

Rethinking I-94 Phase 2 Community Leaders Meeting (Meeting 17)

Date: 2/15/2024 (1-3 p.m.)

In-Person Attendance Option:

Augsburg University
Marshall Room
1st Floor Christensen Center
2211 Riverside Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55454

Virtual Meeting Option:

Zoom Webinar

Meeting Summary

1. Welcome

- Melissa Barnes (MnDOT) welcomed the group, introduced the project team and new Community Leaders, and gave an overview of the meeting content and logistics.
- Liz Wigger (Zan) went over meeting etiquette.

2. Opening remarks & introductions

- Attendees introduced themselves.
- Liz Wigger (Zan) went over the purpose of the group, how it fits within the IAP2 framework in the “involve” level, and the group’s roles.
 - Discussion:
 - Alex Burns (Our Streets Minneapolis) asked about the role of the Community Leaders group versus the role of the community at-large and Liz clarified they are different.
 - Barb Thoman (Union Park District Council) underscored the importance of Community Leaders being involved in building a shared project vision.
- Andy Hestness (Redesign, Inc.) introduced Redesign, Inc.
 - Explained Redesign, Inc. was founded by a church group that was removed during the original construction of I-94.
 - Reviewed the planning effort to redesign the Augsburg pedestrian bridge.
 - Discussed how Redesign, Inc. is involved in real estate development in the community.
- Melissa Barnes (MnDOT) went over project location, description, needs, purpose, and goals.
 - Project needs:
 - Walkability and bikeability
 - Safety

- Infrastructure condition
 - Mobility
- Project purpose
 - Improve mobility for people and goods on, along and across the corridor in a way that facilitates community connections for all modes
 - Enhance safety for people and goods on, along and across the I-94 corridor for all modes
 - Address aging infrastructure condition within the I-94 corridor
 - Support transportation objectives consistent with adopted state and regional (Met Council) plans
- Project goals
 - Identify opportunities for establishing the following for the communities that live, work, gather, and play around the corridor: connections, health & environment, economics, sense of place, safety, equity
 - Develop and execute a community-based approach focused on reconnecting neighborhoods, revitalizing communities, and ensuring residents have a meaningful voice in transportation decisions that affect their lives
- Melissa Barnes (MnDOT) went over project schedule, noting the schedule will continue to be adjusted and there is no funding for construction at this time.
 - Scoping phase: Through 2025
 - Narrowed range of potential alternatives (roadway + transit ideas combined)
 - Alternatives will be high-level with limited details
 - List of locations for access/interchange modifications
 - High-level analysis of corridor impacts
 - Tier 1 EIS: 2025 - 2028
 - Preferred corridor alternative – select roadway type (freeway or non-freeway), number and type of travel lanes, type of transit and associated stops.
 - Options for intersection/interchange modifications
 - Crossing and parallel bicycle and pedestrian improvements
 - Visual quality analysis (corridor aesthetics)
 - Program of projects
 - More detailed analysis of corridor impacts
 - Tier 2 environmental documents: 2029+
 - Follows Tier 1 EIS, completed as projects are designed and constructed.
 - Separate documents to independently analyze and construct the program of projects to implement the corridor vision.
 - Will address specific project impacts at individual project locations within the corridor.
 - Greater detail will be provided about interchanges, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, transit stops, landscaping, lighting, noise walls, and other roadway elements.
 - As designs become more detailed, opportunities for improved streetscaping (trees/vegetation), public art, and other uses of right of way will be better understood.
 - Discussion:
 - Andy Singer (Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition) asked for a slide with the evaluation criteria.
 - Melissa directed him to the project website.

- Alex Burns (Our Streets Minneapolis) asked when MnDOT will bring forward a preferred alternative.
 - Melissa said preferred alternatives will be identified at the end of the Tier 1 EIS phase, around 2028.
- Alex Burns (Our Streets Minneapolis) asked if it's typical to spend multiple years to go through a similar process.
 - Melissa and Khani Sahebjam (MnDOT) confirmed that it is typical for an EIS.
- Jonathan Palmer (nonprofit management consultant and DEI strategy expert) said given the history of I-94 and the negative impact it had on the Rondo community, the process this time has to be done right and take as much time as necessary.
- Barb Thoman (Union Park District Council) asked how many alternatives will move forward from the current 10.
 - Melissa said it depends on which meet the project purpose and need and don't have fatal flaws.
- Mary Morse Marti (Neighborhoods First!) asked who decides which alternatives move forward.
 - Melissa said MnDOT will perform a technical analysis, have conversations with the technical working group, the Policy Advisory Committee and Community Leaders, and facilitate a public comment period for the public to comment on the alternatives MnDOT proposes to move forward. MnDOT will provide reasoning for why each of the alternatives were proposed to move forward.
- Melissa Barnes (MnDOT) gave an overview of the 10 project alternatives.
 - Showed General Maintenance alternative and reminded the group there are seven others, including at-grade options and reducing, reconfiguring, and expanding the freeway
 - Alternatives are on the website
 - The graphics of the alternatives provide a general representation of what the roadway would be
 - Changes to overpasses, interchanges, and ramps have not been determined and no landscaping or corridor enhancements have been identified – details on these elements will continue to evolve later in the process (in the Tier 1 EIS)
 - MnDOT is committed to walkability and bikeability improvements as part of all build alternatives, and specific improvements will be determined later in the process
 - MnDOT looks forward to continued coordination and collaboration with ReConnect Rondo

3. Recap of summer & fall community engagement

- Renee Raduenz (MnDOT) went over the summer and fall 2023 project engagement:
 - Public meetings
 - Community events
 - Presentations at organization meetings
 - Online survey
- Renee Raduenz (MnDOT) went over survey responses:
 - Number of responses from zip codes along the corridor
 - Respondent demographics - most respondents were white, college educated males and are not representative of people who live along the corridor

- About 80% of respondents believe they have the info about the project they need to participate in the process and share input and feedback.
- Stitch/cap/tunnel was a key theme – MnDOT is creating a work group to explore options
- Significant support and opposition for expanded freeway and at-grade options
- Significant interest in information on impacts on environment, air quality, costs, noise, etc.
- Renee Raduenz (MnDOT) introduced the Public Engagement Summary that was sent to the Community Leaders and will be posted on the MnDOT website.
 - Discussion:
 - Andy Singer (Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition) noted connectivity across the highway as well as the potential to return land back to the cities should be considered as evaluation criteria and information on these topics should be provided in the scoping process.
 - Melissa Barnes (MnDOT) noted that cross-highway connections will be looked at in more detail in the Tier 1 EIS phase and MnDOT needs to get further along in the project process to determine right of way impacts.
 - Mary Morse Marti (Neighborhoods First!) asked for clarification on what mobility means as a project goal.
 - Melissa said it refers to improving reliability (along and across the corridor) for drivers, pedestrians, and bikers.
 - Sheldon Mains (Seward Redesign: Redesign Inc) noted there was a Redesign Inc study on Reconnecting Neighborhoods focused on improving the crossings of Interstate 94 between Seward and the West Bank in Minneapolis and it might be valuable for the project team.
 - Diane Graham-Raff (Trellis) noted the alternatives show a design of the road, not what the two cities would look like; Diane noted she wants to see all different types of people being able to interact with their community and businesses encouraged to locate in the area.
 - Dewell Robinson (ReConnect Rondo) asked if there is a way to determine what type of respondents said what different things in the online survey in order to avoid non-representative respondents having too much influence.
 - Renee said the project team doesn't want to put too much weight on the survey and is using it more to determine if any alternatives were missing.
 - Scott Berger (Union Park District Council) noted Woodbury had a high response rate to the online survey and respondents who are more car-dependent should have less weight in the responses while respondents nearest to the project area should have more weight; Scott noted he would like to see the survey data become public and weighted to give more voice to those who would be more affected by the project.
 - Renee said the project team will be doing more analysis on the survey results and the report with a high-level summary of the results will be posted online.
- Melissa Barnes (MnDOT) discussed integrating public feedback:
 - No new independent alternatives are being added
 - MnDOT has done a rail study with Metro Transit, and the study showed Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) will serve the most people and there is not data to justify a light rail in the project area
 - MnDOT will be looking at rail/trains to connect the two downtowns (not along I-94 corridor)

- MnDOT is creating a working group internally for land bridge/stitch/cap options
- MnDOT will ensure space is available in the project footprint for walkability and bikeability improvements, aesthetic improvements and opportunities for technology
- Melissa Barnes (MnDOT) went over how the alternatives will be rated and evaluated in terms of purpose and need, social, economic, and environmental (SEE) impacts, goals and livability, and other considerations.
 - Discussion:
 - Sheldon Mains (Seward Redesign: Redesign Inc) noted there was no mention of wheelchair crossings over the corridor and Melissa said that will be a consideration.
 - Pat Thompson (Saint Anthony Park Community Council) asked which evaluation criteria will outweigh the others and how they will be balanced.
 - Melissa said it will depend on the results, as the criteria are not ranked or rated, and there will not be a perfect alternative.
 - Alex Burns (Our Streets Minneapolis) said his organization door knocked for the project, including to promote the survey, and he's frustrated because he feels the survey was set up to fail and was terribly designed; Alex pointed out, based on the information received from a public data requested, about 20% of people who started the survey closed it and it's frustrating for the agency to say the survey results won't shape key decision because it breaks the trust of people who took the survey; Alex encouraged the project team to continue doing more engagement and use the survey data.
 - Melissa noted MnDOT is not throwing out the data and it will be used; Renee Raduenz (MnDOT) said MnDOT values the survey responses and will use them moving forward and create shorter, more accessible surveys in the future.
 - A Community Leader noted there is a large industrial base in the Seward neighborhood for which there are not a lot of alternatives except I-94; they asked what the engagement plans are for industrial groups.
 - Mark Lindeberg (MnDOT) noted the project team is trying to get freight groups more involved; the Community Leader offered suggestions and connections.
 - Ben Shardlow (Minneapolis Downtown Council & Downtown Improvement District) said he supports including land use in the evaluation criteria for the alternative designs; Ben noted it's hard to look at the alternatives and not understand what the built environment on the edges of the freeway would look like.

4. Upcoming engagement & action planning

- Renee Raduenz (MnDOT) went over upcoming engagement and action planning:
 - MnDOT brought in Zan to help with engagement efforts
 - MnDOT is asking Community Leaders to share the project team's efforts
- Renee Raduenz (MnDOT) discussed opportunities for sharing information and community input:
 - Spring and summer 2024 – share information about evaluation process (impacts)
 - Fall and winter 2024 – share information about evaluation process and upcoming public comment period
 - 2025 – official public comment period on Scoping Document
- Renee Raduenz (MnDOT) outlined upcoming engagement efforts:

- Community Voices
- Community Ambassadors
- High school interns
- Continued outreach to underrepresented populations, schools and businesses
- Continued presentations and conversations with citizen advisory councils/boards and key stakeholders
- Continued efforts to fill gaps in Community leaders

5. Project and process updates

- Katie Haun-Schuring (MnDOT) went over the Section 106 (cultural resources) process and where the project team is at:
 - MnDOT wrote Community Histories and previewed two: “Rethinking I-94: History Along the Corridor, Ventura Village” and “Rethinking I-94: History Along the Corridor, Industry.”
 - MnDOT will be completing a Rondo field survey, Western District report, and a Programmatic Agreement.
- Tim Hunt (ReConnect Rondo) went over the mission, vision and plan for ReConnect Rondo.
- Kent Ahrenholtz (ReConnect Rondo) went over the project area of study and project details:
 - The project is in the planning and financing phase.
 - The project team is working in parallel with the Rethinking I-94 project.
 - Next steps include going through the NEPA process and doing neighborhood traffic modeling and analysis, among others.
- Craig Vaughn (Transportation Collaborative and Consultants) discussed the neighborhood plan for the ReConnect Rondo project:
 - Intent, timeline, and commitment to working with the community
 - Key elements and community efforts
 - Upcoming activities such as policy development and analysis, identification of projects within the focus area, and plan development
- Melissa Barnes (MnDOT) noted there is no time left to cover national research on freeway reduction/removal; she gave an overview of greenhouse gas legislation and the next steps of technical and engagement activities:
 - Technical activities
 - Refine and evaluate alternatives
 - Develop Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Decision Document
 - Engagement activities
 - Continue to meet with partner agencies
 - Continue to meet with schools, key stakeholder, neighborhood and business groups to discuss the project
 - Start conducting Community Voices interviews

Community Leaders Meeting Participants

Present	Name	Organization
X	Alex Burns	Our Streets Minneapolis
	Alexa Golemo	Macalester-Groveland Community Council
X	Alice Roberts-Davis	University of Minnesota
X	Alison Schaub	Neighborhood Network for Seniors
X	Amanda Duerr	Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce
X	Andy Hestness	Seward Redesign: Redesign Inc
X	Andy Singer	Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition
X	Baba Letang	Neighborhood Development Center
X	Barb Thoman	Union Park District Council
X	Ben Shardlow	Minneapolis Downtown Council & Downtown Improvement District
X	Catherine Hinz	Lexington-Hamline Community Council
X	David Frank	Prospect Park Association
X	David Juliff	Be Civil - Reconnect Rondo
X	Deidra Peaslee	Saint Paul College
X	Diane Graham-Raff	Trellis (Metropolitan Area Agency on Aging)
	Diane Merrifield	North Loop Neighborhood Association
X	Glen Johnson, Wako	Elliot Park Neighborhood
	Hugo Bruggeman	Macalester-Groveland Community Council
	Jenne Nelson	Hamline Midway Coalition
X	JoAnn Leppink	Arc of Minnesota
X	John Barobs	Move Minneapolis
	John Fure	Capitol River Council
	John Hausladen	Minnesota Trucking Association
X	Jonathan Palmer	Nonprofit management consultant and DEI strategy expert
	Keith Baker	ReConnect Rondo
X	KJ Starr	West Bank Business Association
X	Krista Lucas	Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC)
	Lisa Kons	Minnesota Safety Council
X	Mary Morse Marti	Neighborhoods First!
	Mikeya Griffin	Rondo Community Land Trust
X	Nieeta Presley	New Life Possibilities LLC
X	Pat Thompson	Saint Anthony Park Community Council
x	Paul Aasen	Minnesota Safety Council
	Philip Hague	Summit University Planning Council
	Rev. Frenchye Magee/ Rev. Dennis Oglesby	Camphor Memorial United Methodist
	Sarah Anderson	Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA Greater Minneapolis)
X	Scott Berger	Union Park District Council
X	Sheldon Mains	Seward Redesign: Redesign Inc
	Spencer Ludtke	Macalester-Groveland Community Council

Present	Name	Organization
X	Theresa Nelson	Move Minnesota
X	Tiffany Orth	Move Minneapolis
X	Tim Hunt	ReConnect Rondo
	Will Delaney	Franklin Area Business Association (FABA)
	Will Schroeer	East Metro Strong

FHWA/MnDOT/Consultant Staff and Interested Parties

Present	Name	Organization
X	Alyssa Kruzel	MnDOT
X	Anna Varney	FHWA
X	Austin Hauf	WSB
X	Bill Goff	MnDOT
X	Craig Vaughn	Transportation Collaborative and Consultants
X	Dan Pfeiffer	Zan
X	Dewell Robinson	ReConnect Rondo
X	Isabel Goldfarb	MnDOT
X	Jack Corkle	WSB
X	Jens Werner	Summit University Planning Council
X	Jess Karls	WSB
X	Jessa Trboyevich	Hennepin County
X	John Jesse	St. Anthony Park Area Seniors
X	Joy Miciano	Zan
X	Katie Haun-Schuring	MnDOT
X	Kent Ahrenholtz	ReConnect Rondo
X	Khani Sahebjam	MnDOT
X	Kirsten Spreck	Summit University Planning Council
X	Lisa Austin	MnDOT
X	Liz Wigger	Zan
X	Mark Lindeberg	MnDOT
X	Melissa Barnes	MnDOT
X	Molly McCartney	MnDOT
X	Noel Mills Ford	WSB
X	Randy Newton	City of St. Paul
X	Renee Raduenz	MnDOT
X	Ryan Earp	WSB
X	Ryan Wilson	MnDOT
X	Sammantha Watson	WSB
X	Sean Oyaas	Rapp Strategies
X	Sheila Kauppi	MnDOT