

# HENNEPIN COUNTY

## MINNESOTA

## Active Transportation Committee

Date: Monday, August 15, 2022

Time: 4 – 6 p.m.

Location: Microsoft Teams conference call meeting

### Committee Members:

- Tammy McLemore, Dist. 1
- ✓ Gilbert Odonkor, Dist. 1
- ✓ Billy Binder, Dist. 2
- ✓ Jenny Ackerson, Dist. 2
- ✓ Laura Mitchell, Dist. 3
- ✓ Jay Eidsness, Dist. 4
- ✓ Haley Foydel, Dist. 4
- ✓ Lou Dzierzak, Dist. 5
- ✓ Courtney Costigan, Dist. 5
- ✓ Bob Byers, Dist. 6
- ✓ Lou Miranda, Dist. 6
- ✓ Greg Anderson, Dist. 7
- Lee Newman, Dist. 7

### Ex-Officio Members:

- ✓ Jordan Kocak, HC Public Works
- ✓ Dan Patterson, HC Public Works
- ✓ Arman Rajaeian, Metro Transit
- ✓ Michael Samuelson, MnDOT
- ✓ John Mark Lucas, U of M

### Guests:

- ✓ Jason Staebell, HC Public Works
- ✓ Nathan Ellingson, HC Public Works
- ✓ Katie White, Minneapolis
- ✓ Aaron Warford, Bolton Menck

## Notes

- **Approval of the July 2022 minutes** **4:04 – 4:05**
  - Lou Miranda moved to approve July 2022 minutes; Courtney Costigan seconded. The minutes were adopted by a majority.
  
- **Franklin Avenue reconstruction** **4:05 – 4:35**
  - Nathan Ellingson from Hennepin County Transportation Design introduced Aaron Warford from Bolton & Menck and Katie White from the city of Minneapolis, who are involved in the project.
  - This is an extension of the 2019-2020 corridor study, moving to the next phase.
  - We've found funding for at least half of the project and confident we'll get more.
  - From Blaisdell to Chicago is funded. Confident the Lyndale to Blaisdell segment will get funded in this year's regional solicitation.
  - We've done some information gathering. We were at Franklin Avenue Open Streets in July.
  - Safety, accessibility and comfort improvements.



- We need to define preferred alternatives for construction in 2025 and 2026.
- Aaron Warford: We're in the data collection mode, looking at the issues on this almost mile and a quarter corridor.
- Safety is a concern for pedestrian crossings and lack of bicycling facilities.
- We have re-engaged the community advisory group that the study worked with.
- As we gather information on the technical side, we're getting input from businesses and property owners at the same time.
- Later this month will come up with early concepts, this is kind of a zero percent design meeting.
- 4-2 conversion was a concept that came out of the study.
- Open house mid-September.
- Courtney Costigan: What do you want to solve for with this project? Franklin needs some love, but do you have some ideas for what you want to happen most? Nathan Ellingson: Franklin right now is a four-lane undivided roadway with no bicycling facility. Biking comfort is pretty low. From a pedestrian side, there are segments where a tree grate might cover 90 percent of the width. We're looking at the comfort and accessibility side of things, especially at crossings. If we can get through with a three-lane section, can we have medians? Green space, there are some trees, but if we can get a dedicated bikeway, some improved sidewalk along with some green space, we're looking at that. Right of way is not consistent, so it's not a one-size-fits-all, it might change block to block. The intent is to try to accommodate all those modes the best we can. Aaron: We probably can't have the same type of accommodations the whole corridor. There are opportunities to maintain a continuous and safe connection, but maybe it will look a little different in places. There are about 24,000 motor vehicles that use Franklin west of 35W, but that drops considerably by Lyndale. For transit, we heard people want safe access to transit and safe facilities. We don't even meet minimum ADA requirements for the existing sidewalks to get people to and from shelters. We obviously don't want to do anything that decreases safety for any users. We need to balance that and mobility.
- Haley Foydel: Looking past 2025-2026, looking east of Chicago. Franklin doesn't get better east of Chicago. Are you looking at pursuing funding there? It's really difficult as a pedestrian and biking over there, too. Nathan Ellingson: I don't know if I can answer that. I think it was reconstructed more recently than this one, and it changes to a three-lane as you move east. I'm not aware of any funding for that segment. This will tie in just west of Chicago, and that intersection was redone pretty recently with Metro Transit. Haley: A concern I always have when I see a reconstruction like this when bike access can disappear. That is really detrimental to biking, and it makes it more dangerous if only part of the road is reconstructed. If it's only paint, even, on the part that isn't reconstructed. It's dangerous for someone biking to have to merge back into traffic. Nathan: That's certainly something we can look at. Jordan: We have a whole separate capital programming process and a process to write applications for federal funding. We try to do it in a data-driven way. Like Nathan said, east of Chicago was reconstructed more recently, so it likely won't rank as well. We have many other projects that might rank better. Once it's reconstructed, it might raise the priority as we try to complete a network and improve safety.

- Jenny Ackerson: I will echo what Haley said. So often it's difficult to see it not blend with existing roadways and it's confusing for all users. I suggest that biking and walking are fortified and not sacrificed for on- and off-ramps.
- Lou Miranda: Since the county adopted its Climate Action Plan and this is an urban street, are you looking to reduce VMT? Nathan Ellingson: That certainly is something we're considering. Aaron: It was a topic of a recent team meeting of ours, how do you accommodate growth. How does a 4-3 conversion fit with volumes we see now, and with the pandemic. I think there are some opportunities, the higher volumes at 35W, we're not interested in knocking down that new bridge, but we need to account for everything at that constriction point. We need to consider growth in traffic and bikes and transit as we model. Lou: If the county wants to reduce VMT you need to do it on the roads you're working on.
- Dave Carlson: Franklin Avenue bridge over 35W did get built with bike lanes. The part of Franklin from Lyndale to Hennepin, on the west side, is under construction. Are they putting in biking and walking facilities, and how does that affect this project? Katie White: From Hennepin to Lyndale is a complete reconstruction, for three blocks. Six foot sidewalks, protected bikeways (one lane each side, four to five feet wide). As we look at Franklin west of Lyndale, how do we make that transition if we have a different design east of Franklin. That's an important consideration.
- Jordan Kocak: I'll work with Nathan to find a time to come back with concepts as this advances.

- **Minnetonka Boulevard reconstruction**

**4:35 – 5:08**

- Jason Staebell from Hennepin County Transportation Design updated on outreach from April to now. TH 100 in SLP to France Avenue at the St. Louis Park / Minneapolis border. This update is to give you the alternative we're going forward for municipal approval this fall. The focus is the east end, where we're proposing some changes.
- The preferred alternative is a shared use path on each side at 9 feet; 6-foot boulevard; 12-foot lanes; 11-foot center shared turn lane.
- The goal is to stay as much as possible in the 66-foot right of way, with bike and pedestrian facilities. It'll be a 4-3 conversion (it's currently four-lane divided). The concept adds green space for our environmental goals and greening of the corridor.
- At the east end, we're proposing a change since we were last here early this year.
- Jason showed an aerial photo of existing conditions. It was an area developed for vehicles. We're seeing if we can make this area a little better for non-vehicle users. We're encouraging vehicle traffic to stay on 25, which is a divided road set up a lot differently than 5. Minnetonka Boulevard would T into 25. The signal at France would be moved a little. We don't plan to change the eastbound lanes on 25, just resurface. We do plan to rebuild westbound 25. There's a good amount of greenspace; some of it will be landscaped, some will be stormwater related.
- Aaron Warford: It eliminates with westbound trap lane. Minnetonka Boulevard is a cut-through to get to TH 100. This uses the four-lane county road to get to TH 100. It reduced confusion. It reduced the number of signals. Today there are three, at Inglewood, the mesh-point of 5 and 25 and then the mesh-point at the final turn to eastbound; it cuts those down to one. It connects to the biking and walking network more easily than today. It better connects to Southwest LRT to the east of Drew Avenue.

- Lou Miranda: Moving the traffic onto 25 is a great idea to get cars off Minnetonka Boulevard. The thing that seems curious to me is the trail goes south, but there's nothing along the old Minnetonka Boulevard. If you want to go west, it's awkward that there's no bikeway on the northern edge. Jason Staebell: We talked with the city about this. They've gravitated toward going to the south rather than the conflict points with people eating at the restaurants. Lou: Maybe move the parking to have room for biking there. If you're going west, no one's going to want to bike west on 25. The businesses are along Minnetonka. The typical path, people will want to stay north and go straight. Aaron Warford: We've talked about this, we don't know the right answer yet.
- Dave Carlson: 1. You at least need a sidewalk in that green space on the north side, from Glenhurst to France. Any time you can separate people walking and biking that's a good idea, especially in a congested area like this. 2. I understand the thinking of rerouting it to a single intersection, but there's a lot of spruce trees in there, I urge you to look at whether you can save those trees. 3. I thought we talked about a cycle track for Minnetonka? Aaron Warford: That was one of the final alternatives we evaluated. It was one of the last two before this was selected. It was a cycle track on the north and a sidewalk on the south. In public engagement we got much better feedback on this concept, due to space for green boulevards on both sides. Less room for snow storage. We kept hearing over and over how little separation there was between vehicles and other modes — transit, walking, biking. We got a lot more negative feedback on the cycle track concept with less separation and green space. The city, too, staff and council members, this was the preferred alternative. On the trees, we're conscious of that. The realignment of westbound 5, we're removing that big wide grass median that's there today. There are trees all through that median. We do have a tremendous net gain in green space with this concept. Space for green infrastructure. It would come at the expense of those trees. We're looking to engage with the arborists at the county so we're not damaging the area and can get trees established for the long term. We're going to have to find a home for the city's monument sign, too.
- John Mark Lucas: The green space: Would it be better experience if the trail bisected the green area, so it's in the middle? Why does the trail need to be right next to the carriageway? It goes back to having a more direct route. And you could experience the trees. Jordan Kocak: How wide are those boulevards? Aaron Warford: 8-10 feet. We're trying to maximize them for separation and snow storage. We're always considerate of that. We are trying to keep room for stormwater treatment. It's often more effective to consolidate those areas for things like raingardens and treating stormwater.
- Greg Anderson: Those right-angle turns aren't a problem for pedestrians, but on a bike it's hard to make a 90-degree turn. I also want to add on about the Glenhurst-France sidewalk or trail. Jason Staebell: Our goal is to put the trail where it makes sense. We don't want goat trails in two years.
- Lou Miranda: Going east on Minnetonka Boulevard, using the trail, you go down to the right, is there going to be a trail on the south side? Jason Staebell: Not with our project. The city is looking at it with another project. Right now there is no bike facility.
- Greg Anderson: Overall it looks like a great improvement over the current environment.
- Dave Carlson: I'd appreciate if you take into consideration what we said today, with more direct trails and sidewalks. The trail at the northwest corner of France and Lake Street, it looks like that's a little sidewalk connection, could that be trail? Jason Staebell: Yes, we

can change that. There are some future considerations of bike facilities on Lake and on France. They won't be built with this project, but if those get funded we can connect to those.

- **Olson Memorial Highway demonstration project**

**5:08 – 5:22**

Jordan Kocak: MnDOT came to talk about TH 55 and some short term improvements this summer, which they've rolled out. Michael Samuelson can give us an update on that.

- Michael Samuelson: In talking with Billy Binder, there were two themes: The project itself and lack of bikeways, and the other was engagement.
- We completed on Friday the installation of this project from Promise Avenue to Van White. It'll be up for a few months.
- When the Blue Line got rerouted off TH 55, we looked at what we could do in the absence of those improvements.
- This project is a 6-lane to 4-lane conversion and shortened up crossings. It's part of a larger set of improvements here, with accessibility improvements next year, a study of transit services with Metro Transit out to Medina, and a more focused study just in Minneapolis.
- Since our conversation a few months ago, we collaborated with the city, which plans to make some improvements on its part of Olson, the block west of 7<sup>th</sup>.
- We've gotten comments for years about crossing Olson. We see the project installed last week as a first step. For this project, our engagement was pretty minimal. We presented to this committee, the city chose not to take it to the PAC and BAC, to roll it out quickly. We're collecting lots of data on yielding, speeds, crossing numbers and surveys. We have a survey at <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/olsonmemorialhwy/index.html>. We'll use this data to help with future projects.
- We're learning the best ways to roll out a rapid-build temporary project like this.
- We looked at whether a bike lane would be appropriate here. We looked at previous comments, and what we heard most often was vehicle speeds and difficulty crossing. We didn't hear as much about traveling on Olson. We do have plans for a bike path on the north side for the medium- to long-term. MnDOT and the city had concerns with the speed differentials between people biking and vehicles without a more durable barriers. The 85th percentile speed was 50 miles per hour, and people bike maybe 8, 10, 15 miles per hour. If there is a collision it's very likely to be fatal. That gave us a lot of pause, as to whether a bikeway with this project was the right solution. Speeds change, and we're getting feedback on this corridor. It's definitely still on the table as part of this process.
- We'll be attending events and pop-ups to gather feedback.
- Billy Binder: I know I asked you about putting bike lanes in the lane removed, and I asked you to talk to us before implementing it. I just can't understand why you didn't come back. Michael Samuelson: I apologize if I made that promise. That was a mistake on my part. From a design standpoint, we weren't particularly looking for feedback on the design. Certainly we can take feedback going forward. Billy Binder: You didn't come back, then you decided the design, but you didn't come to the next meeting afterward and share the design. Michael Samuelson: I can come to the next meeting.
- Jordan Kocak: You said you're studying the changes, and there is engagement with that. You and I can talk more about timing for that, whether it's September or several months

out. What you've done has already happened. If the committee is going to stay engaged, let's time it to coordinate with your process.

- Michael Samuelson: The larger study is going to be more focused on the medium- to long-term. We have a project funded for the middle to late half of this decade. That study is going to focus on the long-term vision of Olson. Certainly the demonstration project is going to inform that. My goal is not to have Olson on the committee's agenda every month. We could have a single discussion a little later, or a discussion and feedback on the 2022 project, or a more holistic conversation on the long-term vision. That's up to the committee. Billy Binder: I think one soon on the demonstration project and then one on the long-term. Jordan Kocak: I'll work with Michael to get something scheduled.

- **Member Announcements**

**5:22 – 5:32**

- Bob Byers: Our project evaluation subcommittee met August 4. We talked about criteria, many focused on safety. I presented some of that criteria in a matrix, but we want to turn it into an interrogatory process with key questions. Lou Miranda and Bob volunteered to turn the matrix items into questions. Meet again on August 22, which could be our last meeting if we agree on wording. And then we can review it as a whole Active Transportation Committee, try it out and fine-tune it.
- Jordan Kocak: Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals conference is at the Graduate Hotel at the U of M this year. I've been part of the conference planning committee and have developed a couple of mobile tours. Anyone on the ATC could attend, there is a fee. I believe you can do one day. It's Aug. 22, 23 and 24. The conference agenda is at <https://www.apbp.org/2022-conference>. I workshopped one of our mobile tours this spring. Sean Hayford-Oleary and Ben Manibog are going to co-lead that tour with me. John Mark is also doing a tour of what makes the U a Platinum level bike-friendly university, which is pretty rare.
- Dave Carlson: Last Friday two sections of Southwest LRT trail, Cedar Lake and Minnesota Bluffs 11<sup>th</sup> to the Depot finally opened. There's a group that met in Hopkins, including the mayor and city council member and businesses, they were very pleased these are open. They're hoping Three Rivers and Metro Transit can get some segments open earlier than they're saying on their Web site. Jordan Kocak: I've been invited to a group the project team is putting together to look at what trail segments could open when, sooner. We haven't met yet, but as I learn more I can share that. Once it's more definitely known, I'll ask the project team to come to a meeting and update us.

- **Adjournment**

**5:32**

- The meeting adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Next meeting:

September 19 | 4 – 6 p.m.

TBD