

May 19th, 2020 Hamline & Snelling Safety Improvements Project Information meeting

MnDOT, City, County and Consultant staff present:

- Mike Barnes, MnDOT Metro District Engineer
- Melissa Barnes, MnDOT Metro North Area Manager
- Sheila Kauppi, MnDOT Metro District Deputy Engineer
- Fay Simer, MnDOT Metro North Area Coordinator
- Joy Miciano, MnDOT Consultant
- Joe Lux, Ramsey County Senior Transportation Planner
- Todd Blomstrom, Arden Hills Public Works Director
- Marc Culver, Roseville Public Works Director

Transcription

[00:02] Joy Miciano:

Alright, well welcome everyone. My name is Joy Miciano. I'm a Public Involvement Consultant for MnDOT and I will be moderating tonight's meeting. Before we start into the meeting I just wanted to provide a welcome. We have with us tonight Mike Barnes from MnDOT Metro. So, Mike, if you could provide a welcome and introduce yourself that would be wonderful.

[00:29] Mike Barnes:

Yes, thanks Joy. Can you hear me okay?

[00:32] Joy Miciano:

Yes.

[00:33] Mike Barnes:

So, good evening and thanks to everybody for being with us tonight I do want to thank you for taking time during this pandemic to participate in a conversation with us and kind of learn about the work in your community. We're all working to learn different ways of doing business. This is our team's first virtual open house so we're glad that many of you are willing to give this a try. We're going to do our best to stay connected while staying socially distant.

Tonight you're going to learn about safety improvements at MnDOT that we have planned or we've already implemented on Snelling Avenue. I know that the intersection closure of Snelling and Hamline is of particular interest for many of you that are with us tonight. We're here to listen to your experiences of the temporary

closure at Hamline and Snelling since we're proposing to keep the median permanently closed. MnDOT is strongly committed to safety and preventing deaths and serious injuries on our roadways and we've been working with our partners in the Towards Zero Deaths initiative. It's to reduce fatalities and serious injuries on our roads that through partnerships and looking through with the engineering enforcement, the education and emergency medical personnel side of things. So we're bringing everything together. The Federal Highway Administration requires that we develop a strategic highway safety plan. Which includes like performance targets and strategies that can help prevent crashes on our divided highways. Things like access management median barriers are just a couple examples of strategies that we put in the plan.

Tonight you're going to hear about a cable media and barrier project. Cable median barriers can really help reduce fatal crashes. They've been shown to reduce them by about 95 percent. When you look out there there's really no other safety devices that conversely guarantees that kind of consistency success in saving lives every year. Since their first installation in Minnesota in 2004, our cable median barriers have saved about 80 lives so far in Minnesota and, of course, we really want to save even more. So, with that, we're going to move on our agenda. I want to see our staff be able to provide an overview of the changes that you've seen us make so far and some changes that are proposed in the coming years to stay with our safety priorities. And I want to thank everybody for attending. We look forward to your questions and comments, not only about the presentation but feedback about how you thought the meeting went since we're probably going to have to do more of these types of meetings as we go in the future here. So with that, before they get started then I'll pass it back to Joy so she can give you some tips.

[03:23] Joy Miciano:

Great. Thank you so much Mike.

Again, welcome. Just wanted to go through what we have going on this evening. We are just checking in with introductions right after this. Actually, I'm going to give you some housekeeping tips as well before we jump into the project information presentation and Melissa Barnes will be leading us in that presentation. And then around 6:30 after the project information we will do the audience question and answers and we hope to be completed with the meeting by seven o'clock tonight. But now we're going to introduce some of the other staff that are with us tonight. We do have some MnDOT staff with us. I'm going to hand it over to Melissa Barnes to give an introduction.

[04:11] Melissa Barnes:

Hello! Welcome. Thank you everybody for attending this virtual open house. I'll echo Mike Barnes and saying that we really appreciate you trying out this format. We still want to connect. We think it's important to do it now. I'm MnDOT's North Area Manager and I will hand it off to Sheila Kauppi.

[04:34] Sheila Kauppi:

Alright. I'm Sheila Kauppi. I'm the Metro District Deputy Engineer. I was the North Area Manager a few years ago when the project first started and when we first closed the median.

[04:51] Joy Miciano:

Great. Fay, would you like to introduce yourself?

[04:52] Fay Simer:

Hi, I'm Fay Simer. I'm the Metro District North Area Coordinator. I work for Melissa.

[05:00] Joy Miciano:

Great. Also, tonight we have some of our partners with us from the county and the city. We're going to ask them to introduce themselves and also identify any other cities that are on our meeting tonight or any of our elected officials. So, I'm going to hand it over to Joe Lux.

[05:18] Joe Lux:

Alright, Joe Lux, Senior Transportation Planning with Ramsey County. And, I just checked our list a couple of minutes ago and at that point we had neither of our County Commissioners on yet but they both indicated they'd be joining us.

[05:33] Joy Miciano:

Great. We'll keep an eye out for them. Thanks Joe. Todd from Arden Hills?

[05:37] Todd Longstrom:

Hi, Todd Longstrom. Public Works Director for the City of Arden Hills. I'd like to acknowledge that Mayor Grant and Councilmember Holden are also listening in on the open house this evening.

[05:50] Joy Miciano:

Wonderful. Welcome. And Mark?

[05:56] Mark Culver:

Hi, I'm Mark Culver the Public Works Director for the city of Roseville, and scanning the list I don't currently see any of the elected officials on the call yet.

[06:08] Joy Miciano:

Ok. Great. We will keep an eye out. Thank you everyone. So, right now I'm going to switch over to Melissa who is going to kick us off with our project information presentation.

[06:25] Melissa Barnes:

All right, I'm working on getting up a presentation for everyone. So, we've already established that we're here to talk about the Snelling and Hamline Avenue safety improvement project. So, we will get started.

(Slide 10) As you know, tonight we're here to give an overview of the project and our reason for considering permanent closure of the Snelling and Hamline median. We have the ability right now to hear your experiences of the temporary closure and you can let us know what we need to consider as we plan for our 2022 project that's coming up that could permanently close the median. As you probably know, the southbound left turn was closed temporarily in 2019, and in 2022 we're actually looking to install, what's called, a cable median barrier. It's what Mike Barnes referred to earlier in his introduction. They have a lot of safety improvements. We'll also talk a little bit about other safety improvements in the area that are coming up as a result of the Hamline and Snelling Avenue median.

(Slide 11) So, this is a picture of the median as it looks today. The southbound left turn lane is closed now. So, this is where we're talking about when I say southbound left turn at Snelling and Hamline Avenue. It's been closed. This is what it looks like today and this is what we've done.

(Slide 12) As I said before, it was temporarily closed in 2019. A recommendation out of the 35W MnPass construction. Traffic increased because of the construction on 35W, and there are two more years of construction: this year and next year. The median will remain closed through those next two years.

(Slide 13) Realizing that motorists and people driving would not be able to turn left when the median was closed at Snelling and Hamline, traffic signal timing was changed at Lydia and Snelling. The southbound left turn

movement at Lydia was given additional screen time so that traffic would not back up onto southbound Snelling Avenue. Also, eastbound Lydia was also given additional screen time, so we tried to improve the signal operations at Snelling and Lydia. We also used our traffic cameras that are mounted out there permanently to monitor traffic and make sure we weren't experiencing any backups.

(Slide 14) Here is the location where we are talking about the cable median barrier project. So the cable median barrier is proposed to be installed from 694 all the way down to County Road C. That's the purple line that you're looking at on your screen. That's proposed to happen in 2022. The breaks in the median would be at the three existing full axis intersections along the stretch, so Lydia, C2 and Glenhill.

(Slide 15) So, as Mike alluded to before, studies of existing cable median barrier installations show dramatic decreases in fatal and serious injuries due to cross median crashes. Cable median barriers can reduce these types of crashes by 95 percent. There are very few safety devices available that virtually guarantee these consistent success in saving lives every year in divided highways. So, these are something that we've installed around the metro area. You've likely seen them on other roadways near you.

(Slide 16) We did take a look at the safety at Snelling and Hamline Avenue. Between 2016 and 2018 there were five crashes at this intersection involving vehicles in the southbound left turn lane, or turning left across Snelling. There were actually 13 crashes total in that time frame, but there were only five that involved southbound left turning vehicles. However, one of these vehicles, one of these crashes was a fatal crash in 2017. By closing the left turn lane, traffic reroutes to intersections that are controlled by signals, and they really provide drivers a safer option to turn left.

Because the traffic on Snelling Avenue has increased over time, there have been fewer opportunities for vehicles making a southbound left turn to find a gap in traffic to make their turn. This causes people to take risks and really leads to more serious crashes. We have also observed that before the closure, vehicles actually queued beyond the turn bay length, so they were queuing onto southbound Snelling Avenue, risking speed rear end crashes, which can also be very dangerous.

(Slide 17) We did take a look at where people were going when they took a southbound left onto Hamline Avenue. So out of the people who were turning left, about three percent turned into the Autumn Grove neighborhood, five percent turned north into the Ingerson Park neighborhood. So, a total of eight percent of the cars were really going to the immediate neighborhoods. However, 92 percent of the vehicles were continuing south. Of those 92 percent, 30 percent were actually even traveling south of Rosedale.

(Slide 18) We took a look at the travel time as well. We were able to track cellphone data, and it's scrubbed of all personal information, but it gives us an idea of how long it's taking people to get home before and after the closure. So travel time actually spiked right after the closure, but then it trended back down by September and it stayed down. Vehicles turning left at Lydia take approximately five minutes longer than turning at Hamline. It varied according to the data. It was as short as one minute, and as long as seven minutes, so about five minutes.

(Slide 19) We also talked to our emergency response partners. We wanted to interview them and make sure that this closure was not an issue with responding to emergency calls, and they expressed that it did not reduce their ability to provide timely service. In fact, some of the EMT personnel we talked to witness crashes in the location and were happy to see crash prevention measures here. They don't need to use this opening to travel there.

(Slide 20) We've also had other plan safety and mobility improvements. At Lydia Avenue the south bound left turn lane will be extended 500 feet in 2022 to accommodate more vehicles. That will happen in coordination with the cable median barrier project. On Glenhill we know that people have been taking a southbound left turn

or a south bound U-turn at Glen Hill since the median at Hamline has been closed. It is signed no U-turn but people continue to take that turn and there is no left turn lane for them to rest outside of traffic. We are proposing to temporarily prohibit those U-turns with flexible delineators and permanently close those U-turns in 2022. County Road C and C2, the southbound left turn lanes there will also be extended.

(Slide 21) Again, I know I've already discussed the cable median barrier projects. We are here tonight to listen to any minor modifications that may be needed, such as breaks in the barrier to facilitate walking and biking, or a break in the barrier at Hamline. An additional project is planned in 2025 to repave the road. We're also in the very early phases of planning that project and also identifying other improvements in coordination with the city and county that could possibly be completed with the paving.

(Slide 22) We are accepting comments, as Joy alluded to, this will be posted by May 26th. We will accept comments through May 31st and we also have Fay Simer who is able to take comments by paper, by email or by phone. You can find out more information about the cable median barrier project at the website listed below, and we will be discussing the outcome of this open house with their city and county staff and releasing the decision through the email and the website. So, I would really encourage you to sign up for emails at the website listed below.

And Joy...

[15:28] Joy Miciano:

(Slide 23) Yeah, thank you Melissa. Thank you so much. So, now we're going to go into our question and answer portion of the evening. And just a reminder, all the participants are muted, and so we are asking that anyone who has a question or comment, submit that question or comment via the chat box. And again, the chat box can be found at the bottom of your screen by clicking on that comment bubble at the bottom.

The meeting recording and the transcript of any of the questions and answers will be available on the median barrier project website by Tuesday, May 26th. So, this is the new website for the median barrier cable project, and so this just to note that this is a different website than most of you went on to get to this meeting. This is a website that will have also the presentation slides as well as the meeting recording and the question answer transcripts. So, I am going to launch into the questions that we are getting from chat so thank you everyone for submitting questions. Keep them coming. We'll be answering questions until about 6:55 tonight.

So, the first question that we have from our participant Gretchen King. Melissa, is 80 lives in 16 years - and I think she's wondering about any lives or accidents that have happened in the last 16 years - is there any clarification on that number?

[17:13] Melissa Barnes:

I don't know if I mentioned 80 lives in 16 years, so I don't think that's -

[17:21] Fay Simer:

This is Fay. I think that comment came in during Mike's introduction about our cable median barrier projects, in general, as a state.

[17:34] Melissa Barnes:

So, that's how they estimate the number of lives that were saved. So, I believe when they started instituting those in 2004 our yearly fatalities averaged about 400 people per year, and as they began to institute their yearly fatalities have trended down motor vehicle crashes quite significantly, and that was one of the things that was proven to reduce those fatalities, so they were able to estimate enough about the number of people, people's lives that that were saved just from putting these cable medium barriers in.

[18:14] Joy Miciano:

Alright, Melissa, the next question for you is, what was the speed of the north bound traffic on Snelling in the most recent fatality?

[18:28] Melissa Barnes:

Fay, do you have that information handy?

[18:32] Fay Simer:

Yeah, I did look into this one. Sometimes the officers just don't know the speed, so the speed itself isn't typically listed. If speed is considered to be a factor in the crash they might have listed that and it was not listed as a factor in this.

[18:58] Joy Miciano:

And so, the next question, what will be done to prevent U-turns on southbound Snelling Avenue, Highway 51 at Glen Hill?

[19:10] Melissa Barnes:

So the southbound U-turn at Glen Hill; the permanent change will actually be a median that goes and kind of creates a triangle to prevent people from making that southbound U-turn. In the future, we are looking at putting up some flexible delineators like what you'd see in a construction zone until that 2022 time frame, because we know that there are a few people who are continuing to make that move.

[19:45] Joy Miciano:

Great. The next question is about accidents on Snelling Avenue. So, Melissa, I'm not sure if you will need to bring in our city staff. How many accidents on Snelling Avenue at the County Road C intersection, and then as well as the Lydia Avenue intersection.

[20:11] Melissa Barnes:

Hold on while I get back to...

(Slide 16) So, there were 16 crashes at Lydia. One was serious, however there are more crashes, or there's more traffic Lydia Avenue than Snelling and Hamline all of the crashes were property damage except for that one serious crash in the same timeframe that we were talking about as the Snelling and Hamline Avenue crashes. I do not have the County Road C crashes handy. Fay, do you?

Yeah and I don't know that we're expecting a lot of traffic from Snelling and Hamline to turn at County Road C, but we do just realize that County Roads C needs additional southbound left turn assistance. We can get that information and we can post it after with the recording as well.

[21:15] Joy Miciano:

Yeah and then with the transcript of the questions and responses. And, then also a second part of that question is how many fatal crashes have there been on Snelling Avenue between 2008 and 2018, and what locations?

[21:35] Melissa Barnes:

I don't have all of that information handy right now, but again that is something that could be provided and it would be good if we could get clarification that's knowing from where to where, because what portion of Snelling Avenue is definitely something that we can share.

[21:55] Joy Miciano:

Okay, the next question, wouldn't decreasing the speed allowed on Snelling Avenue be considered? Isn't high speed a main cause of accidents?

[22:08] Melissa Barnes:

I'm sorry, Joy, you broke up but I couldn't hear.

[22:12] Joy Miciano:

It's ok. Wouldn't would we consider decreasing the speed allowed on Snelling being considered? Isn't high speed a main cause of accidents?

[22:22] Melissa Barnes:

Sure the speed limit is actually more a function of the design of the roadway. As we look to the future in 2025 it's definitely something we can talk about what the roadway looks like. Although right now that job is really just a pavement project runway is designed at a certain speed and even if we were to post the speed limit at a different speed limit people would still drive at about the same speed that it is today. So changing the speed limit is not as simple as just kind of flipping the switch and or changing out a sign and providing different speeds. It's a lot of the design of the roadway that causes people to drive a certain speed.

[23:06] Joy Miciano:

And, there was a request, Melissa, if you can repeat what will be done at Glen Hill and Snelling.

[23:14] Melissa Barnes:

At Glen Hill and Snelling, in 2022 we are looking at putting a permanent median to prohibit the southbound U-turns. More immediately, we are exploring putting in temporary flexible delineators kind of like you see in a construction zone, just tubes that are standing up off the pavement again to prohibit those southbound U-turns.

[23:39] Joy Miciano:

Great. Thank you. The next question are about the lights at Lydia. The lights at Lydia Avenue and County Road C2 have been much more dangerous for pedestrians than the crossing of Hamline and Snelling Avenue. How is MnDOT addressing those issues and how are you tracking those issues?

[24:05] Melissa Barnes:

I guess, I would ask how they are more dangerous? The crossings at Snelling and Hamline Avenue actually have a stop light, and although there is a lot of traffic and a lot going on people have to come to a full stop. Where it's Snelling in Hamline, people are not stopping, so anybody crossing Snelling Avenue at Hamline would be dealing with traffic that is going at a fairly high speed and notable to stop. Did I get the entirety of that question Joy? Again, I'm having a little bit of trouble hearing you.

[24:39] Joy Miciano:

Oh sorry. Yes, anything in the future to address the pedestrians crossing at Lydia and County Road C2?

[24:56] Melissa Barnes:

I don't believe anything particular is planned for this time, but again we will be having a project that is running up Snelling Avenue in 2025. As we plan for that project that's definitely something we can look at and at least take a look at what could be done.

[25:14] Joy Miciano:

And I think the second part of that question, Melissa, is how is MnDOT tracking any of the issues for pedestrians at Lydia and County Road C2?

[25:26] Melissa Barnes:

Did you say how are we tracking?

[25:28] Joy Miciano:

Yes.

[25:29] Melissa Barnes:

Sure, I guess we haven't had a lot of complaints out there. We do have cameras and I do not believe any of the crashes that we had were pedestrian crashes at Lydia, so we have not seen a lot of issues yet, but definitely something we can continue to discuss.

[25:52] Joy Miciano:

So the next question: if this is about safety, why isn't Glenn Hill, when turning left, against southbound Snelling Avenue, being closed?

[26:05] Melissa Barnes:

Sure. There's a few reasons. So the left turn lane at Glenn Hill, it's much more contained. There's no alternate routes to get there. So, in talking with the emergency management, that is a much more difficult neighborhood to get to and the alternate routes there just aren't as convenient. It would take a lot longer to get there. There'd be a lot more U-turns. It's just a much more difficult kind of land-locked neighborhood to access. As well as the natural flow of traffic allows for folks getting into at Glen Hill. That northbound left turn, usually when you're making that northbound left turn you've kind of got a little bit. Traffic's a little bit more spaced out, they're coming from the freeway. They're not coming in these big platoons where you have to wait long periods of time. So being able to make that left turn it is sometimes a little bit easier.

[27:06] Joy Miciano:

Thank you. So the next question is about bicyclists and pedestrians, but I'm not quite sure if I'm clear on the question. Will bicyclists and walkers be able to cross at the Hamlin Avenue barriers?

[27:25] Melissa Barnes:

Currently, bicyclists and pedestrians legally will be able to cross at the Hamline Avenue intersection. We're proposing to close that in 2022 with the cable median barrier project, but that's one of the things we wanted to hear feedback on tonight. We don't believe that there are a lot of people doing this. We have not heard that, but we are, that's part of the reason why we're here is asking that question. So if a lot of people are using that you see that as a need. It can be left open. We do also realize that it's very high speed, but it's also a legal crossing for people walking and biking.

[28:10] Joy Miciano:

So one question asking, what is the real reason for this proposed closure? And have we alerted the residents of Lydia Avenue about the increase in traffic on their street?

[28:26] Melissa Barnes:

Sure. The real reason for the proposed closure is kind of what I've spoke of before, is the balance of safety and mobility. So the safety here is a concern. There's already been a fatality. We expect that if we leave this open this turn is going to get harder and harder to take, and it is entirely possible, there will be more fatalities because it is not that circuitous to get back over to this location and it's very well served by other routes. We feel that it's probably makes a lot of sense to close this median to help with the safety of the roadway and the safety of the roadway users.

[29:12] Joy Miciano:

And then, Melissa, did you address the question about informing the residents on Lydia?

[29:20] Melissa Barnes:

Oh sure. Thank you, Joy. Yes we did send the invitation to this open house and all of the information that we've shared tonight to people along Lydia as well as people in this area.

[29:35] Joy Miciano:

So the next question is about the cable median barrier that's going to be installed. Will it effectively stop jay walkers from crossing the grass median?

[29:47] Melissa Barnes:

Technically somebody could jump it. Somebody who was very able-bodied but it would be a barrier and just like any fence it's mountable, but it is something that would be more difficult to cross.

[30:09] Joy Miciano:

Then, also related to the cable median barrier and the full closure, is there any chance of having something more scenery friendly than a cable median and are there any alternatives to a total closure that is more user-friendly? So, I guess two questions I've thrown at you, Melissa.

[30:36] Melissa Barnes:

So the more the more scenic piece, I don't know that there's a lot of alternatives out there that are this effective. I realize it's a utilitarian object but it's a very effective utilitarian device that's proven to have a lot of safety involved with it so if the person who asked that question has an idea please feel free to submit it later on and if there's something they've seen that they like but there's a lot of roadway devices that are pretty utilitarian including traffic signals and guardrail and median barriers. The second part of the question again, Joy?

[31:18] Joy Miciano:

Is there an alternative to a more user-friendly mitigation than a total closure of the intersection? Has that been looked at?

[31:30] Melissa Barnes:

So, we are still allowing the right-in right-outs at this location. We have talked about what else or are there other things that we could do but really a lot of them are not really cost effective when we're starting to talk about the low number of vehicles who would likely use it and the cost to implement anything else and the other safety issues that occur when you start to introduce new access points and new traffic control devices. So, we are thinking that a median closure in this case makes the most sense but we have looked at and we have talked about other things as we've gone through this process.

[32:16] Joy Miciano:

And, so somewhat related, Melissa, did MnDOT look into other ways to make the intersection more safe for the turn lane? Such as, extending the turn lane itself or making it larger?

[32:30] Melissa Barnes:

Sure, we did talk about how we could extend the turn lane. The problem is that at an unsignalized intersection people will only wait so long. They start to get frustrated and at that queue there's lower tolerance for wait and people start to take more and more risk and takes smaller gaps. Which is what happens when traffic volumes increase. So, then you start to get more crashes and so even extending the turn lane, there's still that safety issue out there where people just only tolerate so much wait time before they just start to take that turn.

[33:15] Joy Miciano:

Also related to the closure, is the intersection closure a done deal?

[33:21] Melissa Barnes:

No, that's why we're here tonight. We did want to listen to the experiences and I would still encourage you to put some of those experiences into the chat box of things that you've heard and you've experienced and you're concerned about. We need to talk about this before closing the median. We do have the cable medium barrier project. However, again, it's proposed and like I said it can be slightly altered if we needed to. We are proposing to close it. We think it's a good thing to close it. We think that the safety and mobility, the balance there is at the point where the safety is important and even losing one life is a big deal. We don't want to have fatalities on our roadways. So where we can prevent them we want to do that.

[34:15] Joy Miciano:

Great. So, I think just one other suggestion for an alternative to slow traffic is establishing trees in the median of Snelling - has that been considered? This has been a proven method in urban development of reducing speed.

[34:40] Melissa Barnes:

Sure, at the speed of Snelling Avenue in this area trees can actually become a hazard inland of themselves. When a car runs off the road, which there have been run off the road, incidents along this portion of Snelling Avenue. If you could pull those up while I'm speaking here. I can't quite remember exactly how many there are without...while I'm talking, those trees become a hazard in and of themselves and can be things that people crash into as well.

[35:16] Fay Simer:

There have been four runoff road crashes since 2014 between 36 and 694.

[35:28] Joy Miciano:

Melissa, there are a few questions about the left turn at Lydia or C2 - more specifically, can we somehow extend the green arrow light going left on Lydia or C2?

[35:48] Melissa Barnes:

I'm guessing they mean the southbound left turn?

[35:53] Joy Miciano:

I assume so, yes.

[35:55] Melissa Barnes:

At Lydia and C2, the light, sure, we get that question a lot so we have to balance the northbound through traffic with the southbound left turn traffic and balance that with the other intersections. We have been giving the southbound left turn movement at Lydia and C2 more time so that they do not extend beyond their turn bay lengths as well. However, we do have to balance that with traffic on northbound Snelling. So, there's a lot of traffic on this corridor. In some places, 35,000 vehicles a day and that is a lot of traffic to handle with a traffic signal. So, sometimes those waits can feel excessively long but especially during the peak hours. At some point these traffic signals just have a limit to how many people that they can get through a signal and we try and balance those the best we can.

[36:51] Joy Miciano:

So, just jumping back to the actual intersection of Hamline and Snelling, the suggestion and question is, what about a light for the turn, like on 280 and Broadway?

[37:09] Melissa Barnes:

(Slide 15) There's already alight down at Lydia and Ham - Lydia and Snelling, excuse me. A light at Hamline - signals although that left turn we're seeing is safer down there they can cause their own types of crashes. They actually increase rear end crashes in their own way and they prevent other types of crashes. So introducing another traffic signal on the system could introduce another place where people crash so we wouldn't be stopping that southbound traffic at Hamline and Snelling but now suddenly we'd start stopping the northbound traffic so we could see an increase in crashes from those northbound vehicles who are now having to stop that didn't have to stop before.

Also, it's an expense that you can put out there. Additional equipment that that needs to be maintained and I think I have a little bit more information on that...yep...no, that's it.

[38:22] Joy Miciano:

Okay. So, other questions about what we have been doing to also reduce speed or what we will be doing to reduce speed and distracted driving in the area. Is there anything that will be done to correct this?

[38:44] Melissa Barnes:

No, but that's a good comment. Speed and distracted driving are important and it's definitely something we can talk to our partners and with the police department, the emergency management folks. Really talking about making sure that there's a comprehensive effort to reduce distracted driving and lower speeds and make sure that people aren't speeding on these corridors to help increase safety. So, you're right it does take a holistic approach to managing safety along the corridor. It's not just engineering and the closure of medians but the rest of it as well.

[39:24] Joy Miciano:

And, then related to the Hamline Snelling intersection, will the eventual plan be to close or prevent a northbound turn onto Snelling Avenue from Glenhill?

[39:42] Melissa Barnes:

Nope, that is not currently proposed or the plan. That northbound left turn from Snelling onto Glenhill proposed to remain open again because that balance of mobility and access is a lot more difficult at Glenhill and the southbound traffic is not necessarily accessing the same along Snelling as the northbound traffic is.

[40:10] Joy Miciano:

So, we do have a few questions about pedestrians and bicyclists. Can you elaborate on other pedestrian focus upgrades for the Hamline-Snelling crossing?

[40:25] Melissa Barnes:

We have not proposed at this time any pedestrian or bicyclist upgrades at the Hamline and Snelling crossing.

[40:40] Joy Miciano:

So for Lydia at Hamline, there are multiple pedestrians and bicyclists every day. How will you make these popular streets more friendly to non-vehicles as of right now?

[40:58] Melissa Barnes:

That would be beyond the scope of this project. Definitely something we could talk about as we move forward. What we're talking about today is really just closure of the median but something to think about as we move forward and talk about other projects that may be able to incorporate things like that.

[41:20] Fay Simer:

Okay, so, maybe this would be a good time, Hamline and Lydia are on both roads that are operated by our partners and maybe they want to chime in. I also wanted to go back -I'll give them a minute to think. I think that the previous question at Glenhill was about if you were driving on Glenhill and turning left, north onto Snelling Avenue. The proposal is to prohibit that movement if you're starting from Glenhill and taking a left onto Snelling.

[41:52] Melissa Barnes:

Sorry. Yep, you're correct, Fay. So eastbound left turn off of Glenhill to go northbound on Snelling would no longer be possible.

[42:06] Joy Miciano:

And, then there is a question, just kind of sticking to our pedestrian bicyclist questions right now, has MnDOT looked at pedestrian data resources such as Strava, strava.com to get data about traffic patterns of non-vehicles. I don't know if Mark and Todd want to talk about either Hamline or Lydia first.

[42:34] Marc Culver:

I can jump in. Marc Culver here. And Joe, if you want to jump in on some of the Hamline stuff. I was paging through some of the questions so as I'm talking about Hamline and Lydia, I'll try to knock off several of them.

One of the questions that was asked was the designation of Hamline Avenue which is actually a county state aid highway. So Ramsey County has jurisdiction over that roadway and we have not talked about -regardless of what the status or what happens at this median closure - we haven't had conversations with the county about turning that back so the county would still be funding that roadway and maintaining that roadway.

As far as Lydia and Snelling, there have been you know several questions about pedestrian activity there and certainly with Northwestern University being in that northwest corner, there is a lot of pedestrian demand and activity in that area and college students don't always do the smartest things when it comes to crossing roadways and it's a conversation that we've had with the college. It's a conversation we've had with parents of students there. It's a conversation we've had with residents in the area and we're very aware of it and there have been some incidents with pedestrians, I believe, prior to my time at Roseville, I believe there was a pedestrian fatality at that intersection. So, it's something that absolutely is on the radar screen and it's absolutely something that we consider when we're looking at improvements and it's something that I know we don't always like to hear about waiting but as Melissa had indicated there is a pavement project coming up on Snelling and, I think it's 2024, we'll be working with MnDOT to address, not only vehicular issues, but also pedestrian safety issues and bicycle issues

And how do we improve safety and access to pedestrians and bicyclists in that area. So, we may not have a lot of answers tonight in regards to actual pedestrian safety there but I do want to assure you that it's something that we're aware of and we're looking at as we make improvements in that area. Lydia itself, we've been monitoring since the median closure we've been monitoring traffic on Lydia and Hamline and County Road C2 and, yes, there's been about a 20% increase at times on Lydia Avenue between Snelling and Hamline. It is absolutely the main alternate route for those that are actually trying to get into that area the residential area and that's south and east of Snelling that would have turned left at Snelling and Hamline there. And, I have to say, to be perfectly honest with you, we haven't had a lot of complaints from residents but we do know that traffic is increasing on Lydia and obviously probably some speeds as well. The average speed is probably ticking up on there as well and that's something that is hard to monitor this year this summer because of the dramatic shifts in traffic volumes and flows and such but that's something that we're going to be looking at more closely and watching. We repaved Lydia last year, I believe it was, and we made some changes at Lydia and Hamline and we can look to see what other changes we can do along Lydia to try to manage and calm some of the traffic on Lydia there as well. I'm not sure if there's anything else there and Joe don't know if you want to add anything to that.

[46:21] Joe Lux:

This is Joe Lux from Ramsey County. I think Marc covered it pretty well. We don't see these changes being something that would make us remove Hamline Avenue as a county road. It might cause us to manage it a little differently in the future if we see volumes drop, we might be able to do some things that are more bike and pedestrian friendly that we probably like to do the next time we pave it anyway. It might bring those on a little sooner.

[46:57] Joy Miciano:

Great. Thank you. Yes, so Marc, we'll be monitoring the questions and let you know if there's any other questions that you can respond to. I just want to let everyone know it's about 6:57. So, we do have a few questions that we have not gotten through. We will be able to stay on the video conference call until about 7:15 but I just wanted to acknowledge that we're close to our time of seven o'clock but we are willing to stay and answer as many questions as we can until 7:15. Melissa, can you just go to the next slide real quick, please.

If you're not able to stay on past seven o'clock, we just wanted to thank you for attending. We really appreciate you taking time out of your evening in this beautiful weather to join us on this call. In the future, you have any questions or comments please contact Fay Simer with MnDOT. Her contact information and phone number are on the slide, as well as, visit the Highway 51 Roseville Arden Hills project website. And again, that is where the meeting recording, as well as, the transcript for the question and answers will be posted. Those will be posted by Tuesday May 26th. There was a question on whether we would post any of the questions that we do not get to tonight. And, yes, that is correct, if we are not able to answer all the questions that are coming in, we will have a transcript of all the questions that were submitted through the chat and we will provide a response through there.

So, before we continue I just want to remind people, if you are still submitting questions through the chat, please make sure to select "all participants" if you select "all attendees" staff are not able to see the questions. And, that goes to all the people attending the meeting but not necessarily all the staff. So, please use the "all participant" selection in the chat.

So, just getting back to some of the questions. Melissa, I think, just sticking to the actual intersection closure, there was another question about putting a left turn signal at Hamline and Snelling that is activated where there are cars in the turn lane so that northbound traffic would not be stopped very long. As well as, having that closure only during rush hour so that it's controlled similar to some of the carpool HOV lanes on 394? Is that a possibility or is that something that's been looked into? And, Melissa, are you still with us?

[50:32] Melissa Barnes:

Is this better? I hear you. You can hear me now?

[50:38] Joy Miciano:

Yes, now I can hear you.

[50:40] Melissa Barnes:

Okay, it was flipping on and off. I apologize. So, to reiterate, yes, any traffic signal that would be put out in an area like this would typically be what we call actuated. Which is what the question kind of alluded to: Would it only turn on when there were vehicles present? So, yeah, that would be something that we would look at again. We do get to the benefits of a signal here with the really good alternate routes in this location. There's just a really good network already in place that can serve and is serving the traffic that's out there as this median is closed. We've been able to look at that and say that that's okay.

Adding a few more cars to Lydia doesn't dramatically increase the risk at that intersection but adding a new signal can increase the safety risk of those vehicles using that traffic signal if it was put up at Snelling and Hamline and also there is a cost benefit ratio of how many people would be using it versus how much we would spend to put it in. The investments in planning and building and maintaining the new piece of equipment is part of how we prioritize our spending as well.

[52:08] Joy Miciano:

Great. Thank you. There's a couple of questions about the businesses and some of the schools in the area. Currently, a number of businesses are on the roadway on Hamlin. How is taking traffic off this roadway considered a good thing for business? And then, another question was, has MnDOT reached out to the local colleges who would be affected by the Hamline Snelling changes?

[52:41] Melissa Barnes:

Sure. For the businesses and, Fay, feel free to jump in here, as well. I think we looked at that together -the businesses are actually south of south of Lydia so the businesses have similar access to anybody else who would be making these turns. And, a lot of them are those destination type businesses. Then for the colleges and - what other type of institutions?

[53:11] Joy Miciano:

It just says local colleges.

[53:15] Melissa Barnes:

The effects to the local colleges we didn't think was huge. Although, we have alerted them similarly to the people that we've alerted here and we haven't heard anything back.

[53:35] Joy Miciano:

So, question about the cable median barrier work: How will this affect the residents who live in the Glen Hill Road neighborhood and have no roadway to walk bike on to get out of their neighborhood other than Snelling?

[53:55] Melissa Barnes:

Cable median barrier projects should not really affect people walking and biking in the Glenhill neighborhood. That's my understanding, the one to the west. It actually goes down the median so not on the side of the street so things would be similar to what they are now. And, that wouldn't really be a change from what it is today for people walking and biking.

[54:27] Joy Miciano:

There's a question about the work on Snelling Avenue: work on Snelling Avenue was mentioned in 2025, what will that include?

[54:41] Melissa Barnes:

As of right now, it's being looked at as a pavement project - as a planned possible pavement project. That's all that it includes right now but a lot of times those are opportunities and opportunities for partnership and to look at other types of improvements that might make sense at that time. But as of right now, it is a maintenance pavement project.

[55:12] Joy Miciano:

And then another question about the cable median barrier, in this area how many vehicle crashes have there been? How many vehicles have crossed the median in this area?

[55:27] Melissa Barnes:

Four, yep, we've mentioned that before: four.

[55:34] Joy Miciano:

Okay. Question of the cable median barrier: I assume, with a pedestrian walking, is it legal to jump over the barrier?

[55:48] Melissa Barnes:

I am not aware of any laws addressing pedestrians and cable median barriers but I have not done a lot of research on that piece in and of itself. I don't think it would be fun. It would probably be rather uncomfortable. They're hard and, I guess, I would not recommend it but I don't know that there's necessarily a law out there that correlates to jumping over a cable median barrier.

[56:24] Joy Miciano:

So, just a clarification, Melissa, on the last question for residents in the neighborhood of Glenhill Road wanting to know, the question was: How do they get out of their neighborhood after that barrier is put in?

[56:45] Melissa Barnes:

Sorry, I apologize. So, if the median at Hamline Avenue is closed. Yes, and again that was one of the reasons we wanted to talk to folks tonight. We can provide a little overlap where people could possibly get through at Hamline but we don't think it's a great place to be walking or biking anyways or that people would likely not want to do that and be trying to take alternate routes in this location, as it stands.

[57:17] Fay Simer:

Maybe just to add some clarification to that question, as far as folks in the Glenhill neighborhood, who live west of Snelling, I think one could still walk or bike through the opening in the median that would be to allow those turns from northbound Snelling. Then, if you were driving you would have the option to turn right and go south on Snelling. So, if you wanted to go north on Snelling you would then be taking a U-turn at Lydia.

[58:02] Joy Miciano:

Great. Thank you for that, Fay. There's a couple questions just wanting to know, in general, if there is a pedestrian issue to report that's outside of a police report of an accident?

[58:23] Melissa Barnes:

Yeah, I think if it's on Snelling Avenue, Fay is definitely a good contact if you're looking to report the concern that has to do with traffic and Snelling.

[58:36] Joy Miciano:

I think it might be more at the time, if there is something happening. More of a pedestrian issue. If it's not road, is there someone they can report that issue to?

[58:52] Melissa Barnes:

Sorry, Joy, you broke up.

[58:54] Joy Miciano:

That's okay. I think it's if there is something happening in real-time, like a pedestrian issue, who can they report that issue to?

[59:03] Melissa Barnes:

I don't necessarily know what issue means but perhaps the police department, if it's in real-time, but otherwise if it is having to do it with a traffic type issue - is that kind of what you're alluding to? - Then that would be something you could call Fay or contact her as well.

[59:27] Joy Miciano:

Alright, so there's several questions not quite related to the closure of the Snelling Hamline intersection. There was a question about a fatality on Snelling Avenue south of County Road E exit, I'm just wondering about that occurrence? I don't know if we know about that.

[59:57] Melissa Barnes:

I don't have the information on that at this time but we can share it.

[60:04] Joy Miciano:

So, we'll just include that in our transcript of the question and answer response. I think I mentioned this question earlier about where do we get our data for traffic patterns for non-vehicles. Has MnDOT looked at other data resources like strava.com?

[60:33] Melissa Barnes:

Yes, we have tried to use the same data that we use for vehicular information for pedestrian information and we haven't had a ton of luck using it yet. We're not finding it to be super reliable or complete but we have taken a look and we've tried to use some of it. Strava has definitely its own limitations. People have to be using it. They have to be logged on. They have to have downloaded the app. This is usually a certain segment of the population who is exercising but there are other applications that track people's cellphone data scrubs that don't necessarily have all those but they still have trouble discerning between, it seems to be, pedestrian vehicle and transit. Users sometimes are already been picking them out. Then there's just some more privacy concerns that I think they've scrubbed some of it where we haven't just been able to get good numbers or good data from it.

[61:38] Joe Lux:

This is Joe from the county. I wonder if I could ask a question. We had some discussions here today that are kind of related to the discussion about getting in and out of the Glenhill Asbury neighborhood. There was some thought that at some point and possibly in conjunction with the 2025 overlay or maybe as a local initiative, so Todd and Mark may want to chime in. It might be an idea to add a trail on the west side of Snelling. Generally speaking, there's pretty wide right-of-way and we thought that might be a possibility.

[62:18] Marc Culver:

Speaking from Roseville's perspective again with the upcoming project that MnDOT will be doing on Snelling Avenue that's absolutely something we want to explore looking at, as I indicated for us, trying to stay vague until you know we have an opportunity to do some surveys and look at some possibilities in that but looking at adding some sort of pedestrian facility in that area. And, yes, Joe, as you mentioned, looking at the west side of Hammond. At least, to complete some gaps or links there between the Glenhill neighborhood down to Lydia, certainly, I think makes sense. And, I think it could fit well in there, but, like I said, those are things that we need to look at the feasibility of such cost. How that all gets done as we lead up to that project coming up in 2024.

[63:11] Joe Lux:

Thanks, Mark. As a former resident of that neighborhood, the route was to take the shoulder of Snelling down to Lydia but that's still about 800 feet or riding a bike along Snelling which is very pleasant.

[63:27] Todd Blomstrom:

And, Joe, I would just like to mention that I support what Mark said and the city of Arden Hills would certainly work with Roseville to investigate those opportunities.

[63:38] Marc Culver:

And if I can, I know we're getting close to the 7:15 deadline here and, again, scrolling through there, some of the people that have some concerns about Lydia and traffic on Lydia. There's been a lot of individual comments about pedestrian safety along Lydia now with the increased traffic I think that's absolutely something that the city of Roseville needs to look at. With that increased traffic there, we do have a pathway master plan that we maintain and we look at links and we try to prioritize link based on a lot of factors including traffic and access to transit.

So I'm absolutely looking at Lydia and updating some of her information there to see all that link between Hamline and Snelling would score on our pathway management plan for adding a sidewalk probably to that south side of Lydia to improve the pedestrian safety through there.

[64:35] Joy Miciano:

Thank you, Mark, for addressing that I was just going through and trying to summarize all the questions about pedestrian safety at the Lydia intersection. So, I do want to acknowledge that it is 7:15. We got through most of the questions and I do want to acknowledge that there were quite a few comments that were provided in the chat that, if we had time, I was going to read through but it looks like we don't have time to read through those. I do appreciate people submitting them. They will be included in the question and answer transcript as well so that everyone can view those comments and that MnDOT will have a record of all the questions and comments that were submitted.

So, again, I just want to thank everyone. I apologize, there were a few questions that we did not get to address tonight but that we will respond to in our transcript of the question answer responses. And, again, that will be posted on the website by Tuesday, May 26th. So, thanks everyone for attending. Melissa, I don't know if you wanted to say a few words before -

[65:50] Melissa Barnes:

Yep, hopefully, you can still hear me. No, I agree. Thank you. I would like to echo Joy's "Thanks". Thank you for attending and thank you for your feedback and, again, if you have additional comments please do submit them online. The transcript will be available by the 26th. It's there at the website. Please sign up for email updates and please reach out if you'd like to discuss things more in person. So, we really appreciate your time tonight and I know it's a beautiful Tuesday afternoon and we appreciate you being here and working with us in this format, so thank you.

[66:26] Joy Miciano:

Thank you everyone! Enjoy the evening