

Rethinking I-94 Phase 2 Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)

Meeting Summary:

Date: 02/05/21
 Time: 10:00 AM
 Summary prepared by: Hannah Rank and WSB
 Location: Virtual (WebEx)

PAC Members

Present	Name	Organization
Yes	Commissioner Margaret Anderson Kelliher	MnDOT
	Senator Bobby Joe Champion	Senate District 59
	Senator Kari Dziedic	Senate District 60
Yes	Senator D. Scott Dibble	Senate District 61
	Senator Omar Fateh	Senate District 62
	Senator Erin Murphy	Senate District 64
	Senator Sandra Pappas	Senate District 65
Yes	Representative Kaohly Her	House District 64A
Yes	Representative Rena Moran	House District 65A
	Representative Carlos Mariani	House District 65B
Yes	Representative Esther Agbaje	House District 59B
Yes	Representative Mohamud Noor	House District 60B
Yes	Representative Frank Hornstein	House District 61A
	Representative Hodan Hassan	House District 62A
Yes	Wendall Meyer	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Yes	Charlie Zelle	Metropolitan Council Chair
Yes	Council Member Kris Fredson	Metropolitan Council District 14
Yes	Commissioner Marion Greene	Hennepin County Board Chair
	Commissioner Angela Conley	Hennepin County District 4
	Commissioner Toni Carter	Ramsey County Board Chair
Yes	Commissioner Rafael Ortega	Ramsey County District 5
Yes	Mayor Melvin Carter	St. Paul
	Council Member Dai Thao	St. Paul Ward 1
Yes	Council Member Mitra Jalali	St. Paul Ward 4
Yes	Mayor Jacob Frey (alternate Abdi Salah)	Minneapolis
Yes	Council Member Lisa Goodman (alternate Patrick Sadler)	Minneapolis Ward 7

Meeting Materials

Distributed 02/02/21:

- Agenda
- PAC Briefing Booklets on key topic draft materials: logical termini, purpose and need and statement of goals, and evaluation criteria
 - 30-minute version
 - 1-hour version
 - More than 1 hour version
 - NEPA Educational Materials

Decisions Made

- PAC will meet in April to discuss the topic “What is Rethinking I-94”
- PAC membership did not express concerns with MnDOT moving forward with presenting initial NEPA materials—logical termini, goals, purpose and need and evaluation criteria—to the public

Action Items

- Schedule April PAC meeting
- MnDOT to provide copies of correspondence from Union Park, Sierra Club, Reconnect Rondo and any other groups or individuals that had been received prior to the PAC meeting. Copies of any responses that have been sent will be provided as well.
- Distribute NEPA materials to Community Leaders

Next Meeting

Date: April

Time: TBD

Location: Virtual

Date: Friday, May 7

Time: 10:00 AM–12:00 PM

Location: Virtual

Meeting Notes

Welcome and Hellos

- Commissioner Anderson Kelliher welcomed attendees and reiterated MnDOT’s commitment to Rethinking I-94 and the communities along the corridor

- Explained that the NEPA/MEPA process legally must focus on the transportation needs but can use the Livability Framework process to facilitate resolving issues beyond transportation. MnDOT will incorporate both processes as part of Rethinking I-94.
- MnDOT and Met Council will partner to give the regional perspective and discuss potential solutions and policies

Process and Role of a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC)

- Sheila Kauppi explained the process and role of a PAC, Community Leaders Group, Technical Advisory Committee, and Policy and Planning Committee
 - Gave process overview and structure of the PAC relative to other committees
 - PAC role is to provide input to and advise MnDOT and FHWA on environmental process and project decisions, and other stakeholders on policies and solutions
 - PAC will also identify issues that are beyond MnDOT
 - PAC discussions will focus on political and policy risk, and potential for collaboration
- Commissioner Anderson Kelliher explained that transportation planning in the metro area is a partnership with the Met Council and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Study Status Update and Look Ahead

- Gloria Jeff provided a recap of the history and intent of the Livability Framework and current efforts
 - Provided overview of January 26, 2021 workshop
 - Will create documents that summarize topics and provide background, current practices, and recommendations for MnDOT
 - Reiterated importance of partnership with stakeholders from city, county, local community leaders, Met Council, etc.
 - Next Steps
 - Next Livability Workshop is February 26, 2021
 - Revise papers based on comments received
 - Preparation of an Executive Summary that covers all topics
- Jack Corkle presented an overview of NEPA/MEPA topics
 - Provided general schedule of documentation and timeframe of key events and hearings in the public engagement process
 - All items presented are draft – seeking PAC agreement to take to the public for comment
 - Identified logical termini: I-35W/TH 55 to Marion Street and commitments MnDOT is making beyond this area
 - Shared Statement of Goals
 - Defined what “purpose” means in terms of the environmental documentation, and presented the project purpose and needs to be addressed
 - Explained that evaluation criteria focus first on the ability of alternatives to address project needs, then potential social, economic, and environmental (SEE) impacts, and in the Tier 1 address project goals/livability items. Shared evaluation criteria.
- Mayor Melvin Carter brought up the distinction between primary and secondary needs and wanted to reiterate the importance of walkability and bikeability, and safety on intersecting streets as a primary need.

- Commissioner Anderson Kelliher explained that MnDOT has received feedback about making those items primary needs. On the Highway 252 project, MnDOT combined primary and secondary into one needs list.
- The Commissioner noted that MnDOT will continue to review primary and secondary needs.
- Senator Dibble noted that we are talking about a program of projects in an area around I-94 (travel shed). He doesn't want to put the NEPA/MEPA process at risk, but noted the partners could create a basket of projects that relate to the I-94 project
 - For example, extending the Midtown Greenway bridge across the river
 - Commissioner Anderson Kelliher commented that part of the potential of the Livability Framework could be envisioning a basket of projects. What goes in the basket will need to be determined
- Sheila identified upcoming PAC meetings on the schedule for 2021
 - May 7, 2021 – 10:00 am
 - July 30, 2021 – 10:00 am
 - November 19, 2021 – 10:00 am

Commissioner Anderson Kelliher noted that they are scheduled from 10:00 am until 12:00 pm, but the team will try to reduce the actual meeting duration to 90 minutes.

- Key activities in the next 5-6 months
 - Public outreach – NEPA and Livability
 - Distribution of draft NEPA materials
 - Alternatives framework/development process
 - Livability items

Public Involvement Plan Overview

- Dan Pfeiffer provided an overview of the Public Involvement Plan (PIP)
 - Described the efforts that took place during Rethinking I-94 Phase 1
 - Provided an overview of the public involvement process and activities to date
 - Shared how communication and engagement will continue during COVID-19
 - Described engagement tools and techniques included in PIP, starting with virtual engagement
 - Shared plans for near-term public involvement
- Senator Dibble brought up the resolutions from the cities of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, as well as the signed community letters from Barb Thoman and ReConnect Rondo.
 - PAC members requested the letters be shared.
- Representative Hornstein asked if a community organization/group has their own plan or recommendations, how is that input included in the process?
 - Dan Pfeiffer explained that the comments or recommendations will be collected during multiple rounds of engagement. Staff will then review all the comments received during a particular time period and respond to the comments. The multiple rounds of engagement build to the formal comment processes of the Draft Scoping Decision Document and Environmental Impact Statement. Staff will identify when the community's comments have been incorporated and when the comments have not been incorporated.

Logical Termini, Goals, Purpose and Need and Evaluation Criteria Overview

- Mike Hughes gave an overview of briefing booklets that cover key topics based on amount of time available to the reader
- PAC membership agreed that MnDOT can move forward with presenting initial EIS materials to the public

Next Steps

- Distribution of materials for public input and comment
- Alternatives framework
- Livability items
- Tentative April PAC meeting: "What is Rethinking I-94?"

Open Comment Time

Documented as close to verbatim as possible.

- **Julia Tabbut (Prospect Park Association):** Thank you. I'm Julia Tabbut, I live in the Prospect Park neighborhood and my neighbors benefit from the convenience of this freeway as much as anyone, and yet in the conversations I'm involved with I hear more support for filling the freeway completely in than I do for expanding it in any way. My neighbors want to be able to walk to the river safely, they want to be able to walk to our nearest business nodes safely, and we want to have more peace and quiet, more healthy air, less pollution. So [inaudible] that livability is separate from the NEPA process, but if you put livability first, especially considering the long-term environmental impacts of the freeway, there may not even be a freeway at all. So as we're thinking about this, it doesn't make sense to build a road for the purpose of the sake of the road itself, it's for the people who use it and the people who are near it, and if we're not taking those needs into account then what are we doing? Thank you.
- **Keith Baker (ReConnect Rondo):** Yes thank you so much and I appreciate being involved in the discussions here today, and certainly hearing about the continuity from Phase 1 into Phase 2, as well as the handoff and the partnership between Commissioner Zelle and our new Commissioner of Transportation. What I oftentimes pay close attention to is the process and the confusion within the community about the process, so I appreciate the distinction between the Livability Framework and the NEPA process, but there still seems to be an opportunity, if you will, to be guided and seeing the schedule as laid out and the input points, I think that really helps tremendously. Know that ReConnect Rondo really sees itself as partners, but we also understand the jurisdictional challenges and roles and responsibilities, but I do think it is also an opportunity for innovation, and so we're looking forward to doing what we can to help the community understand, as well as to inform and educate MnDOT, because I think sometimes the process renders MnDOT sometimes in a dark room looking for a light switch, only because this is a very very new process, and I think community members can be very instrumental in giving guidance or shining light to the direction that we believe very very significantly needs to be considered, so thank you very much.
- **Alex Burns (Sierra Club North Star Chapter):** Thank you. Thank you commissioner and members of the committee for taking my comment, I really appreciate it. I just wanted to say that, raise some concerns with the process to date and the process moving forward, and I think it's important to note that while

the destruction that resulted from I-94's construction, you know it's well-documented, and the continued effects are also well-documented. And while this context is mentioned on the project webpage, it wasn't the disparate levels of asthma or lung cancer or climate concerns that prompted the need for this project, it was the pavement condition and concerns about traffic congestion that sparked the agency to move forward with this project. So, I think that's problematic, and I think it indicates MnDOT's direction that initially guided this project, so while I appreciate that it's being branded as Rethinking I-94, and I should say I'm the land use and transportation chair of the Sierra Club North Star Chapter, and also a Minneapolis resident, and I have deep concerns about this process and the draft Purpose and Need document. And, last thing I'll say is, I know there's talk of the livability standards that are being incorporated into this project. I attended the first livability standards workshop on January 26th, and during that meeting participants were asked to choose, literally to choose between their health and the health of their neighbors, a sustainable planet, and access to jobs and employment, and I just question how can you possibly ask someone to make that choice. It's really false choices like this that created projects like I-94 in the first place, and I think we need to do better moving forward. Thank you.

- **Barb Thoman (Union Park District Council Transportation Committee):** Thank you, Commissioner and members of the PAC. My name is Barb Thoman and I'm the co-chair of the Union Park District Council Transportation Committee. Just about, or just under three miles of the I-94 corridor study area are within the boundaries of the Union Park neighborhood. We were one of 25 organizations that signed the letter that was emailed to MnDOT on December 4th, and to my knowledge we have not received a response. So while residents and employees in our neighborhood drive I-94, the highway is a barrier to safe and convenient travel by car, walking, and bicycling, and it hampers our access to the Green Line on University Avenue. It also inflicts a daily toll of noise and dirty air on adjacent residents. Union Park District Council asks that the statement of Purpose and Need and the Statement of Goals for the project be consistent with the goals for transportation in Minnesota Statute Section 174. Those state goals do not prioritize mobility and access management over reducing greenhouse gas emissions or increasing mode share for transit, bicycling, carpooling, and walking. The federal program that will fund the majority of the cost for this project provides great flexibility in the array of project types and costs that can be funded. So we ask for Needs, Purpose, and Goals that embrace a vision of reduced traffic, greater connectivity, improved access by modes other than driving, and a greener corridor. We ask you to right the tremendous harm that was wrought by the construction of I-94. Thank you.
- **Andrew Singer (Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition):** So, the Purpose and Need is the core of any project, and the evaluation criteria, they are the core of any project, and community leaders saw a preliminary draft of Purpose and Needs this past summer, and when I look at what you're presenting now, and lots of people offered feedback and changes that they would like to see, and when I look at what you're presenting now there's no change, there's no evidence of community input at all. Improving the environment is not a Purpose and Needs, improving air quality, reducing carbon emissions, reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled, VMT, is not a Purpose or Need, and what you've presented today is just sort of a boilerplate MnDOT Purpose and Needs and Evaluation Criteria. I'm not seeing evidence for all the sort of hubbub before it was presented about all the community feedback, I'm not seeing any evidence of community feedback at all. That's my comment.
- **Charles Frempong-Longdon (Sierra Club North Star Chapter, BIPOC Environmental Justice Table):** Hi my name is Charles Frempong-Longdon, I'm an organizer with the Sierra Club North Star Chapter and a member of the BIPOC Environmental Justice Table. My comment is just to say, I believe that I-94 has in

no way existed in a vacuum. Highway construction processes across the state, across the country host in their foundation some of the worst policies restricting black homeownership, community resilience, and mobility. I think it's important that as we approach these conversations, we make sure that we extend opportunities to engage in a dialogue with a broad variety of residents and perspectives. The idea of rethinking invites the idea that imagination can be used as a means of guidance. Livability should not be separated from the processes of MnDOT, but how are we defining livability if not by the parameters set by residents within those communities? We have the opportunity now to do so by genuinely reframing the way that community is incorporated into the process. So what does it mean to holistically and deeply engage in conversations about reparations? This means meeting community members where they are at to acquire a better understanding of what the public needs are. Organizations on the community level have been doing this work for years. [commenter lost connection]

- **Mitra Jalali (City of Saint Paul Councilmember, Ward 4):** I just wanted to add in since I haven't gotten to really speak at a lot of these because of the last year, because of just everything we've been going through and how demanding it's been. So I just, I simply wanted to really reiterate I appreciate so much what folks are bringing to the table today in terms of just wanting to see more. I think that I also recognize and have been in the thick of what we've been asked to take on in the last year, and also I do know that folks have been very engaged through that. The main point of feedback I would offer is just everything I hear in the community as someone who is very involved in getting folks' feedback as an elected official is people putting racial equity at the center, and racial equity does very inherently encompass transit access, public health and pollution and climate impacts of the freeway, reparations and any form and style of engagement that really prioritizes truth telling, prioritizes rectifying structural harms. There's so many examples in the engagement that I've been a part of that really puts that squarely at the center and that demands are rightful and they fierce. I would like to see, as MnDOT continues to engage, an evolution and acknowledgement of that, and just being able to meet that in the community. I do feel like that intention is there but the project framing and the explanation and what gets played back to the community still feels more technical, more kind of, I don't feel the emotion that's real and raw in the community and I just would like to encourage that we just meet folks authentically, and also that it's life or death for a lot of the people who are coming to us talking about what they've lost in the destruction of their neighborhood, and then their ability to continue living as they need to. So I just wanted to lift up that urgency and appreciate the community folks bringing that today too, as the city will continue to coordinate with this as best we can. We did pass a resolution unanimously this week articulating a lot of what we've heard and our entire council voted for it and passed it on to our mayor, who understands better than anybody what's at stake. So wanted to add those points from Saint Paul and from my perspective, thanks.
- **Peter Wagenius (Prospect Park Resident):** My name is Peter Wagenius. I'm a resident of Prospect Park and I was previously the City of Minneapolis point person on the development of the Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit project, a project which ended a multi-year standoff over the future of 35W south of downtown Minneapolis. It will be completed later this year, and represented a bipartisan urban-suburban coalition for how to address that corridor. It's worth remembering that while that project is being completed now, there were components of it that were completed 10, 11, 12 years ago, and the reason is because there was a recognition that bus rapid transit was the only way we could possibly sustainably address mobility needs in a future where equity and climate goals were core values. We should note that experience as a potential model for moving forward on this corridor. And I would add this point: Minnesota does not currently have shovel-ready transit projects in the queue to take

advantage of money from the Biden administration. So we should ask ourselves, are there key components that we could be engineering now? Is there any future of 94 where we don't see a bus rapid transit station at Snelling Avenue connecting to the supremely successful A Line arterial bus rapid transit project? If we know that's part of the future, we should be taking advantage of the wide coalition and support from both Minneapolis and Saint Paul to include bus rapid transit in the future, and think about components that we can be engineering now, so as to make sure we're not seeing our tax dollars, our share of federal dollars go to other regions, but are instead making sure that the shared vision demonstrated by Minneapolis and Saint Paul is reflected in their engineering and we're seizing the opportunity to move forward on things which I think we recognize we're going to end up doing at some point. That is, the example of the BRT station at Snelling Avenue is just one example, I'm sure there are others that we could discuss. I appreciate the opportunity to testify to the group. Thank you.

- **Theresa Nelson (Move Minnesota):** I'm from Move Minnesota, and we participated in Phase 1 of the engagement process for Rethinking I-94. And throughout that process we heard [inaudible] that there was not enough information for people [inaudible] to participate. Of course in general we heard that people want better transit in the corridor people wanted safer connections across the freeway. But people really just in general wanted to lessen the negative impact on their community. They wanted a more [inaudible] community and wanted to be involved in a more meaningful way, to be at the table for developing a vision that is greater than a highway, and to be a part of the decision making. So I would like to just see how that can help us [inaudible] and how we are going to have meaningful engagement as we move forward with this project. Thank you.
- **Response and closing from Commissioner Anderson Kelliher:**
 - Concurred with Councilmember Jalali's comments on racial equity, stating that it is a focus of this administration, not just for the Rethinking I-94 effort. MnDOT has been using a climate framework and is currently developing an equity framework to be used for all projects in the future.
 - Acknowledged the ReConnect Rondo presentation at the House legislative hearing earlier in the week and Keith Baker's comments to the PAC.
 - Stated the focus of the initiative will not just be pavement and bridge conditions. Acknowledged the roadway part of this project is unlikely to solve the real harm and impact that was made by building I-94 through Seward and Riverside and Rondo, and the other neighborhoods that have been impacted.
 - Stated support for an additional PAC meeting scheduled in April to specifically address "What is Rethinking I-94"
 - Noted that the technology platform for future PAC meetings may be changing to address technical issues.

Agency Staff and Public Attendees

Present	Name	Organization
Yes	Anna Varney	FHWA
Yes	Sheila Kauppi	MnDOT – Rethinking I-94 Project
Yes	Josh Colas	MnDOT – Rethinking I-94 Project Manager
Yes	Gloria Jeff	MnDOT – Livability Initiative
Yes	Nancy Daubenberger	MnDOT

Present	Name	Organization
Yes	William Goff	MnDOT
Yes	Chris Krueger	MnDOT
Yes	Torri Hampton	MnDOT
Yes	Hannah Rank	MnDOT
Yes	Melissa Barnes	MnDOT
Yes	Mai Xiong	MnDOT
Yes	Cyrus Knutson	MnDOT
Yes	Jake Loesch	MnDOT
Yes	April Crockett	MnDOT
Yes	Michael Barnes	MnDOT
Yes	Jay Hietpas	MnDOT
Yes	Jon Solberg	MnDOT
Yes	Kim Collins	MnDOT
Yes	Brian Isaacson	Ramsey County
Yes	Jason Gottfried	Hennepin County
Yes	Nick Thompson	Metropolitan Council
Yes	Amy Vennewitz	Metropolitan Council
Yes	Michelle Fure	Metropolitan Council
Yes	Russ Stark	City of St. Paul
Yes	Sean Kershaw	City of St. Paul
Yes	Randy Newton	City of St. Paul
Yes	Matt Privratsky	City of St. Paul
Yes	Jenifer Hager	City of Minneapolis
Yes	Jon Chiglo	WSB – Rethinking I-94 Consultant
Yes	Jack Corkle	WSB – Rethinking I-94 Consultant
Yes	Dan Pfeiffer	WSB – Rethinking I-94 Consultant
Yes	Mike Chavez	WSB – Rethinking I-94 Consultant
Yes	Mike Hughes	Rethinking I-94 Consultant
Yes	Dawn Selle	Hallie Q Brown
Yes	John Barobs	Move Minneapolis
Yes	John Levin	Hamline Midway Coalition Transportation Committee
Yes	Hannah Pallmeyer	
Yes	Alec Armon	Hamline Midway Coalition
Yes	Jonathan Palmer	Hallie Q Brown
Yes	David Juliff	Be Civil – ReConnect Rondo Consultant
Yes	Julia Tabbut	Prospect Park Neighborhood Association
Yes	Scott Berger	Union Park District Council
Yes	Alexa Golemo	Macalester-Groveland Community Council
Yes	Charles Frempong-Langdon	Sierra Club North Star Chapter – Healthy Communities Program
Yes	Emilie Willie	
Yes	Serafina Scheel	Prospect Park Transportation Committee
Yes	Sheldon Mains	Seward Redesign Inc
Yes	Keith Baker	ReConnect Rondo
Yes	Debbie Meister	Neighborhoods First!
Yes	Peter Wagenius	Prospect Park Resident
Yes	James Erkel	

Present	Name	Organization
Yes	Mary Morse Marti	Move Minneapolis
Yes	Brooklyn Park Wagenfeld	
Yes	Andrew Singer	St. Paul Bicycle Coalition
Yes	Theresa Nelson	Move Minnesota
Yes	Joshua Houdek	Sierra Club North Star Chapter
Yes	Sonja Burseth	
Yes	Alex Burns	Sierra Club North Star Chapter
Yes	Evalin Olson	
Yes	Barb Thoman	Move Minnesota
Yes	Pat Thompson	St. Anthony Park Community Council