neighborhood.
- Sam – Our Streets Minneapolis is currently canvassing in the neighborhood. They are asking a public land trust for missing businesses for all modes.

## Written Comments

Provided via the Q&A feature during the meeting.

- Is the third lane that's now restriped going to be used as a bikeway in the interim?
- Are we sharing this information with communities and elected officials along the entire corridor to the west?
- In terms of feedback, how are you collecting feedback from individuals who utilize this space on the changes that have already been implemented?
- As part of these improvements is it possible to check all the walk signals?
- Specifically walking north bound on Van White on the West side that walk button breaks nearly yearly and as of last week it was still not working to get a walk signal
- and more general question what is the best way to report issues like this and other safety issues, it is always complicated to get the right govt agency as so many are involved depending on what part of the road you are talking about
- For feedback on what the community wants, did you go back and look at the Holman decree and how the residents wanted the two sides of Heritage park connected at that time? There are many good ideas in there that residents are still interested but were never implemented.
- I have a question and have my hand raised is there any way I can speak.
- Will there still be time at the end to give statements? I don't have mic permissions.
- When representatives for elected officials speak, can they remind public attendees which office they are representing?
- How did you choose community connector participants? I was disappointed you did not include Green Garden Bakery, as there are a high density of kids that live near Olson
- Very specific question, but will all the trees removed near Van White along 55 be replaced in the near term? There was significant construction and all the large trees were lost in multiple areas both along

55 and connector roads (specifically south on van white has never had trees planted since the Holman decree)

- More general version of this question is how are you balancing immediate needs like missing trees and stripping of the road with possible long term changes that might mean the entire road gets replaced? I feel like we have been told for 20 years that something is going to be done which is why we aren't making the small changes now. But we could have had small impactful changes for the last 20 years while we waited for the bigger changes. How do we avoid this?
- Comparisons to state-wide averages were mentioned., but it does not seem relevant to compare urban to non-urban roads. It would be helpful to know what the city-wide averages are for comparison. Comment: I cross Olson Memorial every day either on foot or bike, and it is not a problem for me, personally. I am concerned that the planned “improvements” will make traffic, and thus pollution, worse.
- How is the corridor planning interfacing with the planning for all the vacant land (Heritage park, and possible right away eventually available for development)?
- How does your traffic modeling account for changed land use and transit decision-making? I.e. improved bike safety and walkability decreasing vehicle modality?
- What is the basis of prioritizing walking, biking and rolling? Do we have a projection on what those numbers would be based on actual facts?
- How will you interact with law enforcement? I am specifically thinking about major issues with people blowing red lights right now. Even with the small lane improvements I have seen an increase in people driving around stopped cars to dangerously run red lights. How do you collect data on this and how does it play into your final design decisions?
- Even if these questions aren't addressed tonight is this saved someplace and used as feedback as part of the process?
- Please repeat which PAC members are present or not, and who is present representing them. Thank you.
  - The PAC members that are present include Senator Agbaje, a representative for Representative Champion, a representative for Minneapolis Councilmember Ellison, a representative for Metropolitan Council Member Yassin Osman, and Mike Barnes with MnDOT
- Related to schools. How are decisions made about what improvements to prioritize. I see serious equity issues today with current improvements. Why is the Perpich school getting a designated underpass when all the schools near Van White to Penn area not getting this option. I believe it is important to prioritize all student safety especially in near north as that has not been a traditional concern.
- This project is being handled completely differently from the way the Hwy 252 / I-94 project has been handled and managed, in terms of starting with community engagement to develop the purpose and need as well as various parameters, whereas the Hwy 252 / I-94 started with a preferred alternative pre-determined and imposed upon Brooklyn Center / Park (and later North Minneapolis), placed into the Met Council and State transportation improvement plans (TIP, STIP).
- For example, you did an exercise with the public having them make models. Were these models recorded by staff for reference and use? We did a similar exercise in BC and BP for the Hwy 252 / I-94 project with large aerial photo maps and post it notes, which were thrown out after the session.

- ..... post it notes taken off maps without being photographed or recorded and thrown into the trash: witnessed by community members. One of our community members asked SRF Consulting staff what would happen to this community feedback and how it was going to be used, and was told frankly, NOTHING. So, I would like to know if these exercises and feedback are actually being recorded, photographed, reviewed and used, and are not just a public relations exercise.
- MnDOT's Hwy 252 / I-94 project Equity and Health Assessment page: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/hwy252study/eha.html>
- Equity and Health Neighborhood Advisors (EHNA) for this project, through the Sustainability and Public Health Division of MnDOT.
- As the Met Council Member representing Plymouth, I appreciate the work to make this portion of the corridor safe for pedestrians. We have those same needs west of this part of 55. Thanks for the invite to listen in.

Adjourned at 5:53 pm

### Next PAC Meeting

The next PAC meeting will be held in the spring of 2024.