

I-35W Transit/Access Project Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are transportation improvements being planned for the I-35W / Lake Street area?

Improvements to I-35W have been studied over at least the last two decades. The highway and the bridges are very old – built in the 1960s – and two of the bridges within the project area are included in legislation that requires that they be replaced by 2018. The region is also planning for the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service along I-35W as described in the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan and as stipulated by the City of Minneapolis with the Municipal Consent for the Crosstown Comments (I-35W and Highway 62) improvements.

The Twin Cities metro region received Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) federal funding which funded various elements of BRT on I-35W including managed lanes, a new in-line transit station at 46th St and some park-and-ride lots, in addition to improved transit facilities in Downtown Minneapolis including dual transit lanes, enhanced bus shelters and real-time transit information signage. The managed lanes (for transit, carpools and congestion pricing) are the only added lane capacity on I-35W. This means a reliance on BRT to handle future growth in transportation demand along this corridor.

2. What are the overall goals of the I-35W Transit/Access Project?

The current phase of the I-35W Transit/Access Project will develop a 30% Concept Plan that includes consideration of the following project components:

- A transit station at or near Lake Street
- A high quality connection to the Greenway
- A southbound exit ramp to Lake Street
- A northbound entrance ramp from Lake Street
- A northbound exit ramp to 28th St
- Improvements along Lake Street between Blaisdell Avenue and 5th Avenue

The 30% Concept Plan will consider the following:

- Effective integration of transit, freeway mobility and multimodal local access
- Provide community benefit through arterial, collector and local street improvements
- Meet BRT/MnPASS objectives and address freeway system issues
- Create opportunities for the community

3. How do these improvements relate to the City's *Access Minneapolis* transportation plan?

Access Minneapolis: Citywide Ten-Year Transportation Action Plan supports implementation of regional transitways. Also, this Plan defines Lake Street as a key component of the designated Primary Transit Network (PTN). The PTN emphasizes high quality transit passenger facilities and amenities, pedestrian environment, bicycle access, safety and security.

4. What bridges have to be replaced by 2018?

Laws 2008, Chapter 152, Section 165.14, directs the Commissioner of Transportation to establish a Trunk Highway Bridge Improvement Program with an emphasis on structurally deficient and fracture critical bridges. Current bridges that meet the program criteria are to be accelerated for replacement or repair. A tier System is included in the legislation to group bridges with Tier 1 being the highest priority.

There are two bridges in the I-35W Transit/Access Project that must be replaced by 2018 under the Chapter 152 legislation. These are the “braid” bridge near 24th Street and the “flyover” bridge that connects northbound I-35W to westbound I-94. Replacement of the braid bridge provides an opportunity through a slight design change to land the bridge on the right side of southbound I-35W rather than the left side, thus accommodating a future continuous managed lane from downtown to the new transit station and beyond. Replacement of the flyover bridge offers an opportunity through a slight design change to ease congestion in the I-94 commons area that results from having a lot of traffic trying to merge in one location.

5. How do these improvements relate to regional transportation objectives?

The Metro Transit Regional goal is to double transit ridership by 2030 and decrease reliance on the automobile, particularly during the peak periods. I-35W is one the regional transitways identified for transit improvements. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a big part of the strategy to achieve this goal.

6. What are the objectives for Lake Street?

The primary objective for the “missing link” of Lake Street between Blaisdell Avenue and 5th Avenue is to develop a design that:

- Addresses the existing peak period congestion and queue lengths (Blaisdell to 5th).
- Minimizes traffic diversion into neighborhoods.
- Provides a pedestrian, bicyclist and transit friendly environment.
- Fits and works with the five main project components that are part of the 30% Concept Plan.

7. What are the objectives for this project that affect the economic revitalization of Lake Street?

Planning for the eventual reconstruction of the Lake Street and I-35W area should support the economic revitalization of Lake Street. The following assumptions and components are important to achieving that broad objective:

- Complete Lake Street roadway and streetscape improvements.
- Plan for ramps to/from I-35W at Lake Street and to 28th Street.
- Connect Midtown Greenway to Lake Street and the transit station.
- Design that supports the reopening and reconnecting Nicollet Avenue.
- Design that supports the adopted Midtown Minneapolis Land Use and Development Plan.
- Attractive space that is pedestrian and bicyclist friendly.

8. What are the main design challenges for this project?

- Fitting all project components into the previously identified right-of-way boundaries – many expectations and needs – little space.
- “Humanizing” the design (scale, pedestrian-bicyclist friendly, exciting, safe space).
- Making clear, easy to navigate three-dimensional connections between the transit station and Lake Street, the Greenway, and north/south transit routes (Nicollet and 4th.5th Avenues).
- Identify how the project can be constructed depending on funding availability (transit station to be constructed first).

9. What is the timeline for completing the I-35W Transit/Access Project?

Developing major transportation solutions in a complex urban environment is an iterative process, with new discoveries occurring throughout the process. The work plan and associated three-year timeline is expected to provide sufficient time to identify and address critical issues and decisions. *Link to schedule chart.*

10. How can I participate in the I-35W Transit/Access Project?

Everyone is encouraged to participate in the I-35W Transit/Access Project. You can participate by:

- Talking with your Project Advisory Committee (PAC) representative or attending a monthly PAC meeting (4th Thursday, 8:30-10:30 a.m., Colin Powell Center, 2924 4th Street South-one block north of Lake Street).
- Attending public meetings and open houses (watch for information about upcoming meetings under “What’s New” on the project website: www.35lake.com).
- Sending comments to: information@www.35lake.com or James.grube@co.hennepin.mn.us.
- Requesting a presentation (contact Jim Grube at 612-596-0307 or james.grube@co.hennepin.mn.us).
- Signing up on the website to receive e-newsletter.