

Hennepin County
Complete Streets Task Force Minutes
September 19, 2011 2 - 4 PM
Hennepin County Government Center
C2350 Conference Room
300 South 6th Street, Minneapolis MN 55487

Attendees: James Andrew, Jill Boogren, Dave Carlson, Gail Dorfman, Kari Dziedzic, Steve Elkins, Mark Fabel, Dave Fink, Kathi Hemken, Richard Johnson, Tom Johnson, Linda Loomis, Peter McLaughlin, Danny Nadeau, Karen Nikolai, Marthand Nookala, Tom Oestreich, Shaker Rabban, Kerri Pearce Ruch, Rose Ryan, Julie Skallman, Mark Stenglein, Craig Twinem.

1. Impact of SAFETEA-LU and Federal Gas Tax Reauthorization deadlines

Mark Stenglein, Hennepin County Commissioner, 2nd District

President Obama signed an extension of SAFETEA-LU to March 31, 2012. Transportation Enhancements was not removed from the bill. The gas tax was reauthorized at its current rate of 18.4 c. per gallon.

2. Minnesota State Aid: Overview and discussion

Julie Skallman, MnDOT Division Director, State Aid

State Aid for Local Transportation (SALT) program goals are to provide a safe network of secondary highways and streets. SALT funding supports more than 120,000 miles of roads and 14,700 bridges. The SALT Central Office administers funding, provides technical assistance, and manages the consistency of rules interpretation on SALT-funded projects. State Aid administers state and federal aid projects. Each MnDOT district has a State Aid Engineer.

Minnesota Rule Chapter 8820 contains the State Aid standards. MnDOT has already made one rule change to the standards as part of Complete Streets implementation. Because of the rulemaking process, it takes about two years to change the standards. Current bicycle facility standards are minimal and will need to be improved. Other standards will be changed as part of Complete Streets implementation.

If a county or city requests a variance from State Aid standards, the request must be presented to the variance committee. It is a committee of peers composed of elected officials and city and county engineers. The committee meets four times per year. Julie approves variances based on recommendations from the committee.

State Aid apportionments are made in accordance with Minnesota constitution, laws, and rules. Funding is from the MN Highway Users Tax Distribution Fund. County State Aid Highway (CSAH) funding to counties is determined 50% based on needs, 30% based on CSAH lane miles, 10% on vehicle registration, and 10% on equalization. Excess funds go to growing areas of the state. 40% of CSAH funds is set aside for maintenance and 60% is for construction. Municipal

State Aid funding is based 50% on needs and 50% on population. Large cities receive the bulk of the funds.

State Aid is governed by Screening Boards, the Rules Committee, and the Variance Committee. The Screening Boards are appointed by the MnDOT commissioner and include MnDOT, county, and city representatives. The League of Minnesota Cities and Association of Minnesota Counties recommend representatives for the boards and committees.

3. Follow up on Complete Streets roadway design checklist

Craig Twinem, Hennepin County Transportation Design Manager

The Complete Streets roadway design checklist was sent this summer to the Complete Streets Task Force for review. Some task force members requested that the checklist be shorter, while others requested extra information. After review by the task force, the checklist expanded from 12 to 14 pages. The checklist is meant to be used by the street designer. By request, a summary sheet was added to provide information about the project to the public. The summary sheet can be added to the project website after design is completed.

Craig presented a sample summary sheet from a project in Champlin. The road was formerly two lanes with gravel shoulder. The current average daily traffic (ADT) is 11,500. Projected ADT is 18,100. The road was widened to three lanes with wide shoulders and an 8 foot trail on both sides. A roundabout and two new traffic signals were added to the road.

Steve Elkins asked how the county reached the projection of 18,100 ADT. Tom Johnson explained that it is part of a two-step modeling process. The entire county is modeled based on land use and projections from Met Council. The models are modified based on discussions with cities about their growth patterns. The second step is to look at the corridor itself, count vehicles at intersections, look at potential growth in the corridor, and look at historical growth. Volumes are forecast for 20 years, but we tell cities that the county won't be back to redesign the road for 50 years. The intersections are the most critical for accommodating increases in ADT.

4. Mill and Overlays: overview, examples, and public involvement

Tom Johnson, Hennepin County Transportation Planning Manager

Most of Hennepin County's street maintenance is mill and overlays. Crews mill off the old pavement and install new bituminous. Hennepin County completes about 100 lane miles of mill and overlay every year. The county is completing more mill and overlays this year due to some additional federal funding. Mill and overlays cost about \$45,000 per lane mile.

The mill and overlay program is finalized late in the year, usually after January 1st. Paving starts in the spring as soon as the weather is nice. Mill and overlays are usually finished in November. The county is trying to finalize the mill and overlay in April one year before the program begins. This will give the county, cities, and residents more time to consider whether the street can be restriped to support Complete Streets. Under a tight timeline, the county typically is only able to look at issues of safety for restriping changes.

In Eden Prairie, the city and county wanted to restripe Baker Road from a four lane road to two and three lane configuration with shoulder. The county allows cities to decide how to contact

residents about striping changes. The city held an open house and residents thought they would have trouble turning onto the road and thought it would be less safe. In the end, the city decided to keep Baker Road as a four lane road.

Typically cities are notified in the spring when a road will have a mill and overlay. There is not a formal resident notification aside from message signs one week in advance. Cities typically put information in newsletters and online.

Gail Dorfman asked how we can put the Complete Streets lens on these projects as we move quickly. How do we do this in an efficient way and not miss opportunities? We already have a policy that gives us support.

Tom responded that we have a few examples of recent mill and overlay projects that incorporated bike lanes: Marshall Avenue and Franklin Avenue in Minneapolis. However, both projects had segments that were difficult and couldn't be restriped in such a tight timeframe. With a larger timeframe, this should be easier. Jim Grube is considering a process to look at restriping across the county as a whole so that striping changes will be decided well in advance of mill and overlays.

Gail Dorfman asked if we could compile a list of Complete Streets striping projects. IF we have a Complete Streets policy and want to implement it, why do we need to have a public process? In Eden Prairie, what do we do if we have a good design and the city decides they don't want it? Do we force it? Restriping 50th Street was a tough fight and we can't go through that kind of process every time. Tom responded that we do not need municipal consent for mill and overlays.

Steve Elkins said that in Bloomington, staff makes a list of potential four lane roads that are candidates for three lane conversions. Staff identify the candidates in early fall, take them to the City Council, and then host an open house that is heavy on education. Staff expect opposition to the project, but the council adopted a policy that unless there is an overwhelming public problem the council will approve a 4 to 3 lane conversion. Issues are resolved in time to keep on the mill and overlay schedule. No neighborhood has asked for a conversion to be undone. These projects are controversial up front, but popular after they are completed. Individual neighborhoods can't veto parts of the city bike plan.

Jill Boogren said that she appreciates that there is a clear policy directive for Complete Streets and that it should be a given that there will be a Complete Streets design. As a bikeway user and advocate learning to navigate the process, right now it's unclear where to find out what mill and overlay projects are coming up. It would be extremely helpful if city, county, and MnDOT project schedules were online early. Having info online is critical. People need to the information and need to know who to talk to. The more we can do to make information available, the better.

James Andrew suggested that we frame these restriping projects as having benefits for everyone. Framing projects as just part of the Complete Streets policy can make the reaction harsher.

5. Demonstration Projects of Complete Streets in various contexts

Tom Johnson and Karen Nikolai, Hennepin County Community Design Liason

Tom Johnson and Karen Nikolai presented examples of complete streets in the county, including:

- Medicine Lake Road
- Golden Valley Road
- Minnetonka Boulevard
- Franklin Avenue at East River Road: bike boxes were added and crosswalks updated
- Lake Street
- Silver Lake Road
- County Road 19
- Lyndale Avenue
- University Avenue

Images are available in an attached PowerPoint presentation. Karen and Tom asked the group for suggestions of what makes a good Complete Streets design.

Jill Boogren commented that designated bike lanes provide vastly more comfort for bicyclists than even a shoulder. Certainly a wider shoulder is better. The narrow shoulder on Portland Ave S in Richfield is really uncomfortable, while Chicago Ave S in Minneapolis has new bike lanes that are a huge improvement to comfort. Around White Bear Lake, you can see the difference in comfort because one community chose to add a wide shoulder around one side of the lake, while another community has no shoulder on this road. In rural communities, Complete Streets designs are more important because there are fewer roads for travel.

Linda Loomis: Golden Valley has started corridor planning on Douglas Drive. We are dealing with a constrained right of way and utilities, which makes this a very expensive project. We will have a wide gutter pan for bike lanes and sawcut joins to provide a smooth ride for bicyclists. The sawcut joins are critical to the success of the project. We need to make sure that people will use the bike lanes.

Mark Stenglein: Bike lane striping really makes a difference for riding to work.

Linda Loomis: On Medicine Lake Road in Golden Valley, we get complaints that it is harder to get on the roadway with a three lane configuration. Dealing with the community shouldn't be a Hennepin County problem, but the city should work with community to resolve these issues.

Mark Fabel: For development, there is a higher quality environment when all modes are accommodated.

Kathi Hemken: On roads where there are striped bike lanes and shoulders, we have more bikers off the sidewalks. This is a safety improvement for everyone.

Linda Loomis: In Golden Valley, we are seeing more people say that they would rather be on the roads than on a trail that isn't clear in the winter. Bicyclists want to make sure that streets are wide enough and clear for riding.

Dave Carlson: It seems like gutter pans have gotten wider. The extra foot in gutter pan is taking away from room for bicyclists to maneuver.

Craig Twinem: A 24 inch gutter pan is necessary to effectively drain road in catch basins.

Mark Stenglein: We need to push ahead with Complete Streets. It makes community softer and easier to live in. Golden Valley Road is a great example of making a road much less harsh.

6. Next meeting is Monday, November 21, Government Center Room A 2350

Note location change from C to A tower.

Meeting agendas, minutes, and presentations are now online at
www.hennepin.us/activeliving