

# **Franklin Avenue (CSAH 5) – East River Parkway Intersection Study Open House #2 – Study Update/Progress Report**

**St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church  
1500 Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis  
6:30 to 8:30 pm  
June 9, 2009**

## **Agenda**

1. Open House
2. Presentation (and Q and A)
3. Continuation of Open House

**Attendance:** Approx. 80 persons

## **Meeting Summary**

From 6:30 to 7:15, meeting attendees gathered at nine “stations” which contained boards describing:

1. Study Goals and Objectives; Study Process and Schedule
2. Existing and Future Conditions – No Build
3. Modified 5-Leg Signal Intersection – Traffic Management Concept
4. 4-Leg Signalized Intersection
5. Pedestrian Routes and Bike Routing Options
6. Roundabout: Single Lane
7. Roundabout: Multiple Lanes
8. Roundabout: Hybrid
9. Grade Separated Trail (Bridge and Tunnel Options)

Staff from Hennepin County and SEH consulting firm were at each station to explain the information and graphics and to respond to questions and comments.

At approximately 7:15, Hennepin County Director of Transportation Jim Grube opened the meeting with a welcome to all participants and introduced Hennepin County

Commissioner Peter McLaughlin who made a few remarks about the need for intersection improvements. Mr. Grube also recognized State Representative Phyllis Kahn, Peter Wagenius, senior policy aide from Mayor Rybak's office, and Annie Welch from Minneapolis City Council member Cam Gordon's office.

Mr. Grube proceeded to outline the Agenda, the purpose of the study and the issues. He emphasized that the intersection improvement project is intended to serve long term user demands. He pointed out that the study was based on 20-year vehicular traffic projections provided by the Central Corridor LRT planning team, and that, in the absence of definitive pedestrian and bicyclist projections, the Hennepin County consultant team presumed a 'doubling' of pedestrian and bicyclist demands. Mr. Grube concluded by quoting the goal of the study to "Develop an intersection solution that will serve user demands over the next 20+ years," and listing the following study objectives:

1. Improve pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicle safety.
2. Reduce delay for all users.
3. Improve intersection design and clarity to satisfy user expectations.

Consultant city planner Dan Cornejo presented several details on each of the study objectives that amplified the types of impacts and/or attributes that pertained to safety, delay, or design clarity. He then addressed several slides that summarized "What have we heard so far?" He discussed the following:

- Pedestrian and bicyclist safety is a HUGE concern for all of you, and us.
- Fear that intersection improvements will actually work, and therefore attract even more traffic.
- Intersection is very confusing and frustrating: the lack of proper signage, confusing lane markings, and signal cycle length tests the patience of all users.
- Runners and Type-A bicyclists demonstrate particularly low levels of patience.
- Older people and people with disabilities have high degree of vulnerability – and desire more time to cross safely
- Intersection seems to work OK (not great, but acceptably) most of day.
- Greatest need is to satisfy a.m. and p.m. peak vehicle users without detracting from pedestrian and bikes

- How certain are we that vehicle traffic will actually increase as much as projected?
- All efforts should be made to consider and use intelligent technology to its fullest before going to a solution that would involve a physical reconstruction of the intersection.

Consultant Mike Kotila described each of the four categories of concept solutions that were being considered:

1. Modify 5-Leg Signal and Lane Configurations (applying technology)
2. 4-Leg Conventional Signal
3. Roundabouts (varying types considered)
4. Grade-Separated Pedestrian-Bicyclist Trail Options.

Jim Grube concluded the presentation by outlining the “next steps” in the study process:

- Continue to examine these concept alternatives with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) , an interagency work group, and the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), which is a work group comprised of neighborhood representatives as well as representation from bicycle advisory committees and Transit for Livable Communities.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Open House / Public Meeting in August to present recommended intersection solution.
- Presentation to Minneapolis City Council and Hennepin County Board in September/October.

### **Public Comment and Feedback at the Meeting**

Following the presentation, the participants and study engineers and planners engaged in a dialogue regarding the concepts and study process:

- There appears to be a bias towards routing traffic to Franklin Avenue; we should be doing “traffic calming” in that corridor.
- What about the impact of money? Who pays for all this? Have you considered the cost implications of the four options? Response: The 5-Leg intersection (design, build, and observe its performance) would cost around \$500,000. All of the other options would cost \$3-5 million dollars. A tunnel or bridge would cost about \$2 million. There are no funds allocated, nor has a funding source been

identified. What we are doing is attempting to find a workable and acceptable solution, then we will seek funds to implement it.

- It appears that with the 5-Leg intersection that the relatively new Bridal Veil Creek Bridge would be torn out. Response: Yes, a portion would be reconstructed, but it would not be the bridge itself, but rather it would involve the at-grade portion; this would be widened. Much of the railing and other features could be reused. We must remember that these are concepts; if selected, the details would have to be worked out. We would respect how this looks now, and try to do the changes up to the same quality level.
- This intersection is, has been, and will always be “nasty.” People have no idea how the “walk” signals work. Why not create a shorter walk, by tweaking the timing of the signals (and not spending millions of dollars).
- The “no left turn” idea with the 5-Leg intersection option won’t work, and it would have a negative impact on residents who live on Yale.
- Do the Traffic Management approach first. Improve the signal operations and lane configurations, watch how it works until LRT starts up, and then make your next decision.
- I have heard that the Franklin Avenue Bridge will be re-made in five years. Why not wait until then and do everything, including intersection improvements, all at once? Response: The Franklin Avenue Bridge is solid and safe. We would not replace it. What we would do would be similar to what was done with the Ford Bridge a few years ago, namely a widening of the surface to create expanded sidewalks, a shoulder for bikes, and replacement of the vehicle lanes, but a bit narrower. So, should we wait until we fix the top? Not necessarily.
- Your traffic projections are really guesses. How do you really know? If you do the 5-Leg Traffic Management option, then you have time, after LRT is completed and in operation, to follow up with intersection reconstruction if you need to.
- Do your traffic projections take into account that some people will be switching to LRT? Response: The traffic projections are based on traffic behavior elsewhere with similar situations.
- Seward will be impacted by the 25 percent increase in traffic, if the intersection is allowed to get even more congested, because traffic will back up even more and cause some drivers to forgo the Bridge and cut through our neighborhood.

- Intersection reconstruction seems too expensive if (it can be demonstrated that) signal and lane changes would work through 2030.
- The idea of a transit mall (such as the one proposed for the U of M on Washington Avenue) is outmoded. Why do we have to accept the U of M position and its effects on our neighborhoods? Response: Regional population and traffic growth, the U of M football stadium, LRT success and new high-density development in the University Avenue corridor – all of these changes will affect us. Do we “dive in” or do we “wade in?”
- “Don’t use a hatchet when a razor blade will do.” We should be going slowly, doing small changes, and monitoring those changes.
- We should just wade in, be conservative. But we in doing so, we must also acknowledge that we could spend \$500,000 now, and then if this doesn’t work, or works only for a few years, then we could still be spending an additional \$3-5 million. Or, possibly, we might find a better and cheaper solution.
- I recall when I-394 was opened in 1992. The reduction in delays lasted only a very short time. I am convinced that any reduction in delays (if we do major improvements to this intersection) will be only temporary. More traffic will come.
- I am very dubious of traffic circles. They are unknown here, and will only lead to more accidents.
- What about trying no traffic signals at all? Except for a sign telling you that you are approaching an uncontrolled intersection?
- Council Member Cam Gordon had the final word: he encouraged all to send in your comments. We need to hear from you and learn what you think about this study and the information provided.

Jim Grube thanked everyone for coming and participating. He reminded everyone that the next Open House – Public Meeting would take place in August.

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