What is Rethinking I-94?

THEN  Construction of Interstate 94 in the 1960s destroyed homes, disconnected neighborhoods and led to a pattern of community distrust with the Minnesota Highway Department — now MnDOT. In the summer of 2015, MnDOT Commissioner Charles Zelle publicly acknowledged past transportation policies that dismantled neighborhoods and apologized to the Rondo community — one of the communities most affected by construction. NOW  MnDOT is committed to doing better. Rethinking I-94 is a long-term effort to improve MnDOT’s engagement and relationships with the communities in a 15-mile study area. With a focus on easier, safer travel in the corridor, Rethinking I-94 intends to reconnect neighborhoods, revitalize communities and ensure residents have a meaningful voice in transportation decisions that affect their lives.

ABOUT THE CORRIDOR

150,000+ Vehicles (including freight) per day

4+ Average hours of congestion per day

67 Crossings with pedestrian and bicycle facilities

2 million Transit users per year

ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Primary ethnic communities

- American
- Indian
- Asian
- American
- Euro
- American
- Latino
- African
- American
- Recent
- African
- Immigrant

Primary languages other than English

- African (One of several)
- 12%
- Spanish
- 5%
- Hmong
- 2%

Racial identity

- 58% White
- 28% African-American
- 8% Asian
- 6% Other

WHAT HAVE WE DONE SO FAR?

Since 2016, the Rethinking I-94 team has conducted initial engagement with stakeholders, researched existing conditions and developed ideas for improving safety and traffic congestion.

2,200 Baseline surveys

250+ One-on-one meetings

75 Listening sessions

15 Community events

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

I-94 is a congested, aging freeway that requires significant investments. Community members and travelers highlighted the following I-94 concerns most frequently:

- Congestion issues
- Poor safety for bicycles, pedestrians and motorists
- Noise and air quality concerns
- No identity or sense of place
- Lack of job opportunities
- Poor connections across freeway
- Lack of inclusivity in future planning
Pavement is between 29 and 55 years old. It was originally designed to last 25 years.

I-94’s crash rate is twice the metro area average.

This segment of I-94 is one of the most heavily used highways in Minnesota.

KEY ENGAGEMENT TAKEAWAYS

Community members are interested in issues beyond the freeway.
Community members value involvement early and continuously, and want accurate, timely information.
Community members want their values and visions to be reflected in designs.

HOW DO WE APPLY WHAT WE LEARNED?

Rethinking I-94 is a pilot effort by MnDOT, and determining how Phase 1 (see figure below) information will be used is an evolving process. However, MnDOT intends to incorporate lessons learned from Phase 1 into department processes within the Rethinking I-94 study area. For example, extensive engagement work conducted during Phase 1 led to the development of two sets of guidelines — the Guiding Commitments for project teams and Livability Framework for communities — that outline how MnDOT will interact with communities, and plan and design projects. These guidelines could potentially expand to future MnDOT projects outside of the Rethinking I-94 study area.

Guiding Commitments:
What people expect from MnDOT

VISION. Understand community values and issues, and build projects toward their vision.

CO-POWER. Cultivate joint ownership and recognize local knowledge as valid and valuable; partner with communities to solve problems.

AUTHENTICITY & RESPECT. Provide timely, accessible information and many ways to participate; acknowledge stakeholders’ issues and constraints.

TRANSPARENCY. Communicate realistic timelines, participation impact, funding realities, decision-making processes and levels of authority; ensure whole process is understandable.

INCLUSIVITY. Create open partnerships and teams that ensure multiple voices can engage and be reflected in decision-making.

Livability Framework:
What people expect from project work

Health & Environment

Economics

Connections

Sense of Place

Equity

Trust

Safety

WHAT’S NEXT?

PHASE 1
Understanding

2016 to 2018
— Conduct initial engagement
— Assess existing conditions
— Explore improvement concepts

PHASE 2
Environmental
2018 to 2020
— Continue engagement
— Prepare environmental document
— Develop and evaluate alternatives
— Identify actions to address needs

ONGOING
Implementation
— Continue engagement
— Implement vision, strategies and policies from Phases 1 and 2
— Design and construct projects as funding allows

CONTACT
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