

# I-35E MnPASS Extension Study - Steering Committee Meeting

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## Meeting Minutes

(SP 6281-46)

Thursday, January 23, 2014,

1:00-4:00 PM

Hugo City Hall

## Welcome, Introductions & Project Overview

Brad Larsen (MnDOT) welcomed the attendees and provided a brief overview of the I-35E MnPASS Extension Study and a quick recap of the Sept. 19, 2013 Steering Committee meeting. He explained this study is a process for helping determine whether there's a feasible and viable option for extending MnPASS lanes on I-35E between Little Canada Rd. and County Rd. 96 during the 2016 timeframe when construction and funding opportunities exist. This study is not a replacement for the federally required environmental (NEPA) process, nor is it a process for determining whether MnPASS should be implemented in the corridor. The Regional 2030 Transportation Policy Plan has designated the I-35E corridor north of St. Paul as a MnPASS Managed Lane corridor and MnPASS lanes are due to open between St. Paul and Little Canada Rd. in November 2015. Brad provided a brief update of the study schedule and indicated preliminary results from two of the studies' primary components will be reviewed as the next Steering Comm. meeting in May 2015. Brad reiterated the role of the Steering Comm. is to:

- Review and provide general and specific feedback on study component methodology, findings and conclusions
- Provide participant recommendations for various study components
- Communicate the study's purpose, approach and results to other officials in your organizations and communities

## Concept Development

Peter Muehlbach, Nick Thompson, and David Ungemah (Parsons Brinckerhoff) reviewed the existing conditions along the corridor, explained in more detail each of the three MnPASS extension conceptual options, and discussed the evaluation criteria and analysis that had been conducted to this point. The three concept options included, for both northbound and southbound traffic, a continuous MnPASS lane, a discontinuous MnPASS lane, and a priced dynamic shoulder lane (PDSL). The evaluation criteria

being used to compare and contrast the three options included: person/vehicle throughput; transit and park-and-ride capacity; incident management; maintenance; enforcement; consistency with driver expectations; MnPASS continuity; operations and management costs, and legal considerations – a draft evaluation matrix was handed out at the meeting. The analysis also included estimated costs for each option.

The group briefly discussed the importance of two related studies: the nearly completed Met Council Transitway (BRT) Study which is evaluating the potential for BRT service in the I-35E corridor north of St. Paul; and the Rush Line Task Force Pre-project Development Study that is about to commence and will evaluate in greater depth BRT in the corridor.

There were several questions seeking clarification about how each concept option would work and potential traffic impacts at specific locations within the corridor. There were concerns expressed about the description of the continuous option not clearly explaining that it would change the status of one of the existing general purpose lanes in each direction through the I-694/I-35E commons area to a MnPASS lane. It was noted under the continuous option that the existing general purpose lane would only change to MnPASS during peak AM and PM rush hours periods – at all other times, the lane would remain a general purpose lane open and free to all traffic.

PB also explained that one of the next steps in the study process will be more detailed traffic modeling. This modeling will take into account projected traffic increases in the corridor and evaluate the impacts of the continuous and discontinuous options on traffic throughout the corridor in 2017 and 2030. The PDSL option will not be taken through the more detailed traffic modeling because the contract budget only allows for two options to go through more detailed modeling, and the continuous and discontinuous options make the most sense because of the initial evaluation results, the project cost estimates and the fact that additional capacity is not currently needed through the commons area. The PDSL option will not be precluded from more detailed modeling in the future during the environmental process if warranted.

It was suggested re-naming the continuous and discontinuous options to the “without a gap” and “with a gap” options.

It was reiterated that the purpose of MnPASS is provide a reliable congestion-free option for transit, carpools and solo drivers during weekday rush hour periods. MnPASS is cost-effective approach for improving the efficiency of our highway and bus transit systems during recurring weekday congestion.

## **Land Use & Transit Enhancement**

Mary Vogel (University of Minnesota, Center for Changing Landscapes) provided an update on the Land Use and Transit Enhancement study component, which had its first Technical Advisory Committee meeting on January 9, 2014. Mary provided a brief overview of the component’s objectives and explained the results from a similar study that CCL led in the I-394 corridor in 2008. She then reviewed several of maps of the I-35E corridor which depicted a variety of factors that will impact land use and

transportation in the corridor such as projected changes in the Metropolitan Urban Service Area, current job density, planned housing density, and other transit, land use and environmental information.

Mary briefly talked about the sites upon which the study might focus, specifically the I-35E interchange areas around CR 14, CR 96, CR E and Little Canada Rd. She also talked about how the information and analysis CCL conducts around the selected sites will be available to local governments to consider and use as they see fit during future community planning and development activities. It was suggested that this component also consider key carpooling and transit nodes north of CR 14 like the Forest Lake Transit Station.

It was noted that the results from this study component will not be available until Fall 2014.

## **Community Dialogues**

Emily Saunoi-Sandgren (University of Minnesota, Humphrey School) gave a presentation on the current plans for the Community Dialogue sessions with corridor stakeholders. A total of six Community Dialogue sessions will be conducted in March-April, with each session including 12-15 participants. Three categories of stakeholders will be targeted: community/business leaders; professional drivers; and general public users. Each session will last about 75 minutes and focus on qualitative feedback, with a brief unscientific survey to conclude each session. The results of the Community Dialogues will be shared at the next Steering Comm. meeting, and eventually aggregated in a report that will be available on the project website.

It was suggested that specific examples of the current MnPASS lanes on I-394 and I-35W be used to help explain the concept options. It was also urged that every effort be made to clearly articulate the impact and trade-offs involved with each option.

Emily handed out several informational documents including the latest draft of the MnPASS infographic and a list of potential stakeholder groups for the Community Dialogue sessions. She asked the Steering Comm. for feedback on the stakeholder categories and specifically to send her any suggestions for recruiting participants for the stakeholder groups.

## **Future Steering Committee Meetings**

The next Steering Comm. meeting will be during May 2014

