



# Hwy 252/I-94 Equity & Health Assessment (EHA) Equity and Health Neighborhood Advisors -- Meeting #13

Tuesday, December 5, 2023 | 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm

Brooklyn Park Library, Mississippi River Room, 8500 W Broadway Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55455

Teams Meeting ID: 873490322

## Attendees

EHNA members:

1. Akia Vang, Minneapolis resident
2. Darryl Sannes, Brooklyn Center resident
3. Jim Wynne, Brooklyn Center resident
4. John Wexler, Former Brooklyn Park resident
5. Michael Svard, Brooklyn Park resident
6. Nahid Kahn, Brooklyn Center resident
7. Tara McCarthy, Brooklyn Center resident

Staff:

1. Amber Blanchard, MnDOT
2. Kim Collins, MnDOT
3. Nissa Tupper, MnDOT
4. Sheila Kauppi, MnDOT

## Notes

### 1. Welcome & Introductions

- Nissa thanked the EHNA members for their time and contributions to the Equity Health Assessment process, which started in 2021.
- Attendees introduced themselves, involvement with the EHA and city of residence.

EHNA questions and discussion:

- Where are the EHNA meeting notes?
  - All EHNA meeting notes, along with meeting materials, are posted to the EHA webpage under "EHNA meeting documents"  
([www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/hwy252study/eha.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/hwy252study/eha.html))

## 2. Discussion of MnDOT Response to Scoping Decision Document (SDD) engagement

EHNA questions and discussion:

- Why are the project alternatives carrying forward when most public comments during the SDD engagement were not supportive of the chosen alternatives?
  - MnDOT takes into account all of the information they have over the journey of the project. Oftentimes there is fatigue associated to being engaged in a process that might take 10 years (or more) to develop a construction project. As decisions get made along the journey it can be difficult to understand what previous community members, or planning documents, may have included. This makes open communication throughout very important.
  - As the new project manager, Amber is committed to overall transparency, specifically the public's role in the decision-making process, and committed to mitigating property impacts.
- The SDD uses 2019 traffic and traffic forecasting data, which was pre-COVID. Can this data be updated?
  - Yes. The analysis conducted as part of the SDD with 2019 data will be updated as part of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) phase.

## 3. Overview of Hwy 252/I-94 project schedule and engagement

- Amber Blanchard provided an overview of the current project schedule with anticipated timeline for future engagement.

EHNA questions and discussion:

- What is the intent of the Notice of Intent (NOI) period? Weren't comments already taken on the Scoping Decision Document? Can we see an updated schedule for project milestones?
  - Yes, the NOI period is asking for comments on the same Scoping Decision Document. It is part of the federal process.
  - Between now and the NOI period, MnDOT is re-envisioning the public engagement strategy, updating the project schedule, and setting up for the technical work that will be conducted during the DEIS phase.
  - The EHNA will not continue as a formal group during the DEIS phase. MnDOT will embed many of the EHNA recommendations into the DEIS analysis and will concentrate more on community-based engagement for the DEIS phase. The EHNA members will be able to participate in future engagement activities and MnDOT will set up a way to communicate about these with EHNA members.
  - MnDOT will send EHNA members the project schedule and public engagement plan, as well as post them to the Hwy 252/I-94 project website when they are available.
    - The NOI will be published in approximately mid-April 2024 with a 30-day public comment period from mid-April to mid-May 2024.
    - The DEIS phase is expected to start in June 2024.
    - TAC meetings will continue to be held monthly on the third Thursday of every month and PAC meetings will be held quarterly (e.g.: January, April, July, October).

- What was the impact of our involvement?
  - The SDD is not the end of the road for the EHA and EHNA impact. We recognize some are disappointed that MnDOT is not carrying forward non-freeway alternatives for evaluation during the DEIS phase. The project Purpose and Need has been agreed upon by all jurisdictions and the focus now is on moving forward. Many of the analysis-related EHNA recommendations will be embedded into the DEIS phase of the project. There will also be new ways that EHNA members can provide input as the project evolves.
- The community needs more support to understand this project process and how community members can advocate for what they want.
  - Amber noted that her approach is collaborative and her intention is to shift the dynamic to a collaborative model between community and MnDOT. The engagement process will be more community-focused during the DEIS. MnDOT will follow-up with the new engagement plan and would also like to hear ideas from the community about what they'd like to see.
- The EHA and EHNA were new for MnDOT. Would you do it again? If so, what would you change?
  - MnDOT has captured feedback about the EHA process from the EHNA, the Project Advisory Committee, and the Technical Advisory Committee through meetings and a survey. We are taking that information into a formal internal debrief and will share those lessons learned back with the EHNA when they're available.
  - This was a pilot effort for MnDOT and we did not get this process perfect. We've heard that EHNA members would have liked to see more of a community-created process and that there could have been benefit to starting the EHA process earlier. We've also heard from EHNA members that we should focus on structuring a process that has more representation and consistent involvement from community members on the EHNA. We will take this, as well as the other feedback received, into account as we look for ways to evolve this process for other projects and deepen our health and equity work on the Hwy 252/I-94 project.
- Can we have more engagement with Minneapolis residents as the I-94 portion of the project moves forward? What's the impact of the new cumulative impacts law for the project?
  - The EHNA did include several Minneapolis residents who participated as they were able during the SD phase. MnDOT will include more targeted engagement for Minneapolis residents as the project evolves.
  - MnDOT will look into the impact of the new cumulative impacts law.
- FHWA has mentioned that a six-lane expressway could follow a separate process, is this accurate?
  - Yes, this could be an option after the completion of the EIS process. If a preferred alternative is not identified in the EIS process, another environmental process would be needed to explore a six-lane expressway as a solution.

#### **4. Wrap up and next steps**

- Nissa confirmed that the EHNA group will no longer meet during the DEIS phase and recapped MnDOT's action items and follow-up to the EHNA:
  - Amber will send the updated project schedule and public engagement plan when it's available (early February 2024).

- Amber will contact the EHNA about additional interim safety improvements that will be made (January 2024).
- Nissa will gather feedback from interested EHNA members about how they would like to stay engaged during the DEIS.

EHNA questions and discussion:

- There are still interim safety improvements that are needed on Hwy 252. Can you look into them?
  - Yes, we want to hear about project improvements for safety that have been missed or are still needed. EHNA members noted the flashing lights are a good safety measure and should be kept. MnDOT will look into implementing improvements for the safety items that EHNA members noted, including:
    - Potholes at 66<sup>th</sup> — Notice was given on December 6, 2023. The temporary patch material has been placed (picture was from Dec. 6, 2023 and is embedded below). MnDOT staff will continue to monitor the location through the winter. Work will be completed in Spring 2024 that is more of a permanent fix.



- Installing “Freeway Ends” signage. The road markings are hard to see and will be missed in winter conditions.
- Adding additional speed limit signs and adjusting the speed limit sign when entering Hwy 252 from I-694 so that drivers can see it.