

Whitmore Resolution Group

MEETING OVERVIEW

June 13, 2022 | 5:30 p.m.to 8:30 pm. | New London, MN

Meeting Overview

Participants of the Advisory Group met to hear about four different draft concepts from MnDOT for the Hwy 23 & Hwy 9 intersection improvement project at Peace Lutheran Church in New London on June 13, 2022. A brief summary of the session is below, as well as an overview of next steps. This second session involved (1) an overview of the draft concepts from staff from SRF Consulting Group, Inc.; (2) time spent by the group engaging in clarifying questions; and (3) an in-depth conversation related to the positives of each concepts and any concerns for each concept. The group also made suggestions on simplifying the concept documents for future public engagement.

Attendees at 6/13/2022 meeting

- Richard Schmidt, Business & Public
- Jamie Boelter, NLS
- Anthony Rupp, NL Fire and EMS
- Mel Odens, County Public Works
- Dr. Richard Wehseler, Clinic & Public
- Trooper Munson, Law Enforcement
- Roger Indieke, County Commissioner
- Stacy Petersen, Business (at intersection), Public
- Darica Schneider, Trucking and Public
- Cody Brand, MnDOT
- Ryan Barney, MnDOT
- Mandi Lighthizer, MnDOT
- Jon Huseby, District Engineer (not Advisory Group member)

Additional individuals on Advisory Group (unable to attend 6/13/22 meeting):

- Kelly Asche, NL City Council
 - Doug Dietz: New London Township
 - Josh Reed: New London Chamber of Commerce
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Background and Introductions

Facilitator Pam Whitmore opened the meeting and reviewed the agenda for the evening. The introduction included a circle introduction of participants present at the meeting, as well as an overview of the ground rules. The ground rules included a reminder to the group that the process provides a fresh start for working together toward safety improvements for Hwy 23 & Hwy 9, and that the group is

looked to as leaders in the community. The Facilitator discussed the importance of giving the process a chance to work and encouraged the group to stick to facts, as opposed to opinions, when discussing the project with public.

Education on DRAFT Concepts:

Before presenting the four draft concepts, staff from SRF Consulting Group, Inc reminded the group that future work on Hwy 40 is included in the draft concepts. Staff from SRF Consulting Group, Inc then presented the four concepts to the Advisory Group. Each group member was provided a Concept Input Sheet to note questions about each concept, as well as to provide comments about each concept to help with preparing for edification of the public. The four draft concepts included:

Draft Concept 1: Interchange

Draft Concept 2: J-Turn

Draft Concept 3: Roundabout (single lane)

Draft Concept 4: Traffic Signal

The Advisory Group had a number of questions on each concept, which provided invaluable feedback and will assist MnDOT in its upcoming public engagement. Many of the questions focused on the following topics:

- Flow and location of pedestrian traffic on each draft concept.
- Required grading of the various draft concepts and elevations
- Estimated speed in conjunction with each draft concept
- Ease of use for younger and older drivers
- Traffic counts and studies
- Impacts on right of way
- Crash information and seasonal impacts
- Emergency response capabilities

Exercises for Perspective Learning

Advisory Group members engaged in an exercise to kick-start its facilitated discussion. The exercise focused on learning perspectives from each other regarding the draft concepts presented. The areas below arose out of the exercise and were expounded upon within the Advisory Group discussion. The following notes reflect comments from the Advisory Group members.

Draft Concept 1: Interchange with bridge over Hwy 9.

POSTIVES	CONCERNS
No “at grade” crossings	Likely most expensive
Keeps highways apart	Adds two more intersections, where there could be crashes
Hwy 23 can remain higher speed, with Hwy 9 & Hwy 40 slowing down	Potential for wrong way drivers
Easy to Navigate	Existence of barriers and type of barrier – i.e. concrete barrier
Easiest for emergency vehicles to navigate	Allowance for economic growth along highways
Takes away left turn	Adequacy of distance for safe travel during winter months
Take future city expansion into account	
Considered by group member as more of a long-term fix	

Draft Concept 2: J-Turn with pedestrian underpass

POSTIVES	CONCERNS
Better than how Hwy 23 & Hwy 9 currently exists	Concerned that it will create confusion on where to go or where to be, especially for younger and older drivers
Makes drivers pay attention, less severe crashes	Lack of room for acceleration and/or lane change for trucks
	Challenging for emergency response vehicles and increase in response time
	Still have possible T-bone crashes

Draft Concept 3: Roundabout (single lane) with pedestrian underpass

POSTIVES	CONCERNS
Lower speeds	Slows down traffic too much, which will reduce Hwy 23 mobility
Reduces severity of crashes	Single lane may not provide enough room for trucks
Second best alternative for emergency response vehicles to use and to respond to critical incidents	Pedestrian box remains and may impact future costs
Better than how Hwy 23 & Hwy 9 currently exists	Slow downs during “peak” times and possible back-ups or bottle necks
	Drivers driving over roundabout
	Some drivers may find confusing
	Ability or lack thereof to handle the oversized loads that consistently travel on Hwy 23

Draft Concept 4: Traffic Signal with pedestrian underpass

POSTIVES	CONCERNS
Better than how Hwy 23 & Hwy 9 currently exists	Can still have T-bone crashes, if drivers blow through stoplights, and has potential for high speed crashes.
Third best alternative for use by emergency vehicles	Pedestrian box remains and may impact future costs
	Difficult for law enforcement
	Some drivers may have difficulty seeing traffic signals in fog
	Can cause back-ups, which some members expressed concerns over increase in road rage
	Concerns over length of time sitting at lights, and the impact on school traffic
	Drivers inattention to changing speed limits resulting from light activity

Next Steps for Discussion

MnDOT will take the feedback and data from the Advisory Group to help them prepare these draft concepts for the public’s review and input. As noted in the meeting, the Advisory Group were not asked to select a single option to take to the public; rather, the public will be seeing and providing input on the same draft concepts the Advisory Group reviewed. The Advisory

Group also were shown an input Matrix that MnDOT will use as a part of its decision making, and the group provided some additional insight. The session ended with a conversation between MnDOT and the Advisory Group about the draft public engagement plan. The Group provided suggestions on graphics for the concept designs, as well as offered input on best ways to engage the public.

Engagement Goal

MnDOT hopes to have concept draft documents finalized by end of June with the start of engagement starting in mid-July and running through August.