ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
for
SP 027-653-021
Minn Proj. No. STPM 2716 (123)
Hennepin County Proj. No. 1011

66th Street (County State Aid Highway 53)
From: Xerxes Avenue South
To: 16th Avenue South

In the City of: Richfield and Edina
In the County of: Hennepin
Section, Township, Range: Sec. 26,27,28,29, Twp 29N, Range 24W

Submitted pursuant to 42 USC 4332
by the
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION and
Hennepin County
for
Reconstruction of 3.3 miles of an existing four-lane divided and undivided roadway to
an urban roadway with pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

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Date

Reviewed and Recommended:

District State Aid Engineer  
Date

Approved:

State Aid Engineer/State Aid For Local Transportation  
Date

Approved as per 23 CFR Part 771.119(c):

FHWA - Project Development Engineer  
Date
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I. REPORT PURPOSE

This Environmental Assessment (EA) provides background information including:
- need for the proposed project
- alternatives considered
- environmental impacts and mitigation
- agency coordination and public involvement

This EA was prepared as a part of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to fulfill requirements of 42 USC 4332. The EA is used to provide sufficient environmental documentation to determine the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or that a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is appropriate.

This document is made available for public review and comment in accordance with the requirements of 23 CFR 771.119 (d).

II. HIGHWAY SECTION DESCRIPTION

Hennepin County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 53, locally referred to as 66th Street, extends between France and Cedar Avenues, a distance of 4 miles (see Figures 1 and 2).

Existing Condition: The west end of this highway section from France Avenue through the Xerxes Avenue intersection to the Edina city limits has previously been upgraded to a four-lane divided roadway with turn lanes and sidewalks. Similarly, the section between 16th Avenue and Cedar Avenue on the east end is currently a four-lane divided roadway with turn lanes and sidewalks.

The project section is located on 66th Street from 150 feet west of Washburn Avenue South to 16th Avenue South in Richfield, Minnesota. This section of 66th Street is generally a four-lane undivided urban roadway and is classified as an arterial reliever for alternative travel from Highway 62 and other nearby connections. Existing right-of-way varies from 66 to 100 feet.

The west end of 66th Street is a five-lane undivided roadway with a two-way center left-turn lane from Xerxes Avenue to Penn Avenue. Between Penn Avenue and I-35W, 66th Street is a four-lane undivided roadway with no left- or right-turn lanes. Between I-35W and Nicollet Avenue, 66th Street is a four-lane divided urban roadway with left-turn lanes at key intersections; between Nicollet Avenue and 16th Street, 66th Street is a four-lane undivided urban roadway with no left- or right-turn lanes. Metro Transit has multiple bus routes (Routes 111, 515, and 558) that travel along 66th Street and multiple bus stops within the project limits. Heavy commercial truck traffic comprises about 3.5 to 4 percent of the overall traffic on 66th Street. The speed limit through this section is 35 miles per hour (mph).
66th Street in the project section is an aging, urban roadway that was originally constructed in 1958 with segments being reconstructed as late as 1987. Recently, Richfield has reconstructed 66th Street to the east of this proposed project. The project area is a mix of residential, commercial, a central business district, and open space (park) land uses. See Figures 1 and 2 for project location and Figure 3a for existing conditions.

**Bridge Crossing Location:** Bridge number 27V11 (I-35W) crosses over 66th Street in the project area, but it is not being modified as part of this project.

**Railroad Crossing Location:** Twin Cities Progressive Rail (PGR) Bloomington crosses at grade just east of Pleasant Avenue on 66th Street. Railroad crossing data sheets were submitted to the MnDOT Office of Freight and Commercial Vehicle Operations. See Appendix D.

**Airport Proximity:** The project is within the area of influence for the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The MnDOT Office of Aeronautics reviewed the proposed project and determined the project would have no adverse impacts to the operation of the airport. See Appendix D.

### III. PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

**Project Purpose**

Hennepin County seeks to improve safety and mobility for all non-motorized and motorized users within the 66th Street corridor.

**Project Needs**

**Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure** - This segment of 66th Street has sidewalks on both sides of the corridor; however, the sidewalks are not separated from the curb, do not allow bicycle traffic, are in various states of disrepair, and existing curb ramps are not ADA compliant. There are no usable shoulder areas or designated shared use paths for bicyclists within the project corridor. City ordinance prohibits bicyclists from using sidewalks; therefore, bicycle commuters must use existing traffic lanes with average daily traffic volumes ranging between 12,200 (east) and 22,100 (west) vehicles per day (vpd) (Hennepin County Special Project Analysis Report (SPAR), 2014).

**Safety Deficiencies** - The corridor has an existing safety problem with bicycle/pedestrian/automobile and automobile/automobile crashes that was identified in the Hennepin County Special Project Analysis Report (SPAR) for CSAH 53 using Hennepin County’s crash data for a three-year period from 2007-2009 (SPAR, 2014). Updated crash data from 2011-2013, shown in Appendix B, further documented the safety problems identified in the SPAR. From 2007 to 2012, there were 28 pedestrian and bicycle crashes documented along 66th Street (SPAR, 2014). From 2011 to 2013, there were 20 pedestrian and bicycle crashes documented in the same area, 16 of which resulted in physical injury. This data suggests that the number of crashes per year that involve pedestrians and bicycles in the corridor is increasing.
Table 1 provides a summary of crash types by segment. The SPAR identified a measureable number of rear-end crashes at intersections and along segments of the 66th Street corridor during 2007-2012. More recent crash data from 2011-2013 shows the most common crash types to be rear end, right angle, and sideswipe crashes through the corridor.

Table 1. 2011-2013 Crash Type Summary for 66th Street

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Termini</th>
<th>Rear End</th>
<th>Right Angle</th>
<th>Sideswipe</th>
<th>Left Turn</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xerxes Ave to Penn Ave</td>
<td>Intersection-Related Crashes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Other Crashes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn Ave to I-35W</td>
<td>Intersection-Related Crashes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Other Crashes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-35W to Nicollet Ave</td>
<td>Intersection-Related Crashes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Other Crashes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicollet Ave to 16th Ave</td>
<td>Intersection-Related Crashes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All Other Crashes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Existing automobile crash rates (2011-2013) for road segments along 66th Street exceeded the average crash rate for similar roadway types\(^1\) for eight of thirteen road segments (Appendix B). For example:

- 1.38 existing crash rate as compared to 0.68 average crash rate for urban, four-lane divided roadway segments (Penn to Logan)
- 1.15 existing crash rate as compared to 0.92 average crash rate for urban, five-lane undivided roadway (Vincent to Sheridan)
- 2.12 existing crash rate as compared to 1.16 average crash rate for urban, four-lane undivided roadway segments (Portland to 12th)

Six of the eight road segments with above average crash rates also had crash severity rates that exceeded the critical severity rate.\(^2\) Four of those six road segments are four-lane undivided roadways, which have a high number of access points and lack turn lanes, increasing the potential for rear-end crashes. Some of the highest severity rates were found between Portland Avenue and 12th Avenue, and between Logan Avenue and I-35W West Ramps. These segments also correlate with two areas that have high pedestrian and bicycle crashes (2011-2013 crash data). Appendix B includes a summary of crash

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\(^1\) Average crash rates based on Hennepin County averages for similar roadway type, as reported in SPAR.

\(^2\) Critical severity rate based on Statewide Average Severity Rate for similar facilities, not including junctions, from MnDOT 2012 Green Sheets.
severity data by segment and intersection.

Traffic speed may be a contributing safety factor. The posted speed limit is 35 mph, and actual speeds of the roadway varied from 37 to 41 mph (SPAR, 2014). Increased speeds generally increase the severity of crashes, and speed results indicate the highest actual speeds were observed along four-lane undivided roadway segments. Between Portland Avenue and 12th Avenue, actual vehicle speeds were 41 mph (for eastbound and westbound traffic) and the segment exhibited a severity rating of 4.39 (exceeding the critical severity rating of 1.90 for a similar type roadway) and between Logan Avenue and I-35W, actual vehicle speeds were 39 mph (for eastbound traffic) and 41 mph (westbound traffic) and the segment exhibited a severity rating of 2.40 (exceeding the severity rating of 1.77 for a similar roadways). According to the FHWA Course on Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation, reducing speeds significantly reduces the number and severity of crashes involving pedestrians.

Roadway Condition and Signals - The existing roadway is in need of repair. The pavement is deteriorating and the traffic signals are now obsolete. Hennepin County evaluates pavement conditions using the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) and the Present Serviceability Rating (PSR). In 2012, this section of 66th Street (with the exception of 4th Avenue to Park Avenue) had a PCI rating ranging from 0 to 32 (100 being new surfacing) and a PSR rating varying from 1.6 to 2.81 (a rating of 5 being flawless). A portion of 66th Street, including Penn Avenue to Humboldt Avenue and Nicollet Avenue to 16th Avenue (excluding the roundabout at Portland Avenue), had a thin overlay completed in 2014 due to the severity of degradation to drivability that could not wait for the proposed 66th Street project improvements.

IV. ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives Considered
The following alternatives were considered during the development of the preferred alternative for this project.

No Build Alternative
A No Build alternative would entail making no geometric changes to the roadway and no additional traffic turn lanes or pedestrian/bicycle lanes. The No Build alternative does not address the purpose and need for the project, as safety and mobility issues for non-motorized and motorized users of 66th Street would remain. Additionally, as traffic volumes are expected to increase, crash rates for the corridor would persist or worsen given the high number of conflict points, lack of turn lanes, and lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure would remain unchanged.

The No-Build condition would eliminate construction related impacts to the natural and social environment and would eliminate right-of-way acquisitions. If no improvements are made, however, safety and roadway infrastructure will

continue to degrade and hinder future growth by limiting the mobility of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and automobile users.

**Preferred Alternative**

This project will add bicycle facilities and enhance pedestrian accommodations along the 3.3 mile corridor. At the same time the roadway will be reconstructed. Project elements include a 10-ton design, a raised concrete median or a continuous left turn lane, pedestrian and bicycle accommodations, ADA-compliant curb ramps, and the replacement of existing signals at key intersections, including constructing roundabout intersections at Lyndale and Nicollet Avenues (see Figure 3b).

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities of the preferred alternative include shared use paths and cycle tracks. A shared use path is defined as a multi-use trail or other path, physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier. A cycle track is defined as an exclusive bike facility that is distinct from the sidewalk and separated from motor traffic with a physical barrier. These facilities separate vehicles from pedestrians and cyclists which will improve the safety and mobility of non-motorized users of the 66th Street corridor. Given the high volume of traffic along the corridor (12,200 vpd on the east end to 22,100 vpd on the west end (SPAR, 2014)), a separated refuge for pedestrians and cyclists was determined the safest option.

The preferred alternative includes four typical sections and are generally described as being (from east to west):

- From Xerxes Avenue to Penn Avenue, a four-lane divided roadway with a shared use path on the north and a sidewalk on the south side of roadway;
- From Penn Avenue to Nicollet Avenue, a four-lane divided roadway with a separated cycle track and sidewalk on both sides;
- From Nicollet Avenue to Portland Avenue, a three-lane divided roadway with a separated cycle track and sidewalk on both sides;
- From Portland Avenue to Cedar Avenue, a three-lane undivided roadway with a separated cycle track and sidewalk on both sides.

Design alternatives were evaluated in an attempt to avoid total parcel acquisitions/relocations but no alternative would have reasonably or feasibly avoided all homes and still meet the purpose and needs for the project. The acquisition of 18 homes will be required between Penn Avenue and I-35W on the south side of 66th Street. In this segment, existing right-of-way is narrow and homes are closer to the road than in other areas of the project corridor, many not meeting standard building setbacks, therefore any property needed would make these parcels non-conforming and result in many short steep driveways that would not be compatible with pedestrians/bicyclists or functional for homeowners. Alternatively, any improvements in this segment

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4 Available at [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/resources/design_nonmotor/shared/index.cfm](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/resources/design_nonmotor/shared/index.cfm)

would require a reduction in travel lanes or eliminating pedestrian/bicycle accommodations to avoid parcel acquisition. A three-lane design was investigated (SPAR, 2014 and in subsequent VISSIM model), and determined not feasible in this segment at this time due to existing and forecast traffic volumes. If upgrades to TH 62 and other relievers were implemented, taking some volume from 66th Street, a three-lane design in this segment may function; however, the level of needed improvements elsewhere are not currently programmed therefore not included in the analysis.

The preferred alternative is expected to reduce the number of crashes across the corridor. According to the Highway Safety Manual (HSM), 2010, the number of anticipated crashes resulting in personal injury reduces when either dividing an originally undivided four-lane roadway or converting a four-lane roadway to a three-lane roadway. Table 2 lists the crash reduction factor associated with the proposed conversion of road segment (i.e. four-lane to three lane conversion) and the total anticipated reduction for annual injury crashes. The preferred alternative includes the addition of a raised median between Penn Avenue and Portland Avenue, which will increase safety by limiting access and associated conflict points of those accesses compared to the existing undivided design; in these segments, crashes resulting in injury are anticipated to be reduced by up to 22 percent. Additionally, the preferred alternative includes converting the existing four-lane roadway to a three-lane roadway from Nicollet Avenue to Cedar Avenue; where crashes are anticipated to be reduced by up to 29 percent.

Table 2. Calculated crash reduction by segment for injury crashes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSAH 53 Segment</th>
<th>Crashes Per Year</th>
<th>Crash Reduction Factor</th>
<th>Total Anticipated Future Crashes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xerxes Ave to Penn Ave</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penn Ave to I-35W</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>2.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-35W to Nicollet Avenue</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicollet to 16th Avenue</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1 Excludes crashes at intersections within listed road segment
2 From 2011-2013 crash data
3 The existing cross-section of these segments will not be altered meaning crash reduction as a result of design is not anticipated
4 Potential crash effects of providing a median on a previously undivided roadway (Highway Safety Manual, 2010)
5 Potential crash effects of four to three-lane conversions (Highway Safety Manual, 2010)

In addition, all cross sections will provide dedicated space for left-turning vehicles, and it also provides a shoulder space along the curb that enhances right turns and provides buffer room for vehicles backing out of driveways which will reduce the number of conflict points for vehicles entering the roadway.
Roundabouts will be constructed at the intersections of 66th Street with Lyndale and Nicollet Avenues. Roundabouts have been shown to calm traffic and reduce speeds within ¼ mile of the intersection and reduce conflict points from 32 to 8 for vehicles and from 16 to 8 for pedestrians. Roundabouts improve safety for non-motorized users by providing pedestrian refuge, and bicycles have the option of using the pedestrian crossing or riding through the roundabout.

The preferred alternative would satisfy the purpose and need by improving safety and accessibility pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles, as well as maintaining the ability of the corridor to function as an arterial reliever. The project also supports area land use intensification by improving operational efficiency and accommodating reasonable access. This will strengthen connections to other nearby employment and commercial centers and provide increased mobility and linkages to jobs, housing, and other services.

Reasonable Location or Design Alternatives Considered
A variety of design alternatives and concepts were evaluated in comparison to the project goals through stakeholder engagement (Appendix C).

Three-Lane Roadway Design Concept: Reconstruction of 66th Street to a three-lane corridor was considered in an effort to limit property impacts and address safety needs of non-motorized users through the corridor. The results of the SPAR showed a three-lane segment fails (LOS F) between Xerxes Avenue and Nicollet Avenue causing traffic on ramps to back-up onto I-35W, which would create safety issues along I-35W. The only segment of the three-lane roadway design concept that functions at an acceptable level of service is between Nicollet Avenue and Cedar Avenue because this segment has lower traffic volume. The three-lane roadway design concept was incorporated as part of the preferred alternative for the segment between Nicollet and Cedar.

Four-Lane Roadway Design Concepts: The concepts that were evaluated as part of the project development included:

- **Reconstruction to a four-lane divided roadway with a separated raised one-way cycle track and sidewalk on both sides (Concept #4B).** This concept addressed the safety needs of the project by offering mode specific non-motorized facilities without limiting traffic capacity through the corridor. Concept #4B was adopted as part of the preferred alternative for the segment of 66th Street between Penn Avenue and Nicollet Avenue. As noted in the preferred alternative section, the parcel acquisition could not be avoided given most building setbacks were already non-conforming, thus any sidewalk reconstruction with any boulevard separation from the roadway would require acquisition.

- **A low impact concept was evaluated with the intent to reduce property impacts and acquisition associated with Concept #4B.** The concept included a four lane divided roadway with a shared use path on both sides, as opposed to a designated cycle track and sidewalk. Despite the smaller footprint, the concept addressed the safety need of the project...
by offering a separated non-motorized facility without limiting traffic capacity through the corridor. Application of this concept was considered for the section of 66th Street from Xerxes Avenue to Penn Avenue. It was not advanced from Penn Avenue to I-35W because of site constraints. Homes on the south side of 66th Street from Penn Avenue to I-35W are closer to the existing right of way relative to other areas of the project corridor; 12 of 18 homes on the south side are less than the required 15 foot setback today and two are less than the required 30 foot setback. Many are setback less than 10 feet, which is less than the length of most cars.

In order to apply the low impact concept and prevent home acquisitions, 66th Street would have to be shifted entirely to the north; however this would increase the number of non-conforming homes on the north side of the road. Currently only 3 of 25 homes on the north side of 66th Street are non-conforming, whereas if shifted north 17 parcels would be non-conforming, in addition to those on the south that would remain non-conforming. In addition, due to existing slopes in the area, driveways for homes would not be functional with remaining spacing. Therefore, complete avoidance of the parcels on the south side of 66th Street was not reasonable or feasible and the low impact concept was only adopted as part of the preferred alternative for the segment of 66th Street between Xerxes Avenue and Penn Avenue where buildings are further from the right of way. The concept was further refined to a shared use path on the north side of the roadway and a sidewalk on the south side.

Intersection Design Alternatives:

- **Closed Raised Median** - This concept was considered for the whole project corridor. A closed raised median results in lower speeds due to perceived narrowing of the roadway and reduces vehicle conflict points from 32 to 4. The median also provides refuge for pedestrians and bicycles; however, this option would result in rerouting traffic through the neighborhood and would require mostly right-in/right-out only turns. Raised medians are included in between key cross streets between Penn Avenue and Portland Avenue.

- **Roundabout** - Roundabouts were considered at all major intersections along 66th Street. This concept calms traffic and reduces speeds within ¼ mile of the roundabout. It reduces conflict points from 32 to 8 for vehicles and from 16 to 8 for pedestrians. It allows pedestrian refuge, and bicycles have the option of using the pedestrian crossing or riding through the roundabout. However, right-of-way impacts would be required with this option. Roundabouts were only recommended for Lyndale and Nicollet Avenues.

- **Full Access Median** - This concept was considered for the whole project area. The median provides refuge for pedestrians and bicyclists and maintains the left-turn lane for vehicles. It would reduce speeds due to

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6 City of Richfield ordinance requires 15-foot offset for side yards, where buildings are oriented away from roadway, and 30-foot offset for front yards, where buildings are oriented toward roadway.
perceived narrowing of the roadway; however, this concept does not reduce conflict points and limits access for driveways near intersections. Full access medians are included along the corridor at pedestrian and bicycle crossings between Portland Avenue and Nicollet Avenue.

Alternatives Considered but Rejected
The other roadway design alternatives that were considered but rejected are described below.

- **Concept #1** - On-street bicycle lanes with two sidewalks. This concept was not advanced because it did not meet the project goals of accommodating recreational bicyclists or reduce bicycle/vehicle conflicts.
- **Concept #2** - On-street bicycle lanes with one sidewalk and multiuse trail. This concept was not advanced because it did not adequately address safety needs for cyclists. During the public involvement process, on-street bike lanes were decided to be less safe for cyclists as compared to a grade-separated cycle track due to high traffic volumes along the corridor.
- **Concept #3** - One sidewalk and multiuse trail. This concept was not advanced because it does not meet the project goal of accommodating commuter bicyclists.
- **Concept #4A** - Raised one-way cycle tracks with two sidewalks. This concept was not advanced because it does not meet the project goal of accommodating recreational cyclists and due to concerns related to maintenance.
V. PROJECT COST, FUNDING & SCHEDULE

Estimate of Cost
Roadway Costs: $37,007,000
Total: $37,007,000

Anticipated Funding
Type and amount of federal and matching funds
 Federal: $7,840,000 STP
 County: $23,439,000 MSAS and/or CSAH
 Other State: $0
 Local: $5,728,000

The project is in the 2016-2019 State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).
 Federal fiscal year 2016, Sequence # 1471
 Estimated cost shown in STIP: $40,000,000
 Federal funding shown in STIP: $7,840,000

Anticipated Schedule
Environmental Assessment: January 2015
Public Hearing: January 2016
EIS Need Decision: February 2016
Design Study: November 2015
Right-of-Way Acquisition: March 2016
Plans, Specifications & Estimate: January 2016
Letting: July 2016

Future Stages Or Improvements
This project is not part of a phased construction.

VI. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL (SEE) IMPACTS

Section 4(f) Of The Transportation Act Of 1966
There are two parks adjacent to the 66th Street project (Figure 3a).

Veterans Park
Veterans Park is directly adjacent to the north side of 66th Street between Portland and 11th Avenues and is a Section 4(f) resource. The project will stay within existing right-of-way in this area and will not use any land from Veterans Parks, resulting in no Section 4(f) impact to this park (see Figure 3b).

Monroe Park
Monroe Park is located south of 66th Street between Knox and Irving Avenues. It was established in 1969 as a neighborhood park with youth fields for soccer and baseball and a hockey rink in the winter. The park includes an existing trail network. There is no vehicle parking at Monroe Park;
however, there are four separate pedestrian accesses, including one at the north end of the park from 66th Street, via an old right-of-way for the absent James Street. The eastern 30 feet of this old right-of-way is owned by Hennepin County, and it has provided a perpetual easement to the City of Richfield for purposes of street and park use on this parcel. The western 30 feet of the old right-of-way is also designated for street and park purposes and provides the current trail connection to the park from 66th Street. The northern park boundary in relation to these parcels is shown in Figure 4. Easement and dedication records are attached in Appendix E. Based on this information, both parcels are assumed to be Section 4(f) resources but have allowance for street use. Currently, this area is undeveloped open space, with a steep trail access connecting the park trail system to 66th Street.

The additional right-of-way needed for the 66th Street project will result in the northern 40 feet of the old James Street right-of-way being used as 66th Street right-of-way. This land will remain in street use and will also be used to construct pedestrian and bicycle facilities. This land use remains consistent with intended “street and park” purposes, and will not affect the existing activities, features, or attributes of the park.

Additionally, the northwest corner of Monroe Park abuts a residential property (6600 James Avenue), which includes a retaining wall partially within the park. This parcel is one of the 19 homes to be acquired.

As part of the construction of the 66th Street project, a new ADA-compliant trail access will be constructed through part of the parcel at 6600 James Avenue and will continue to the south, connecting to an existing trail within Monroe Park. See Figure 4 for a location of Monroe Park and detail of the work to be completed. The existing trail access from 66th Street, located between the properties at 6600 James Avenue and 1617 66th Street, is not ADA compliant and will be removed. In order to construct the new trail access as indicated, a temporary easement will be required within the park. The structures at 6600 James Avenue will be removed, including the retaining wall that is partially located within the Monroe Park boundary. The retaining wall was not constructed for park use, serves no park function, and will be removed in order to construct the trail.

The duration of the park occupancy will be temporary (less than 60 days) in nature, and there will be no change in ownership of the land. There will be no adverse physical impact or interference with the activities or purposes of the park, on either a permanent or temporary basis. The new trail will be functional before the existing trail is removed. The land being used will be fully restored to a condition that is at least as good as what existed prior to the project.

A detailed Section 4(f) De Minimis evaluation is included in Appendix E. The proposed action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the resource, and is not anticipated to adversely affect the activities, features,
and attributes of Monroe Park. The City of Richfield, as owner of the park, supports the work to be completed within the park and agrees the temporary impacts will result in an improved park condition and will not adversely impact park activities, features, or attributes. See Appendix E for correspondence from the City of Richfield.

FHWA has agreed that a De Minimis finding may be appropriate for the impacts to Monroe Park, resulting from the 66th Street Reconstruction project. A public notice was prepared detailing the availability of the environmental document and the intent for a De Minimis finding. The public notice contains information on commenting procedures and timeframes.

**Section 6(f) Of The Land And Water Conservation Fund Act Of 1965**
The project has been reviewed for potential Section 6(f) involvement. The project will not cause the conversion of any land acquired or developed with funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. No Section 6(f) involvement exists on this project.

**Section 106 Of The National Historic Preservation Act Of 1966**
Between July and November of 2015, The 106 Group Ltd. (106 Group) conducted a Phase I and II architecture/history investigation for the project area. During the Phase I architecture/history investigation, the 106 Group identified 168 properties that were 45 years of age or older. Of the 168 properties, two had been previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the Academy of Holy Angels and the Minneapolis St. Paul Rochester and Dubuque Railroad Corridor Historic District. Of the 166 unevaluated properties, the Hub Shopping Center (see Figure 5 for location) was recommended as potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP. The remaining properties were recommended as not eligible for listing in the NRHP due to a lack of historical significance and/or a loss of historical integrity. Subsequently, in November of 2015, a Phase II architecture/history evaluation was conducted for the recommended potentially eligible property identified during the Phase I survey. The purpose of the Phase II architecture/history evaluation was to determine whether the Hub Shopping Center is eligible for listing in the NRHP. As a result of the evaluation the Hub Shopping Center was recommend as eligible (Appendix F). A determination of no adverse effect on all three eligible properties has been recommended by the MnDOT Cultural Resource Unit for SHPO review.

**Endangered Species Act Of 1973**
The project will have no effect on federally listed threatened and endangered species or critical habitat. See attached letter from MnDOT’s Office of Environmental Stewardship (OES) in Appendix D.

The project will have no effect on state listed threatened and endangered species or critical habitat. A review of the DNR Natural Heritage Information System (NHIS) was conducted (License Agreement 718) for the area within
approximately one mile of the project study area (see correspondence in Appendix G).

Right-Of-Way
The project will require approximately:

- 5.27 acres of permanent right-of-way acquisition from 77 parcels, and
- 4.98 acres of temporary easements from 160 parcels, and
- 0.05 acres of drainage easements from 10 parcels, and
- 0 parcels secured by permit or agreement

The project will require 19 residential relocations for the 19 residential properties to be acquired as part of the project. No business relocations will be required (see Figure 6a-6f and Appendix H). These relocations do not disproportionately affect low-income or minority populations.

Acquisition and relocation will be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended.

The project will require changes in access to several parcels. Medians will be added throughout the corridor to improve safety by limiting adjacent residential and commercial properties to right-in/right-out access. Raised medians will be constructed between the following streets:

- Thomas Avenue and Sheridan Avenue
- Sheridan Avenue and Russell Avenue
- Newton Avenue and Morgan Avenue
- Morgan Avenue and Logan Avenue
- Logan Avenue and Knox Avenue
- Knox Avenue and James Avenue
- James Avenue to Irving Avenue
- Irving Avenue to Humboldt Avenue
- 2nd Avenue and 3rd Avenue
- 3rd Avenue to Clinton Avenue
- Clinton Avenue to 4th Avenue
- 4th Avenue to 5th Avenue
- 10th Avenue to 11th Avenue

All existing residential and commercial access driveways will be replaced in kind with the exception of two commercial access closures. The closures are both in the vicinity of Nicollet Avenue. One existing access to be closed cannot be replaced in its current location due to the proximity of the proposed roundabout at Nicollet Ave and 66th Street; however, two existing accesses will remain on the parcel. The other existing access to be closed has a second, nearby access located on the property and, therefore, will not be replaced.

Hazardous Materials
A Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was conducted for the project area. A total of 64 records of environmental concern (REC) sites
were identified, 15 of which ranked as high and were identified near the project corridor.

Hennepin County completed a Phase 2 ESA for high ranked REC sites and sites near property to be acquired. The Phase 2 ESA recommended Hennepin County prepare and submit the following documents:

- Request for Assistance Form to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Voluntary Investigation and Cleanup (VIC) Program and the MPCA Petroleum Brownfields Program
- Voluntary Response Action Plan (VRAP) to the MPCA Petroleum Brownfields Program; also to be included in the project specifications.
- Environmental Construction Contingency Plan (ECCP) to the MPCA VIC and MPCA Petroleum Brownfields Program; also to be included in the project specifications.

These documents have been prepared and submitted to MPCA, and can be viewed at Hennepin County’s Medina Public Works office. Any potentially contaminated materials encountered during construction will be handled and treated in accordance with the above documents and applicable state and federal regulations.

**Farmland Protection Policy Act Of 1981**
The project will not involve the acquisition of farmland.

**Air Quality**
The project will not significantly impact air quality.

**Highway Traffic Noise**
The project is not a Type I project under FHWA noise regulation 23 CFR 772, and an evaluation of noise impacts is not needed.

**Construction Noise**
Construction noise has been considered, and no impact is anticipated. Night construction activities are not anticipated.

**Floodplain Management**
The project will not encroach into a floodplain.

**Wetland Protection**
The project will not impact or encroach into a wetland.

**Section 404 Of The Clean Water Act**
The project will not involve placement of fill into waters of the U.S. (defined in 33CFR 328).

**Water Pollution / MPCA—NPDES**
The construction activities will disturb one or more acre of land area (including clearing, grading, and excavation). A Phase II NPDES permit will
be required. The permit will be submitted to MnDOT State Aid prior to project authorization, and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be included in the construction plan package.

This project will not increase the existing impervious surface area and associated highway runoff, and it will not change the existing drainage system. This project does not introduce highway runoff to sensitive water bodies. Therefore, no impacts on water quality are anticipated.

Controversial Issues
No controversial project issues remain. See Section VIII.

Environmental Justice
The purpose of federal Executive Order 12898 (February 16, 1994) is to identify, address, and avoid disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects on minority and low-income populations. Census and Hennepin County parcel data was examined to make a determination.

The total population in Richfield for whom poverty status is determined is 35,415. The percent of the population in Richfield that is below the poverty level is 14.5 percent (5,121 people).\(^7\) The total population within the project area by Census block group is 13,657. The percentage of people within the project study area with income in the past 12 months below poverty level is 13.3 percent (1,813 people).\(^8\)

The percentage of Richfield’s population that is a minority\(^9\) is 41 percent, and the percentage of the minority population within the study area is 33.5 percent.\(^{10}\)

As part of the proposed project, 181 parcels out of 212 are to be impacted through temporary easements and permanent right-of-way acquisition. This includes 19 homes that will be acquired. The 181 impacted parcels are located throughout the entire project area (see summary of demographics in the table below). Figures 7a and 7b show the percent of minority and low-income populations throughout the project area for comparison.

Table 1. Demographic Analysis Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>% Low Income</th>
<th>% Minority</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Richfield</td>
<td>35,415</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>41.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study Area</td>
<td>13,657</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^7\) Data are based on poverty status in the past 12 months by place. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey.

\(^8\) Data are based on poverty status of individuals in the past 12 months by living arrangement by block group. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey.

\(^9\) Minority was considered non-white populations. This includes Black or African American, Hispanic, Asian American, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

\(^{10}\) Data are based on Hispanic or Latino origin by race by block group. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey.
Based on the demographic analysis of the project area by block groups, there are identifiable minority and low-income populations within the project area; however, the percentage of low income and minority populations in the project area are comparable to the rest of the city’s demographics. The project requires temporary (from construction) and permanent impacts (displacement of homes) that will affect the whole corridor, including low-income and minority populations within the corridor. The city looked at all alternatives that would be reasonable and feasible to avoid permanent impacts; however, all permanent impacts could not be avoided. Numerous public meetings were held to gather stakeholder input through the alternatives analysis. Mitigation measures will be implemented to reimburse and assist displaced property owners for relocation.

Therefore, the project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effect to any minority population or low-income population, and there are no Environmental Justice concerns related to this project.

State Environmental Review
The project does not meet the mandatory EAW or EIS thresholds under Minnesota Rules, part 4410.4300, subp. 22 or part 4410.4400, subp.16, and does not have potential for significant environmental effects.

VII. AGENCY COORDINATION (Not covered in the “SEE” impact section above)

Appendix D provides the correspondence received from several agencies regarding this project, including:

- MnDOT Railroad Crossing letter
- MnDOT Office of Aeronautics letter
## Permits Required

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Agency</th>
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<th>Status / Date Received</th>
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<tr>
<td>Coast Guard</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNR--Water</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNR—Public Waters</td>
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<td>MPCA--NPDES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>TO BE SUBMITTED</td>
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<td>MPCA—Section 401</td>
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<td>Watershed District</td>
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<td>Wetland Conservation Act / BSWR</td>
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### VIII. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To date there have been five open house public meetings held for this project and several other opportunities for public input. A copy of the meeting summaries is attached (see Appendix I).

**Public Information Meeting(s) held:**

**Date:** Open House #1 - October 10, 2013  
**Who was invited & how:** Hennepin County and the City of Richfield jointly held the first of five open houses to discuss both the 66th Street and Portland Avenue reconstruction projects. The City mailed meeting notices to residents and businesses within the area surrounding the project. The open house was held to show and gather feedback on preliminary plans for both projects.

**Concerns raised:** Traffic delays and speeds, lack of pedestrian facilities, condition of pavement and sidewalks, snow storage in the winter  
**How were they addressed:** These concerns have been evaluated as part of the final design for the reconstruction of 66th Street through the implementation of roundabouts to slow speeds and through upgrades to improve the condition of the roadway and sidewalks.

**Date:** Open House #2 - January 22, 2014  
**Who was invited & how:** Hennepin County and the City of Richfield jointly held the second open house to discuss both the 66th Street and Portland...
Avenue reconstruction projects. The City mailed meeting notices to residents and businesses within the area surrounding the project. The open house was held to show and gather feedback on preliminary plans for both projects.

**Concerns raised:** Need for improved pedestrian crossings, on-street parking is important to community development along 66th Street, slower design speeds, use raised medians in moderation, and consider options that do not require substantial right-of-way impacts

**How were they addressed:** These concerns have been incorporated as part of the final design for the reconstruction of 66th Street through the implementation of roundabouts to slow speeds and through upgrades to improve the condition of the roadway and sidewalks.

**Date:** Open House #3 - April 3, 2014

**Who was invited & how:** Hennepin County led the third open house to discuss only the 66th Street reconstruction project. The County mailed meeting notices to residents and businesses within the area surrounding the project. The open house was held to reinforce what was heard at the previous open houses, share what has been developed by the project team since that time, and solicit input on intersection alternatives.

**Concerns raised:** Marked and lit pedestrian crossing near Pizza Luce, phase construction to avoid significant travel impacts to seniors living at 66th Street and Lyndale Avenue, prefer one-lane roundabouts over two-lane, and desire to avoid landscaping that grows over signage

**How were they addressed:** These concerns have been incorporated as part of the final design for the reconstruction of 66th Street through the implementation of roundabouts to slow speeds and through upgrades to improve the condition of the roadway and sidewalks.

**Date:** Open House #4 - September 25, 2014

**Who was invited & how:** Hennepin County led the fourth open house to discuss the 66th Street reconstruction project. The County mailed meeting notices to residents and businesses within the area surrounding the project. The open house was held to reinforce what was heard at the previous open houses, share what has been developed by the project team since that time, and solicit input on preferred and recommended concepts.

**Concerns raised:** Property impacts/value, opposition to boulevards, support for bicycle infrastructure, loss of parking, and maintenance concerns in respect to boulevards

**How were they addressed:** These concerns have been incorporated as part of the final design for the reconstruction of 66th Street through the implementation of roundabouts to slow speeds and through upgrades to improve the condition of the roadway and sidewalks.

**Date:** Open House #5 - November 13, 2014

**Who was invited & how:** Hennepin County led the fifth open house to discuss the 66th Street reconstruction project. The County mailed meeting notices to residents and businesses within the area surrounding the project. The goal of the open house was to reinforce what was heard at the previous
open houses, share project developments, and solicit input on recommended design alternatives from I-35W to Xerxes Avenue.

**Concerns raised:** Right-of-way, access, opposition to boulevards, support for bicycle infrastructure, and loss of parking. Recommended concepts from this open house were Low Impact and Concept 4B.

**How were they addressed:** These concerns have been incorporated as part of the final design for the reconstruction of 66th Street through the implementation of roundabouts to slow speeds and through upgrades to improve the condition of the roadway and sidewalks.

### Public Hearing(s) held:

**Date:** October 28, 2014 - City Council Meeting

**Who was invited & how:** City Council, City Staff, and open to the public

**Concerns raised:**
- Intersection safety for bicyclists with a bike lane or cycle track
- Consideration for the approval of the Preliminary Concept #4B between I-35W and 16th Avenue and supporting design variance to reduce right-of-way impact

**How were they addressed:**
- The majority of those surveyed at the public open houses supported a separate cycle track, which is a safer option for bicyclists as opposed to shared lanes with traffic
- Resolution was approved of the preliminary Concept #4B between I-35W and 16th Avenue and support for the design variance to reduce right-of-way impact. The resolution was passed 5 to 0 (Resolution No. 10995).

**Copy of transcript is available at**
http://www.cityofrichfield.org/home/showdocument?id=5865

**Date:** December 9, 2014 - City Council Meeting

**Who was invited & how:** City Council, City Staff, and open to the public

**Concerns raised:**
- Residents expressed concerns regarding park security and impacts to their home
- One resident did not support the project and roundabouts
- Resident expressed concern that narrowing streets would create congestion in neighborhoods
- Attendees expressed concerns regarding the displacement of 18 homes and the property tax impacts
- Consideration for the approval of the preliminary layout of the Low Impact Concept (Xerxes to Penn) and preliminary layout Concept #4B (Penn to Girard)

**How were they addressed:**
- The Low Impact Concept was created to address the property acquisitions to try and minimize the impact
- Resolution was granted for approval of the preliminary layout Low Impact Concept (Xerxes to Penn) and preliminary layout Concept #4B (Penn to Girard). It was passed 3 to 2 (Resolution No. 11015).
Date: February 24, 2015 - Special City Council Work Session  
Who was invited & how: City Council and City Staff  
Concerns raised:
  - Mayor expressed concern that roundabout design criteria is not tried and tested and is unable to find examples suitable for the 66th Street corridor  
  - Consideration for the approval of roundabouts at major intersections along 66th Street; consideration requested for each intersection independently  
How were they addressed:
  - Roundabouts have been shown to improve safety for all modes of transportation through the recommended intersections without creating congestions  
  - Resolution was granted for approval of roundabout at Lyndale Avenue (Resolution No. 11054) and Nicollet Avenue (Resolution No. 11053)  

A combined public informational meeting/public hearing will be held after this Environmental Assessment has been distributed to the public and to the required and interested federal, state, and local agencies and Native American Tribes for their review.  

At the informational meeting/public hearing, project documentation will be available for public review. The public will also be given the opportunity to express their comments, ideas, and concerns about the proposed project. These comments will be received at the hearing and during the remainder of the comment period and will become a part of the official hearing record.

IX. DESIGN STUDY

See Appendix J.

TRAFFIC DURING CONSTRUCTION
Traffic along 66th Street will be detoured to TH 62 between Xerxes Avenue (west end) and Cedar Avenue/TH77 (east end).