

RECONNECTING NEIGHBORHOODS

across I-94 at Lexington Parkway and Dowling Avenue



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PREFACE

This report summarizes the outcomes of two visioning workshops facilitated by Smart Growth America on behalf of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to generate ideas about how to improve connections around and across the Interstate 94 (I-94) corridor at Lexington Parkway in St. Paul and Dowling Avenue in Minneapolis. The workshops took place on July 24 and July 26, 2017.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the

observations and ideas discussed by participants during the workshops, and suggest near and long-term strategies to advance the ideas brainstormed. The strategies outlined in this report can help provide a foundation for further discussion between MnDOT, its agency partners, and the communities on future transportation projects and maintenance program opportunities. The report also provides additional strategies for consideration amongst MNDOT and its agency partners.

Smart Growth America developed this report in response to the workshop discussions. They do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of all of the participating agencies or community members and do not represent a consensus from the workshop participants around specific strategies or design treatments. Rather, the report is intended to help facilitate future conversation amongst the agency partners.



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The McKnight Foundation, a Minnesota-based family foundation, seeks to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. Program interests include regional economic and community development, Minnesota's arts and artists, education equity, youth engagement, Midwest climate and energy, Mississippi River water quality, neuroscience research, international crop research, and rural livelihoods. Founded in 1953 and independently endowed by William and Maude McKnight, the Foundation had assets of approximately \$2.2 billion and granted about \$87 million in 2016. www.mcknight.org.

Smart Growth America is the only national organization dedicated to researching, advocating for and leading coalitions to bring smart growth practices to more communities nationwide. From providing more sidewalks so people can walk to their town center, to ensuring that more homes are built near public transit and that productive farms remain a part of our communities, smart growth builds great neighborhoods across the nation that all Americans can share.

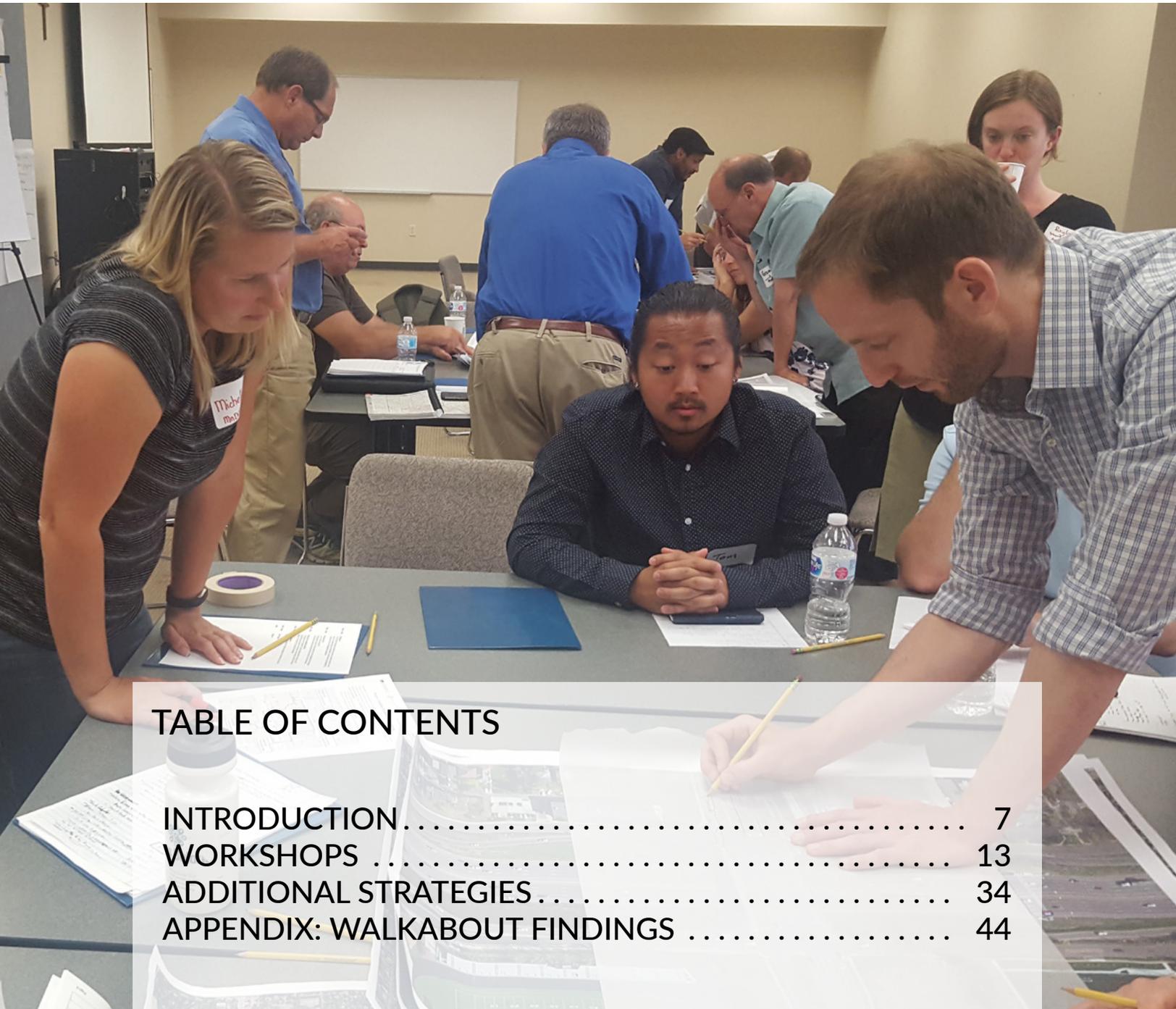
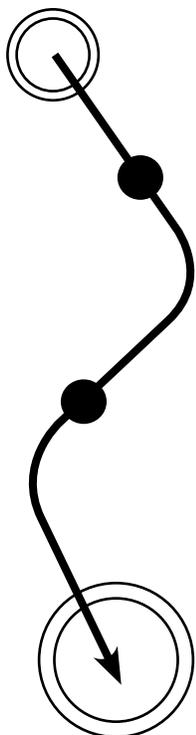
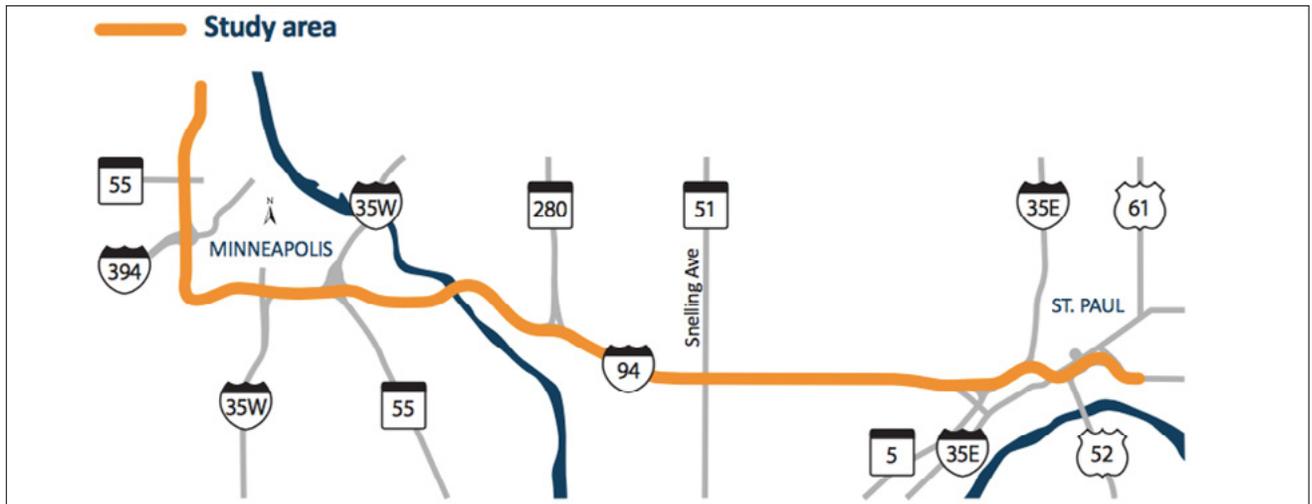


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INTRODUCTION

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The construction of I-94 in the 1960s through the heart of St. Paul and Minneapolis had devastating impacts for historic communities in both cities. It created physical barriers between neighborhoods, disconnected people from opportunities, and disrupted the social fabric of the communities.

MnDOT launched the [Rethinking I-94 Study](#) as a two-year effort to chart a future for the I-94 corridor. Through a series of public meetings and outreach, MnDOT is working with neighborhoods, community groups, district councils, local governments and others to:

- Develop a comprehensive, long-term and community-based approach to address I-94 study area needs;
- Better understand who uses and crosses I-94, how they are traveling, and what parts of the study area work and do not work for residents;
- Gain a stronger understanding of the condition of I-94 including bridges, walls and tunnels in the study area; and
- Determine how to best address mobility needs on I-94.

At the conclusion of the Rethinking I-94 study, MnDOT will develop an implementation schedule that guides future transportation project development efforts and identifies priority construction projects along and across the I-94 corridor.

SGA Workshops on July 24th and 26th, 2017

Through support from the McKnight Foundation, MnDOT partnered with Smart Growth America (SGA) to host two visioning and design workshops for decision-makers and community residents to further the objectives of the Rethinking I-94 Study. The first workshop focused on the area surrounding the Lexington Parkway bridge over I-94 in St. Paul, while the second focused on the area surrounding the Dowling Avenue bridge over I-94 in Minneapolis.

Purpose

The goals of the workshops were to provide a closer look at two key interchanges along I-94 and engage agency partners and community members in discussions about near-term improvements and long-term visions to improve access and safety across I-94 and in the surrounding area. The discussions also focused on strengthening connections between the physical infrastructure and the values and character of the surrounding neighborhoods through creative placemaking.

The outcomes of both workshops will support broader efforts to reconnect the social and physical fabric of the communities impacted by the construction of I-94. The observations made by participants about each interchange and ideas brainstormed are helpful in generating discussion amongst the agency partners about how to improve access and address community

needs.

How the two interchanges were selected

MnDOT selected the two interchanges through consultation with the City of St. Paul and the City of Minneapolis. MnDOT and the City of St. Paul selected the Lexington Parkway interchange because of its proximity to the Rondo neighborhood, which was among the hardest by the construction of I-94. The interchange also poses safety issues for pedestrians due to complex car turning movements, traffic signal timing, and accessibility issues for persons with disabilities.

While the Dowling Avenue interchange is outside of MnDOT's Rethinking I-94 study area, MnDOT and the City of Minneapolis selected it as the workshop location due to its potential to serve North Minneapolis residents and provide improved multi-modal connections to the future [Upper Harbor Terminal redevelopment site](#). The Upper Harbor Terminal is a publicly owned, 50-acre industrial riverfront site. The recent closure of the Mississippi River lock and dam has provided a new development opportunity for the site. The ideas generated during the Dowling Avenue workshop may also help the Rethinking I-94 staff generate ideas for other portions of the freeway corridor.



Workshop approach

The SGA team used the same approach to facilitate both workshops, building on similar workshops conducted with other transportation agencies and communities around the country. This approach included a “walkabout” of the areas surrounding each of the identified I-94 interchanges. A walkabout is a hands-on exercise that allows stakeholders to conduct an assessment of a corridor, intersection, or neighborhood with a focus on evaluating the environment for residents walking, biking, and taking transit. The purpose is to identify concerns related to safety, access, and comfort that may need to be addressed through future transportation investments, development projects, policy changes, or education and enforcement measures. A walkabout can also inform long-term community visioning efforts.

SGA split participants into four walkabout groups with different routes and perspectives to use in evaluating the areas. Participants made observations about the overall feel of the area, the needs of different modes of travel, the sur-

rounding development patterns, and the role the roads play in connecting people to destinations in the community.

After returning from the walkabout, participants worked in groups with large printed maps of the area to articulate the major issues they observed and brainstorm ideas that could be tackled over the short, medium, and long term.

Limited community participation

MnDOT planned both sessions around the goal of collecting stakeholder input from neighborhood residents as well as agency decision-makers, yet both workshops included limited community participation. Representatives from MnDOT divisions and the city and county agencies made up a large share of both workshops’ participants, impacting the focus of the discussions and the ideas brainstormed. This report includes strategies for expanding and improving community engagement approaches to help address this moving forward in the Additional Strategies section.



This Report

This report summarizes major values and goals articulated by participants during each workshop, observations made during the walkabouts, and the ideas brainstormed for improving safety, access, and sense of place along and across the I-94 corridor at the two interchanges of focus.

This report also outlines additional strategies for MnDOT and its partners moving forward,

particularly strategies for increasing community participation in future sessions. Smart Growth America developed these strategies based on the workshop discussions and subsequent conversations with the MnDOT I-94 team. Please note that they do not necessarily represent or reflect the views and opinions of the workshop participants.



1. A bus shelter without sidewalk access along Dowling Avenue.
2. Participants in the Lexington Parkway workshop brainstorm issues and opportunities.
3. Discussing neighborhood context in preparation for the walkabout of the Lexington Parkway interchange.



Workshop Executive Summaries

Workshop I: Lexington Parkway, St. Paul

The Lexington Parkway workshop took place on July 24, 2017 at Concordia University in St. Paul. Participants included representatives from the neighborhood, the City of St. Paul, Ramsey County, the Lexington-Hamline Community Council, Reconnect Rondo, the Union Park District Council, Common Bond, and a number of MnDOT divisions. MnDOT and local agency staff made up a relatively large proportion of the participants compared to representation from the community, which influenced the focus of the workshop discussions.

SGA also engaged a group of five artists from the [Roots of Rondo](#) initiative, a project of Springboard for the Arts that connects black artists in and from the Rondo community, to provide expertise as both creative leaders and members of the community during the walkabouts and discussions.

Participants made a number of observations about the Lexington Parkway interchange and surrounding area during the walkabout, including:

- An inhospitable environment for people walking and biking on the Lexington Parkway bridge;
- Crossings for pedestrians at the interchange that appeared unsafe due to signal timing, high turning speeds, and other aspects of the overall interchange design;
- Some poor sidewalk conditions in the area and lack of benches, shade, and other amenities for people walking; and
- Limited/inconsistent pedestrian access to transit stops.

The workshop participants brainstormed short-term maintenance strategies and medium-term improvements to the bridge and surrounding area that could address the issues identified and enhance connectivity over I-94. These included strategies for improving pedestrian and bicycle safety by updating signal timing, making adjustments to the allocation of space on the bridge, and revisiting the configuration of the interchange. Participants also discussed relocating transit stops so that they are easier to access.

Other ideas focused on making the bridge and interchange feel more comfortable and pleasant overall by improving the design of the bridge fences, adding peace poles or other decorative features that represent the neighborhood, and integrating better street lighting, and more vegetation and public art

Participants also brainstormed longer-term visioning concepts and goals for the area to create better connections across I-94 and echo the values and culture of the neighborhoods surrounding it. These ideas included major infrastructure changes, like expanding the Lexington Parkway bridge to make space for wider sidewalks and community space to foster a greater sense of connectivity across I-94. They also included concepts like a gateway or arch at the interchange that reflects the Rondo neighborhood, as well as a cultural heritage trail that celebrates the rich history of Rondo and acknowledge the damage caused by I-94.

Workshop II: Dowling Avenue, Minneapolis

The Dowling Avenue workshop took place on July 26, 2017 at the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Headquarters. Workshop participants included a handful of representatives from the neighborhood, the non-profit Friends of the Mississippi River, the team for the Upper Harbor Terminal, as well as the City, the County, the Metropolitan Council, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and several MnDOT divisions. Like the Lexington Parkway workshop, the Dowling Avenue workshop included a large representation from MnDOT and local agency staff compared to representation from the community.

Participants made a number of observations about the Dowling Avenue bridge and surrounding area during the walkabout, including heavy volumes of traffic near the interstate ramps that make it difficult for pedestrians to cross, narrow sidewalks, and an unpleasant aesthetic environment on the Dowling Avenue bridge.

Participants focused on changes to support the new Upper Harbor Terminal development in brainstorming near-term maintenance strategies and interim improvements, including opportunities to address gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle network and improve the quality of facilities for those modes of travel.

They also brainstormed long-term visioning concepts including a shared use pedestrian and bicycle bridge over I-94 to provide greater connectivity to the future Upper Harbor Terminal development. Participants also explored the idea of widening the Dowling Avenue bridge to create a land bridge with park space, and explored a number of reconfigurations for Dowling Avenue to improve pedestrian safety while accommodating increased traffic expected from the future development.

WORKSHOPS

- / I: Lexington Parkway & I-94, St Paul
- / II: Dowling Avenue & I-94, Minneapolis



- / Background
- / The Workshop
- / Ideas Generated

Workshop I: Lexington Parkway and I-94, St. Paul

Background

Lexington Parkway in St. Paul crosses I-94 at the edge of the Rondo neighborhood, a historically African American community that was among the hardest hit by the construction of I-94 in the 1960s. The government demolished many local African American-owned businesses and hundreds of homes to build I-94, displacing thousands of residents. The community still has not recovered economically or culturally from the devastating impacts, and I-94 continues to serve as a physical and psychological barrier separating people from opportunities. MnDOT and the City of St. Paul acknowledged this damage and formally apologized to the community in 2015, but there is still significant work to be done.

Community leaders have launched a number of local initiatives to reconnect the neighborhood in order to reverse the damage caused I-94 and address the trauma residents still face. One such effort is the [Better Bridges for Stronger Communities Project](#), led by the Friendly Streets Initiative (FSI) and local community groups. The Better Bridges Project is a community-driven effort to re-envision eight bridges over I-94 to make them safer for residents walking and biking and more aesthetically reflective of the values and cultures of the neighborhoods they connect. FSI is collecting design ideas for each of the eight bridges—which include Pelham, Fairview, Snelling, Hamline, Griggs, Lexington, Victoria, and Dale—through a series of community events, temporary placemaking improvements, and local surveys,

One major idea that has come out of the Better Bridges Project is a community-driven concept for a land bridge, or lid, over I-94 for several blocks in the Rondo neighborhood that could include a public park, market, or other community space. While stakeholders are still discussing the size, exact location, and design of the proposed land bridge, the general concept has received support from the community. It has led to the formation of [ReConnect Rondo](#), an organization dedicated to realizing the land bridge vision through coordination with MnDOT and the city, research, and advocacy to update transportation policy in support of the concept.

The Rondo neighborhood was also a site of focus during U.S. DOT's [Every Place Counts](#) visioning workshop in July 2016, a national initiative to reconnect neighborhoods and improve community health, mobility, and opportunity. During the Every Place Counts visioning workshop, participants reaffirmed the community's interest in a land bridge over I-94 in the neighborhood.

The Workshop

Overview

The Lexington Parkway workshop took place on July 24, 2017 at Concordia University in St. Paul.

While community participation was limited, the workshop included some representation from the neighborhood, the Lexington-Hamline Community Council, the Union Park District Council, and Reconnect Rondo, as well as CommonBond Communities. The workshop also included a more sizable participation from the City of St. Paul, Ramsey County, and a number of MnDOT divisions.

SGA also engaged a group of five artists from the Roots of Rondo initiative, a project of Springboard for the Arts that connects black artists in and from the Rondo community to create collaborative artistic projects to showcase the rich stories of past, present and [future of Rondo](#). The artists provided their expertise as both creative leaders and members of the community to offer insights during the walkabouts and discussions.

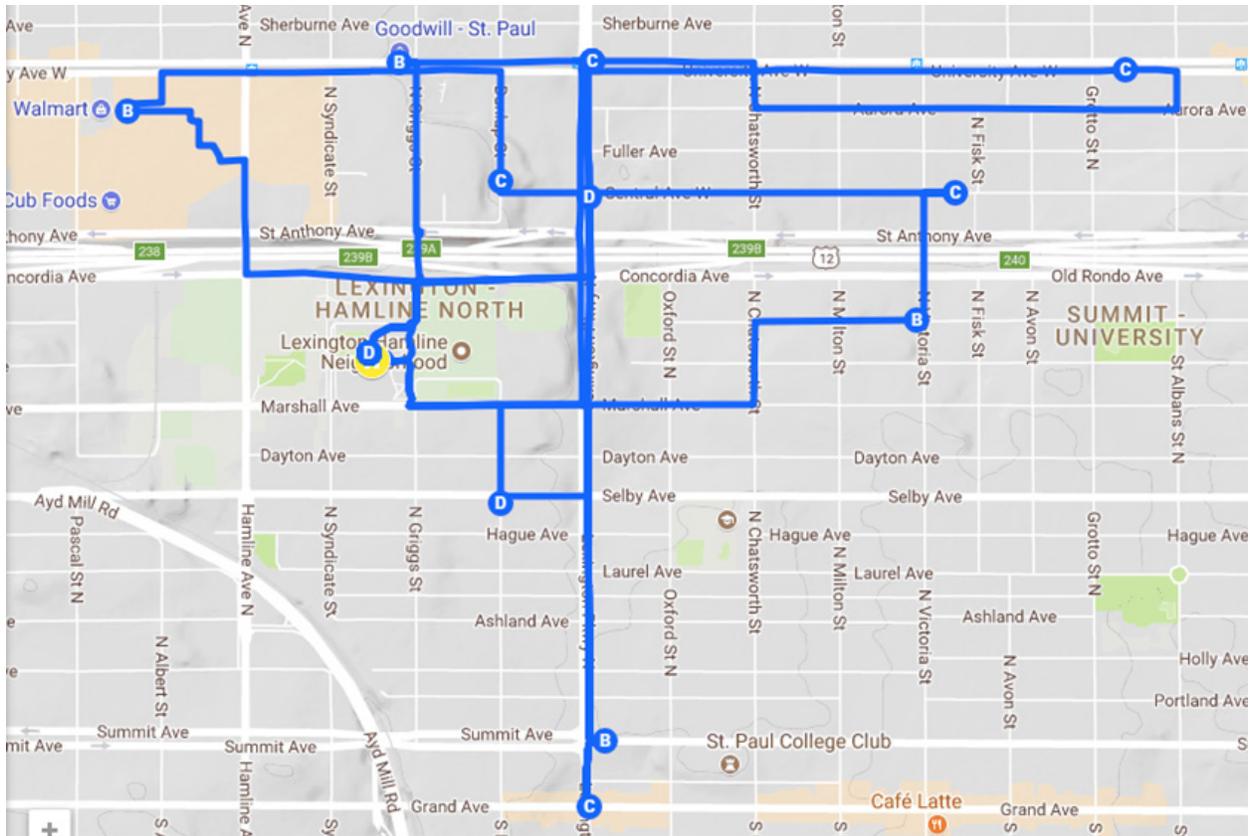
Objectives brainstormed by participants

Workshop participants brainstormed a number of values and objectives based on their knowledge of the area and context provided by the

Friendly Streets Initiative and the City of St. Paul before heading out to conduct the walkabout. These objectives included:

- Preserving housing affordability for existing community residents
- Supporting businesses during future construction
- Improving health outcomes, including around asthma, diabetes, and healthy food access
- Improving pedestrian safety at the interchange and other crossings, including better accommodation for residents with disabilities
- Reducing speeds and aggressive driving
- Improving winter maintenance of sidewalks
- Making all transit stops accessible to all residents, including improving connections to the nearby Green Line Station
- Providing wayfinding and cultural/historical markers
- Preserving and improving parking options for cars, as well as delivery trucks and bicycles
- Providing more vegetation in public right-of-way
- Integrating more community art
- Reflecting the high number of youth-focused destinations in this part of the community



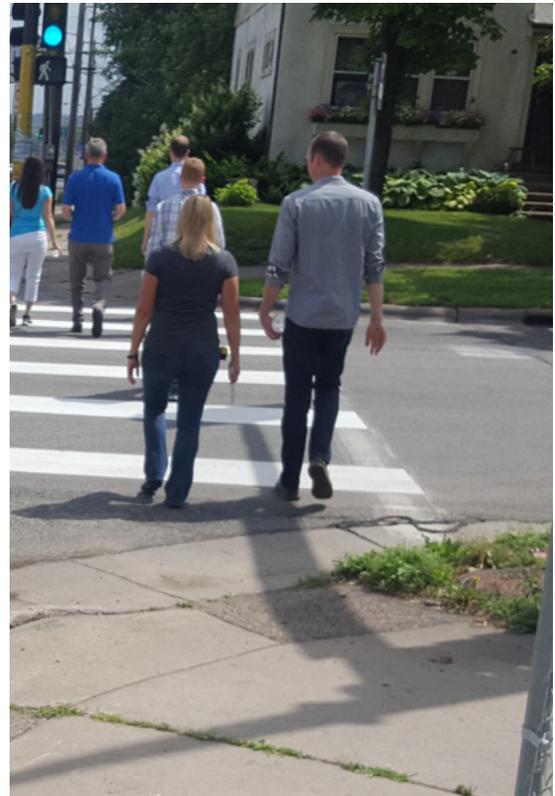


Walkabout

Workshop participants walked from Concordia University to the Lexington Parkway interchange to conduct the walkabout. The SGA team split participants into four groups, each focused on observing from the perspective of a person with different travel needs:

- Team A: A student and family walking to/from school
- Team B: A senior taking transit to/from church
- Team C: A person with a disability
- Team D: A person biking

All four groups crossed and observed the Lexington Parkway interchange and bridge over I-94. The groups then split up to observe conditions on the routes to different destinations in the neighborhood, before returning to Concordia University for discussions.



Observations

Participants made a number of observations during the walkabout regarding the safety, access, comfort, and overall feel of the Lexington Parkway interchange and area surrounding it. Despite traveling along different routes, similar themes emerged during the observations. These topics are summarized below.

Pedestrian environment on the bridge

Participants noted that proximity to high-volume car traffic, high travel speeds of vehicles exiting and entering I-94, and chain link fence create an uncomfortable environment for people walking and biking along the Lexington Parkway bridge.

Signal timing/phasing and crossing distance

Participants raised a number of issues for people crossing at the Lexington Parkway/I-94 ramp terminal intersections:

- Long crossing distance and short crossing times for pedestrians result in a two-stage crossing that traps pedestrians in the median.
- Protected/permissive phasing at the ramp terminal intersections allows drivers to turn left into the path of crossing pedestrians when pedestrians have a “WALK” signal.
- Lack of pedestrian countdowns and audible cues makes crossing particularly challenging for visually impaired residents.

Turning speeds and safety issues

Participants noted that the channelized right-turn lane (or slip lane) at Lexington Parkway and St. Anthony Avenue feels unsafe to cross on foot because drivers take the turn at high speeds.

Condition of sidewalks

Participants observed issues on the sidewalks in the study area, including narrow and inconsistent widths, uneven and broken pavement, and crossings that lack curb ramps. They observed utility poles, overhanging branches and overgrown bushes and other obstructions, as well as litter and broken glass.

Bus stop access and amenities

Participants observed bus stops in inconvenient locations, such as far from a crosswalk. Bus stops were also often difficult to identify because they lacked features such as a bench or shelter. Participants also noted that there were generally few benches, shelters, or places to rest in the broader area.

Allocation of roadway space on frontage roads

Participants observed low traffic volumes and high speeds on the frontage roads and suggested that there may be an opportunity to reallocate roadway space to calm traffic and create a safer and more pleasant environment for people traveling through the area. Participants also noted that the two marked crossings on the respective frontage roads, St. Anthony Avenue and Concordia Avenue, have different treatments and inconsistent messaging.



Ideas generated for the Lexington Parkway interchange and surrounding area



The workshop sparked a number of ideas for improvements that could be considered by the City of St. Paul, Ramsey County, and MnDOT to address the negative impacts of I-94 on the surrounding communities.

Smart Growth America expanded the ideas raised by participants during the workshop into the concepts outlined below. These ideas are grouped by implementation timeframe into short-term maintenance issues that could be addressed within one year, interim treatment strategies that could be tackled in 1-3 years, and long-term visioning concepts. The im-

plementation timeframe varies depending on the complexity of the project. For example, a project requiring multi-agency and stakeholder coordination and involving various funding sources, would likely take longer to implement than a project under jurisdiction of one agency.

The ideas below have not been endorsed by any agency partner and do not represent a consensus from the workshop participants or a recommendation of specific design treatments; rather, they are meant to spur further thinking and conversation between MnDOT, its partners, and the community.

Short-term maintenance issues

Participants discussed the following ideas for improvements that could be initiated and/or implemented within one year.

Lexington Parkway Resurfacing Project coordination

Participants identified an opportunity to coordinate several short-term improvements with Ramsey County Public Works as part of the Lexington Parkway Resurfacing Project. This would require convening MnDOT, the City of St. Paul, and Ramsey County staff to discuss the project scope and roles and responsibilities. The following improvements could potentially be incorporated into the resurfacing project:

- Rebuilding signals and improving signal timing (e.g., eliminating permissive dual left-turn phasing) to address the crash history at the ramp terminal intersections.
- Adding pedestrian countdowns and extending the signal timing to allow adequate time for pedestrians to cross.
- Adding stop bars and improving continuity and visibility of crosswalk striping.
- Exploring potential to relocate curbs as a part of this project or a separate project. Based on the field observations and existing traffic counts, there may be opportunities to reallocate pavement by introducing separated bicycle facilities and/or providing curb extensions to shorten pedestrian crossing distances.

Since the workshop, MnDOT, the City of St. Paul and Ramsey County have begun working toward integrating signal updates at the interchange into a MnDOT project. Improving pedestrian movement will be a primary objective in the design of the updated signal system. MnDOT has also programmed a project to address ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) deficiencies at the location.

These projects will provide opportunities for further community engagement to discuss how best to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians on Lexington Parkway in the context of the surrounding network.

Pop-up/demonstration projects

Participants suggested using temporary pop-up or demonstration projects to explore the possibility of a separated bike lane on Lexington Parkway and travel lane removal or realignment along the frontage roads, St. Anthony and Concordia. Pop-up projects typically involve community members working together to address neighborhood issues and demonstrate features they want changed or improved within public space. They provide a way to acknowledge the longer-term vision, get community input and build trust, and increase opportunities for engagement.

Near-term gateway treatments

Participants indicated a desire to make the bridge design reflect the values of the community through the use of gateway treatments. A gateway marks an entry point to a community and can include a combination of landscaping, art, and enhanced signage, or other identifiable features. The participants proposed incorporating Peace Poles or another design feature identified by the community. Depending on the type and placement of the gateway treatment, the County, City, and/or MnDOT might be responsible for installation and maintenance.

Bus stop relocation

To make bus stops more accessible, participants suggested coordination with Metro Transit to revisit bus stop placement and amenities.

Mid-term interim treatment strategies

Building on the short-term ideas, participants discussed the following ideas for improvements that could be initiated or implemented in one to three years.

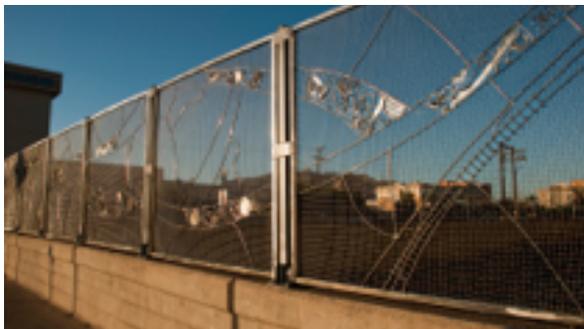
Wayfinding and signage

Wayfinding refers to information systems that guide people through a physical environment. Wayfinding treatments typically provide visual cues, such as maps, directions, signs, and symbols to help guide people to their destinations. Participants identified an opportunity to simplify street signs and names so that they only include the street name that honors the community history. Participants also suggested directional guidance for pedestrians that would deliver information at key decision points in their journey, such as distance and time to major destinations.

In addition, participants proposed adding wayfinding to the existing pedestrian and bicycle bridges at Griggs Street and Chatsworth Street, and improving the pedestrians and bicycle facilities along these corridors on both sides of I-94. Enhanced and consistent crossing treatments at the frontage roads on these corridors that run parallel to Lexington may help encourage people to use them.

Lighting

Participants suggested improving lighting along the Lexington Parkway corridor and surrounding area, including on the bridge, to improve safety and comfort for people biking and



walking. This could include establishing lighting uniformity for all modes, and making lighting brighter at intersections and other locations where pedestrians and bicyclists are crossing.

Bridge features

Today, the Lexington Parkway bridge is uninviting for people walking and biking and acts as a barrier to crossing I-94. Participants suggested opportunities to make the bridge more hospitable. This might include revisiting the number of lanes and narrowing the lane widths to slow down vehicle traffic, as well as providing separation between vehicle lanes and people walking and biking to make them less vulnerable. Buffered bicycle lanes are a relatively low cost improvement that could make the bridge more inviting to both bicyclists and pedestrians by providing separation from high-speed car traffic.

In addition, participants suggested exploring opportunities to improve bridge fences to make them more visually pleasing and reflective of community values. Several agencies across the country have developed decorative crashworthy barriers that make bridges feel more integrated into the neighborhoods on either side.

Street trees and green infrastructure

Participants suggested that there appear to be opportunities to consider reallocating lanes or on-street parking along the frontage roads to incorporate green infrastructure on Concordia Avenue and St. Anthony Avenue.



Long-term visioning concepts

Participants brainstormed the following potential high-level concepts for the Lexington Parkway bridge and surrounding area. These ideas are intended to spark further discussion about how to better address community needs, improve safety and access for people walking and biking, and reflect the character of the surrounding neighborhoods.

While fairly specific in some cases, these visioning concepts are intended as starting points, not an endorsement of or consensus around specific design treatments.

Widen the Lexington Parkway bridge and create a gateway to the neighborhood

Some participants suggested widening the Lexington Parkway bridge to provide additional space for wider sidewalks and safer bicycle accommodations, potentially also creating room for green space and public art. In addition to improving the environment for people walking and biking, this could also help foster a greater sense of connectivity across I-94 between the neighborhoods on either side, particularly if paired with placemaking improvements along Lexington Parkway on either side of I-94 with a similar aesthetic.

Participants also suggested installing archways over the freeway ramps at Lexington Parkway to welcome drivers exiting the interstate to the neighborhood and signal to visitors that they are entering an historic community. The archways could be designed by community artists or through input from the community to help affirm the cultural identity of the neighborhood and create a cohesive character that spans across I-94.

Establish a green corridor on Victoria Street

Some participants raised the idea to create a green corridor along Victoria Street on either side of I-94, and integrate it with the proposed land bridge over I-94 proposed by the community. This would create a continuous corridor of green space over and on both sides of I-94, potentially including community parks and a

recreational biking and walking trail. This would help provide a consistent message along this corridor that prioritizes pedestrians and bicycles. The corridor would continue to provide a connection for vehicles and emergency response services, but at a slower speed, potentially by introducing all-way stop-controlled intersections, or mini-roundabouts.

Create a Heritage Trail to acknowledge the history of the Rondo neighborhood

Participants suggested creating a cultural heritage trail through the Rondo neighborhood to celebrate the rich history of the community and acknowledge the damage caused by I-94. This could be a physical trail that crosses I-94, potentially integrated with the suggested green corridor on Victoria Street, or it could be series of sites with signs or placards at locations of historic importance for the community. These sites should include both visual and audio information to meet the needs of all community members, including visually impaired residents.

Consider integration of roundabouts at the interchange

The workshop project team suggested potentially integrating multi-lane roundabouts at the Lexington Parkway interchange. The purposes of the roundabouts would be to slow traffic while addressing the crash history at the ramp terminal intersection. This concept could include separated multi-use paths across the bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The roundabout concept would need community buy-in and approval to move forward. This would hinge partially on creating a concept that fits within current right-of-way to avoid taking land from existing businesses or homes. Some workshop participants expressed reservations about how roundabouts would significantly change the character of the area. If there is interest in this option, MnDOT and the City could follow the Friendly Streets Initiative's model by holding a community event and installing temporary pop-up roundabouts using cones or planters to get community input and reactions.

Workshop II: Dowling Avenue and I-94, Minneapolis

Background

The Dowling Avenue bridge over I-94 in North Minneapolis currently connects a residential neighborhood on the west side of I-94 to an industrial area next to the river on the east side. It is outside of the limits of MnDOT's Rethinking I-94 Study, meaning that there is no I-94 improvement project currently planned for the interchange. However, it exemplifies many of the safety and access challenges posed by I-94.

MnDOT and the City selected Dowling Avenue in part because of its proximity and importance in providing access to a major future development project next to the river. The Upper Harbor Terminal development will replace some of the current industrial use between I-94 and the river with private development and park areas. While the City, the Park and Recreation Board, and the developer team are still creating specific plans for the site through a series of community meetings, the current plan calls for a combination of riverfront green space, mixed-use commercial development, and a large amphitheater for concerts and events. The new development is expected to generate an increase in traffic in the area. It will also likely cause an increase in demand for crossing I-94 to access the riverfront on foot, by bike, and on transit, particularly during major events. There are no capital improvement projects planned outside of Upper Harbor site other than a short segment of Dowling east of the I-94 ramps. However, the goal of the workshop and this subsequent report was to envision improved connections to the Upper Harbor Terminal site from a variety of locations.

The non-profit organization Friends of the Mississippi River has studied possible connections from North Minneapolis to the Mississippi River for the last few years, including taking inventory of the conditions in and around the various freeway bridges over I-94 through surveys and other stakeholder outreach. Findings from this outreach included community support in the area for a pedestrian bridge over I-94. This outreach also identified key concerns among members of the community, including concerns about gentrification and displacement, as well as air quality.

The Workshop



The Dowling Avenue workshop took place on July 26, 2017 at the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board Headquarters.

Like the Lexington Parkway workshop, the Dowling Avenue workshop had the most sizable participation from government agencies, including the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, the Metropolitan Council, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and several MnDOT divisions. Other participants included representatives from the community, Friends of the Mississippi River, the Minneapolis Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and the team for the Upper Harbor Terminal.

Objectives brainstormed by participants

Before heading to the Dowling Avenue site, participants brainstormed a number of objectives based on their own knowledge of the area and context provided by Friends of the Mississippi River and the development team for the Upper Harbor Terminal.

These objectives included:

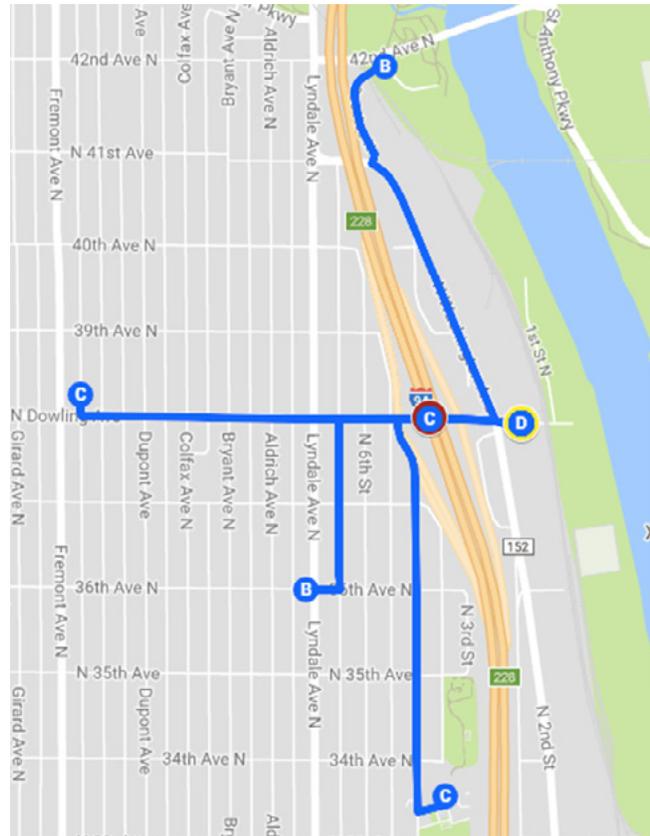
- Improving safety for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Decreasing conflicts between modes of travel
- Reducing the share of trips taken by single-occupant vehicles, while still preserving access for cars and trucks
- Reducing vehicle speeds
- Improving travel flow through the interchange
- Improving connectivity to destinations across I-94 and the river
- Improving air quality
- Increasing physical activity
- Improving access to jobs and services
- Preserving community character

Walkabout

Workshop participants traveled by bus from the Park and Recreation Board Headquarters to Dowling Avenue to conduct the walkabout. The SGA team split participants into four groups, each observing from the perspective of a person with different travel needs:

- Team A: A student and family walking to/from school
- Team B: A senior taking transit to/from church
- Team C: A person with disabilities going to an amphitheater event
- Team D: A person biking to Grand Rounds Trail on the riverfront

All four groups crossed and observed the Dowling Avenue interchange and bridge over I-94. The groups then split up to observe conditions on the routes to different destinations in the neighborhood, before returning to the Park and Recreation Board Headquarters for the afternoon discussion.



Observations

Participants made a number of observations during the walkabout about the safety, access, comfort, and overall feel of the Dowling Avenue interchange and area immediately surrounding it. These observations are summarized below.

Condition of sidewalks

Participants observed maintenance and accessibility issues on the sidewalks in the residential neighborhood to the west of I-94, including narrow widths, uneven pavement, and utility poles and other obstructions. They observed unmaintained weeds in the cracks between pavement panels, and litter and broken glass in some areas, creating an unpleasant environment for people walking that would be especially challenging to navigate with a stroller or in a wheelchair. While street lighting does exist along the corridor, it is high-level lighting that is not oriented towards pedestrians.

Allocation of roadway space on Dowling Avenue

Participants suggested that the right-of-way space on Dowling Avenue could be utilized differently to create safer and more appealing conditions for people walking and biking. For example, they noted that much of the available on-street parking on Dowling Avenue was not in use, though a more in depth parking study would be needed to confirm this observation. Participants noted that houses along the cor-

ridor generally face the side streets, many of which appear to have ample on-street parking, though the walkabout took place during the day while many residents may have been at work.

Turning speeds and safety issues

Participants also noticed cars taking right turns from Dowling Avenue onto Lyndale Avenue at high speeds, creating potential safety concerns for pedestrians standing on the corner and trying to cross. They observed tire marks on the sidewalk and damage to the traffic signal pole on the northeast corner, indicating that cars have driven over the sidewalk in the past.

Pedestrian environment at the interchange

Participants raised a number of issues at the I-94 interchange for people walking. The high travel speeds of vehicles exiting I-94 create an uncomfortable environment for pedestrians trying to cross the interchange. Some of the pedestrian signal push buttons appeared not to work, and the time allotted for pedestrians to cross the ramps seemed too short for people traveling more slowly. There is also no pedestrian signal for the free right turn on the northbound ramp off of I-94, forcing pedestrians to negotiate gaps in traffic in order to cross. Participants also observed a bus stop located on one of the I-94 ramps with no sidewalk connecting to it.

Ideas generated for the Dowling Avenue interchange and surrounding area



The one-day workshop and walkabout sparked a number of ideas by workshop participants that could be considered by the City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County, and/or MnDOT to address the negative impacts of I-94 on the surrounding communities. Smart Growth America expanded the ideas raised by participants during the workshop into the concepts outlined below. These ideas are grouped by implementation timeframe into short-term maintenance observations, interim treatment strategies, and long-term visioning concepts. Like the ideas generated during the Lexington Parkway workshop, the concepts below have not been endorsed by any agency partner or

private property owners and do not represent a consensus from the workshop participants or a recommendation of specific design treatments.

Rather, they are meant to spark further thinking and conversation between MnDOT, its partners, and the community. MnDOT and its agency partners each have criteria-driven maintenance and project selection processes in place to identify and address these types of concepts in a timely and equitable manner. For more information about how transportation projects are selected in the City of Minneapolis, see the links within the footnotes on this page.¹

1 For further information about how transportation projects are selected and planned within the City of Minneapolis, readers can view the following documents:

- The Minneapolis Capital Improvement Program (CIP), which identifies the projects the City will fund over the next five years: <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/cip/WCMSP-178520>.
- The Minneapolis 20 Year Streets Funding Plan, which details the approach, criteria and methodology developed to prioritize street projects in the CIP: <http://www.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/20yearplan>.
- The City of Minneapolis's ordinance on roles and responsibilities for sidewalk repair: http://www.minneapolismn.gov/publicworks/sidewalks/sidewalks_repair

Short-term maintenance issues

Participants discussed the following ideas for short term solutions to minor observed issues.

Improve sidewalk conditions along Dowling Avenue

Participants identified a need to generally improve sidewalk conditions along Dowling Avenue. MnDOT has already taken short-term steps, including removing litter and other sidewalk obstructions to create a more inviting and accessible environment for people walking.

Provide wayfinding signage

Participants proposed enhancing wayfinding signage in the study area, particularly to direct

pedestrians and bicyclists to existing trails and other bicycle route connections in the area.

Start conversations with Metro Transit about connections to the future Upper Harbor Terminal development

Participants identified a need for alternative travel options to and from the future development at Upper Harbor Terminal, including transit to connect the new development with downtown Minneapolis. Conversations with Metro Transit about future transit needs should be incorporated into the development planning so that future transit service needs are met.

Mid-term interim treatment strategies

Building on the short-term ideas, participants discussed the following strategies to address more complex issues along the corridor.

Improve pedestrian facilities along Dowling Avenue

Participants recommended replacing broken sidewalk panels and addressing gaps in sidewalk access, especially to transit stops. They also noted a need for more pedestrian crossings along the corridor, and suggested revisiting bus stop locations to coincide more closely with existing pedestrian crossing locations.

Provide an enhanced pedestrian and bicycle buffer on Dowling Avenue

Participants suggested additional separation between vehicles and people walking and biking along Dowling Avenue. They also sug-

gested revisiting the need for on-street parking, potentially reallocating some of that space to provide consistent separated bicycle facilities along Dowling Avenue for the entire corridor, including over the I-94 bridge.

Consider redistributing space for bicycle lanes

Washington Street/2nd Street is an important north-south corridor that ties this area to downtown Minneapolis. Participants suggested revisiting the cross section and potentially providing separated bicycle facilities to attract a wider range of bicycle riders. Acknowledging that this corridor is also heavily used by freight, participants suggested conducting a study to evaluate the potential impacts on trucks and other modes.

Long-term visioning concepts

Participants brainstormed the following potential high-level concepts for the Dowling Avenue bridge and surrounding area. These ideas are intended to generate further discussion about how to better address community needs, improve safety for people walking and biking, and support future development.

While fairly specific in some cases, these visioning concepts are intended as starting points, not an endorsement of or consensus around specific design treatments.

Create a shared use bicycle/pedestrian bridge over I-94

During the workshop, Friends of the Mississippi River presented on ideas raised through feedback collected from residents of the area, including a possible shared-use pedestrian and bicycle bridge over I-94. Participants revisited and further explored this concept during the workshop discussions. A separated pedestrian and bicycle bridge would provide a safe alternative to the Dowling Avenue bridge for people wishing to access the Upper Harbor Terminal from the residential neighborhoods on the west side of I-94.

Workshop attendees suggested different ideas about where the bridge could be located, with several proposing 36th street. Participants also had different ideas about how far the bridge should extend. Some suggested that it connect the neighborhoods to the west of I-94 with the future Upper Harbor Terminal development, while others proposed extending it all the way across the Mississippi River to provide better connectivity to the east.

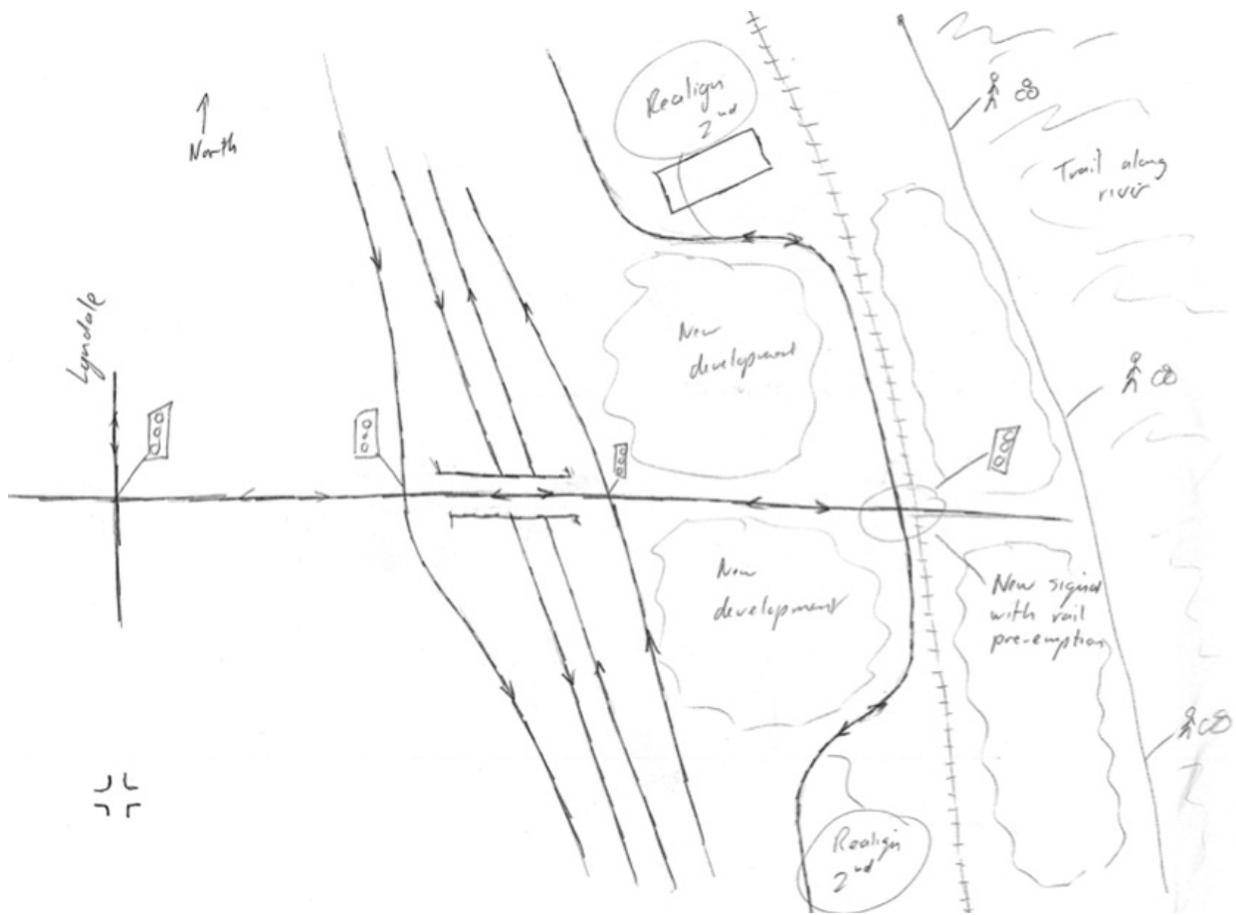
Expand the Dowling Avenue bridge to create a better environment for people walking

In the longer-term, participants suggested widening the Dowling Avenue bridge to create a better environment for people walking and biking across I-94. This could include widening the sidewalk, providing better pedestrian lighting, and potentially integrating vegetation and public art to create a more pleasant environment for walking and biking to and from the Upper Harbor Terminal development.

Participants also raised the idea of a wider land bridge over I-94 to provide space for parks on either side of the roadway. This could dramatically change the aesthetic of the area, making it feel more like a destination in line with the new Upper Harbor Terminal area.

High-level concepts for corridor improvements along Dowling Avenue that tie in with future development

During the workshop, Smart Growth America suggested a number of high-level ideas for intersection control and access along Dowling Avenue to spark participants' imaginations for thinking of ideas beyond the current conditions, addressing safety concerns, and accommodating vehicle and multimodal travel to the future Upper Harbor Terminal Development. The following section summarizes the four concepts developed by Smart Growth America.



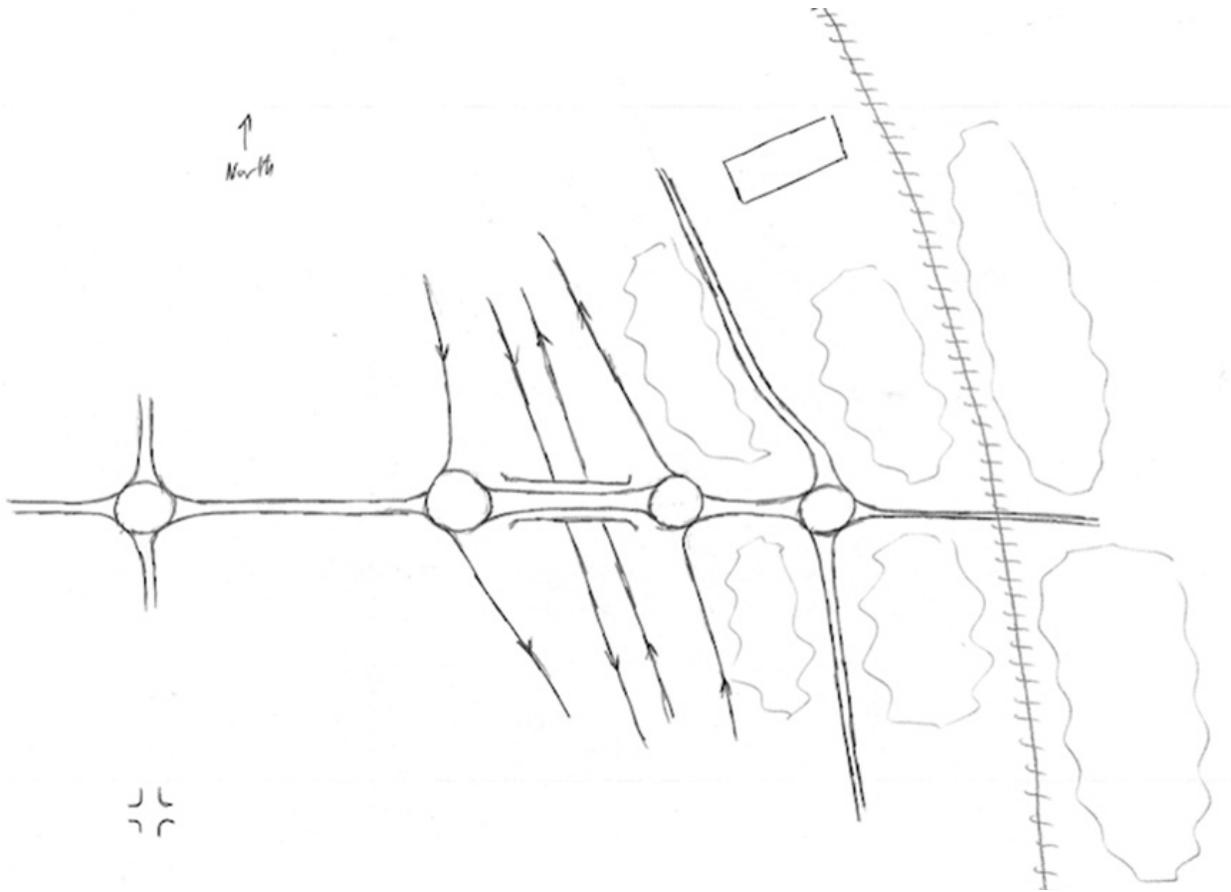
Concept 1—A series of signals with at-grade access to new development:

The intent with this concept is to create a combined at-grade signalized intersection at the railroad providing access to the new development. This also suggests the realignment of the Washington Street and 2nd Street approaches to increase the spacing between intersections and create large parcels for development in the northeast and southeast quadrants of the interchange.



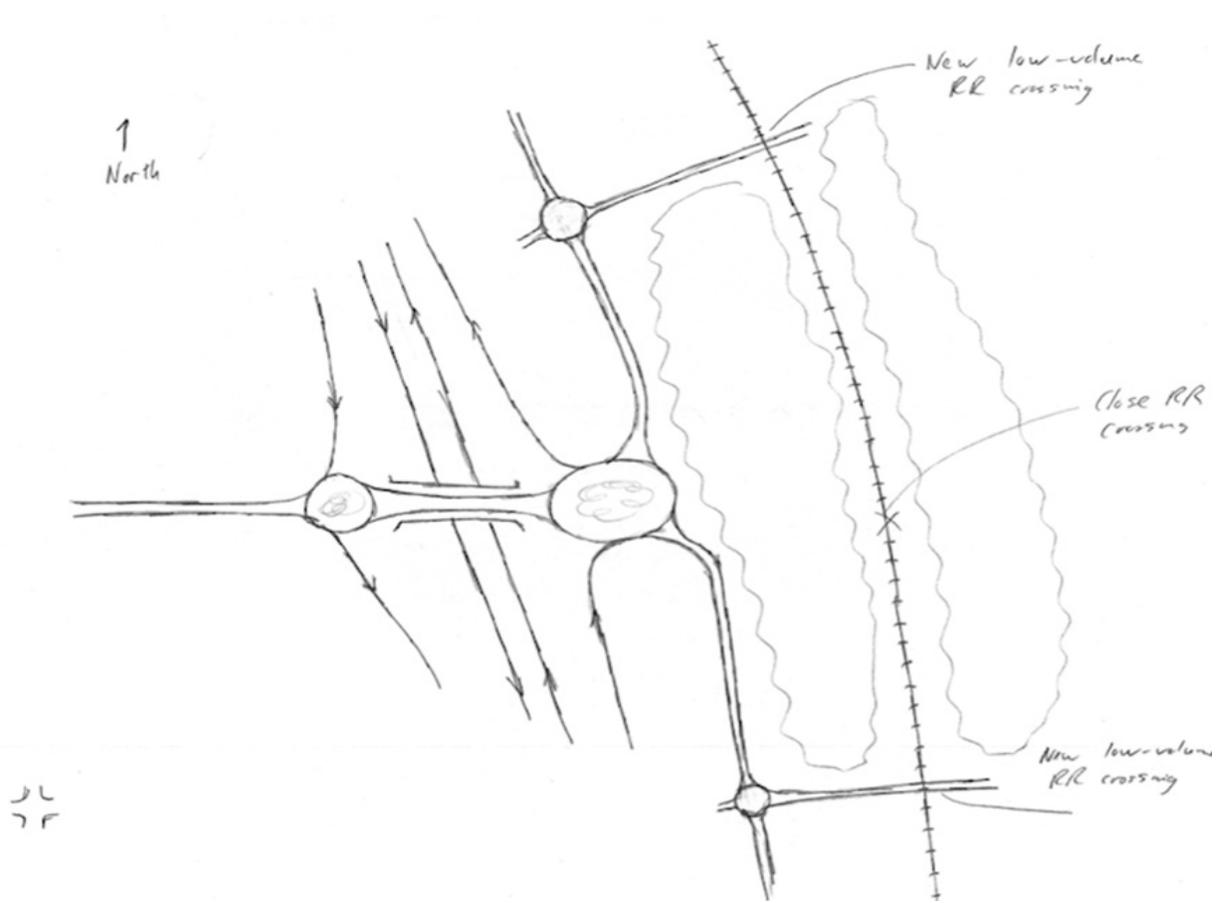
Concept 2—A series of signals with grade-separated access to new development:

This option is similar to Concept 1, but provides a grade separation for accessing the new development and removes interaction with the rail line.



Concept 3—A series of roundabouts with an at-grade access to new development:

This concept introduces a series of four roundabouts that maintains the existing at-grade railroad crossing.



Concept 4—A series of roundabouts with a combined ramp terminal/frontage road roundabout:

This concept combines the frontage roads (Washington Street and 2nd Street) into the northbound ramp terminal roundabout. The intent of this concept is to provide two access points across the railroad to the new development. Both of these access roads would have narrower cross-sections than would be possible with only one access point. This would also create a different dynamic for development opportunities, particularly through larger continuous parcels.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

- / Expanding community engagement
- / Supporting affordability for current residents
- / Reducing impacts on local business during construction
- / Establishing corridor design guidelines in partnership with local communities
- / Ongoing coordination among MnDOT, cities, and counties



During both the Lexington Parkway and Dowling Avenue workshops, participants raised barriers and challenges to accomplishing the ideas brainstormed, particularly around coordinating across partner agencies. Participating community members also raised broader priorities and concerns around stakeholder engagement practices and neighborhood affordability.

While some of these issues and barriers are not specific to MnDOT or the Rethinking I-94 Study, MnDOT can play a role in acknowledging them through its work and, in some cases, addressing them through practices and broader policy change. This section outlines recommendations and considerations for MnDOT and its partners moving forward.

Note that the team developed these recommendations based on the workshop discussions and subsequent conversations with the MnDOT I-94 team. Unless otherwise stated, they have not been vetted with the workshop participants and do not necessarily represent or reflect their views and opinions.

Expanding community engagement

MnDOT’s Rethinking I-94 Study is an engagement-based initiative. It centers on working with neighborhood residents, community groups, and other local stakeholders to collect feedback and input about their needs and how to address them.

MnDOT Commissioner Charlie Zelle committed the department to “a new era when we put people ahead of concrete and community ahead of cars,” during his formal apology to the Rondo neighborhood. This community-oriented decision-making will be crucial to building transportation projects that meet people’s needs and addressing the damage caused by the construction of I-94.

Despite the Rethinking I-94 team’s efforts to engage community leaders and residents to

participate in the I-94 workshops at Lexington Parkway and Dowling Avenue along with transportation decision-makers, community participation was lower than MnDOT and the team had hoped. This outcome, while disheartening, offered lessons about how to increase community participation in future workshops and efforts moving forward.

MnDOT and the team also integrated a brainstorming session into the Dowling Avenue workshop to identify ways to increase neighborhood participation in future workshops in response to the low community attendance. The following sections summarize the outcomes of this discussion and provide additional recommendations.

Lessons from the workshops

Some of the major barriers to community participation likely stemmed from the timing and duration of the workshops, both of which took place on weekdays from 8am-5pm. While decision-makers and stakeholders from the cities and counties, Metropolitan Council, transit agencies, non-profits, and MnDOT were able to attend the workshops through their jobs, many community residents would likely have needed to take the day off work to do so. Others might have needed to find all-day childcare in order to attend. These financial and logistical barriers probably posed too great a burden for some residents.

Further, community residents who tend to be active around these issues may be facing engagement fatigue from participating in a

number of meetings and workshops that do not appear to produce immediate outcomes or change how decisions are made. This can be especially frustrating when residents have taken time off work or overcome other hurdles to attend workshops and forums, only to feel that their voices have not been heard.

This is a challenging balance for MnDOT to strike, as transportation decision-making operates on long timelines of several years at minimum. Ideally MnDOT wants to get community input in the early stages of these decisions, but doing so can feel meaningless to community members if their feedback during the early conversations has historically not carried through to later decisions.

Who to engage

Participants at the Dowling Avenue workshop brainstormed the following additional stakeholders to engage in similar efforts moving forward: churches, Metro Transit, people with disabilities, school systems and Safe Routes to School, businesses, law enforcement, community groups, emergency response, youth, elected officials, Parks and Recreation, stakeholders from the railroad, and local art and place-making groups.

Note that these groups are specific to the Dowling workshop, though some of them (or similar groups in St. Paul) could apply to the Lexington Parkway site as well.

Engagement Approaches

In light of these challenges, participants during the Dowling Avenue workshop brainstormed approaches for how to encourage greater community attendance at similar events moving forward and generally foster more community trust. These ideas included:

Holding shorter workshops at different times of day when possible

Workshop participants noted that it could be easier for people to attend shorter events in the evenings and on weekends. In some cases, it might not be possible to have the depth of discussion needed within a two-hour evening event; for example, it would be challenging to do a walkabout and in-depth brainstorming session in an evening meeting. However, MnDOT might be able to break up longer workshops like the Lexington Parkway and Dowling Avenue sessions into several smaller pieces.

Provide childcare during workshops and events

This may make it easier for community members to participate in sessions they might not otherwise be able to attend because the costs or logistical hurdles of finding childcare are too great.

Making it clear how the outcomes of the engagement will be used moving forward

Articulating clearly how feedback from community members will feed directly into future projects or policy decisions and providing concrete next steps may help encourage residents to attend.

Providing community members with incentives or accommodations to help them attend

This might include paying key community leaders a small stipend to participate, offering childcare, or otherwise making it easier and more feasible for them to attend. This also helps communicate that they are experts on their neighborhoods and MnDOT values them for that expertise.

Engaging the community to help plan workshops and events, not just attend them

Doing so can make a big difference in ensuring that workshops are responsive to specific community needs. It might also help show members of the community that they will get value from participating in the sessions.

Hiring trusted community leaders to act as liaisons

Lots of residents will be more comfortable engaging with a community leader whom they know and trust. Hiring liaisons to support engagement efforts can help build on the relationships the I-94 team is already working to cultivate with communities.

Reducing the number of MnDOT staff at workshops

Community members may be hesitant to raise ideas if there are too many MnDOT practitioners in the room who are unintentionally driving the conversations with their own ideas and potentially alienating community members by using technical language. The intent of the workshops is to listen and collaborate in exploring innovative ideas.

Meeting people where they already are

Rather than hosting separate workshops and events, MnDOT can continue to attend existing standing neighborhood meetings, school functions, or community events. This can provide an opportunity to collect feedback from a broader group of residents that would not attend separate events. It can also help demonstrate MnDOT's willingness to engage in communities' efforts in addition to asking for participation in MnDOT's own initiatives.

Providing translators at workshops and public meetings

This can help ensure that residents who speak English as a second language or not at all are able to provide input and feel more comfortable doing so.

Offering multiple ways to provide feedback

MnDOT and its partner agencies can collect broader input by providing multiple ways for residents to provide feedback on a topic, such as online or phone surveys in addition to in-person events. MnDOT has taken this approach before and gotten good feedback as a result.

Communicating following workshops and events to show residents that they have been heard

This could include email communications summarizing the workshop outcomes and the major next steps MnDOT plans to take, periodic updates to show progress, and follow-up meetings or events to delve further into specific issues or ideas generated during workshops.

Documenting and share all feedback received

For plans, projects, and other initiatives, MnDOT may want to consider creating and circulating documentation of all input received, who it came from, and how MnDOT addressed it (or why MnDOT chose not to incorporate it). This can help reduce concerns from community members that their input has not been heard.

Doing ribbon cuttings and community events for smaller projects

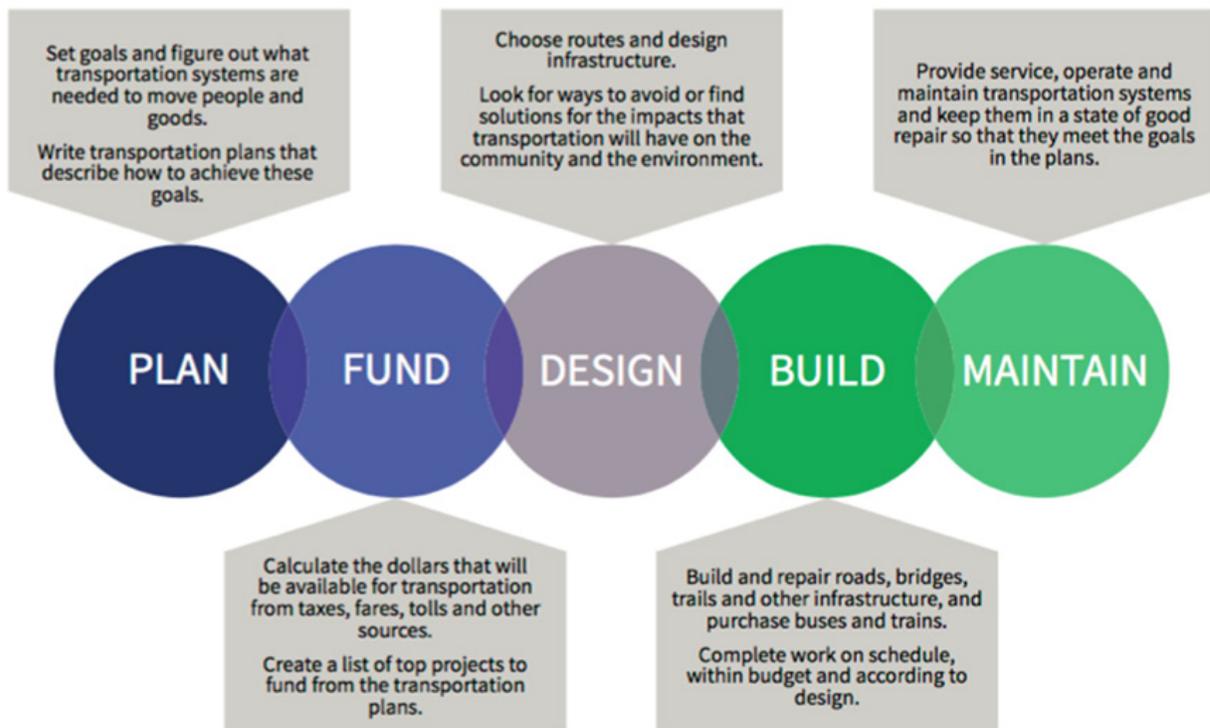
Traditionally, transportation agencies only hold ribbon cuttings and events for major capital projects. Doing something similar for smaller projects and pilot projects can be a great engagement strategy. It can help build excitement around broader initiatives while conveying to residents that MnDOT is accomplishing the things it has promised to accomplish.

How community members can help

State departments of transportation operate within a complex funding and regulatory context governed by federal and state laws. The process involved in taking a project from initial planning to construction can take years, if not, decades, with many decision-points along the way. The decision-makers involved in the initial planning for a project are frequently different from those involved in the design and construction of that project. While the long timelines and red tape can be frustrating for community members, they can also pose significant challenges for state DOT staff working to meet community needs.

As a result, residents, neighborhood groups, and advocacy organizations wishing to influence transportation decisions will be most successful if they expand their understanding of the processes and funding sources MnDOT and the cities and counties use to select and build projects. Knowing how projects are conceived and executed makes it easier to determine when and how to engage in order to influence outcomes, and knowledgeable community members can help MnDOT and the local agency partners better meet their needs.

The figure below shows the different stages of transportation project development as outlined in the U.S. Department of Transportation's "[Every Place Counts Leadership Academy Transportation Toolkit](#)." Each of these stages of a project process presents a different opportunity to engage and influence project outcomes.



Supporting affordability for current residents

Participants in both workshops expressed concerns about gentrification and displacement of current community members as additional development comes to the neighborhoods, noting that in some cases rising property values could force out residents who have lived in the neighborhoods for decades. When MnDOT and its partners invest in transportation projects that improve safety and access, those improvements sometimes contribute to increases in the value of nearby properties by providing more connectivity to destinations in the area. This creates economic value for the community, but that value does not always directly benefit existing neighborhood residents.

While MnDOT cannot adopt policies that directly prevent displacement, the department recognizes its role in contributing to gentrification through its investments and the challenges posed by transportation projects

that make neighborhoods more desirable. The MnDOT I-94 team is committed to being at the table for discussions about how to minimize displacement. This includes repeating and echoing the concerns of community members around gentrification and displacement to continue to give those concerns a voice in discussions with other government agencies.

MnDOT can also encourage its partners in local government to adopt local policies that could help reduce displacement of current community residents. This could include policies that limit or cap increases in property taxes for existing homeowners in the community or provide subsidies to long-time homeowners to offset the increase property tax increases. It could also include policies to preserve the affordability of current subsidized and naturally occurring affordable rental units.²

² Enterprise has collected case studies on preserving housing affordability near transportation projects that could provide a useful resource to the Cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis: <https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/download?fid=1945&nid=13975>

Reducing impacts on local businesses during construction

Participants in the Lexington Parkway workshop raised the importance of reducing the negative impacts of future transportation construction projects for local businesses. For example, while the construction of the Green Line in the area has been a positive step for the community in many ways, the impacts of the construction (such as reduced access, noise, dust, and unsightly construction equipment) also caused significant hardship for adjacent local businesses, some of which did not recover. MnDOT's own projects have the potential to cause similar challenges for businesses.

MnDOT may be able to help reduce the negative impacts of construction by making small changes to its own practices, encouraging its partner agencies to do the same, and providing education to help prepare the impacted businesses.

Require contractors to provide assistance to businesses

MnDOT could require that the contractors it hires provide assistance to businesses adjacent to projects moving forward. This could be as simple as requiring that they provide signage saying that businesses are open during construction so that businesses do not have to do so themselves. It could also mean revisiting requirements around maintaining access to adjacent businesses.

Provide coaching to businesses in advance on how to prepare for the impacts of construction

MnDOT can support businesses by providing them with information about the project

as far in advance as possible, and offering basic education and coaching leading up to construction to help them prepare for the impacts. This might include encouraging businesses to come together to speak with a unified voice in coordinating with MnDOT or other government agencies. It could also mean encouraging them to pool resources around advertising, outreach, or other approaches to maintain a customer base during construction.

Cities: ease requirements in zoning codes during construction to support businesses

Decision-makers in the cities can help businesses weather construction impacts. This could include encouraging the municipality to relax zoning requirements during construction for adjacent businesses, such as signage or parking restrictions.

Use temporary public art to enhance the area around construction sites

Placemaking strategies can be a great option for drawing customers to businesses adjacent to construction and combating the visually displeasing environment around construction sites. For example, the City of Raleigh used posters with artistic renderings of a finished project to improve the feel of the area surrounding the project during construction, while Cincinnati decorated planks and footbridges spanning gaps in the sidewalk due to construction. Portland covered construction barricades with banners and used performance art to draw people to businesses in the construction project area.³

3 The City of Milwaukee identified these and other examples in a 2010 study that surveyed how public agencies around the country have reduced negative impacts to local businesses during municipal construction projects. This study could be a useful resource for MnDOT and its partners: <http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/images/publications/workshops/2010-construction.pdf>

Establish corridor design guidelines in partnership with communities

During the Lexington Parkway workshop, the SGA team suggested that MnDOT may want to consider working with the cities, counties, and communities to establish specific design guidelines for key corridors in the region that fit the desired context. These guidelines would shape roadway design decisions moving forward and would vary several times along the corridor to reflect the values and priorities of different neighborhoods. Such guidelines could help inform how MnDOT's right of way interacts with intersecting local streets and adjacent land uses.

This would require upfront coordination on MnDOT's part to collect input from each community along the chosen corridors, but could make design decisions during individual projects easier and more straightforward, potentially reducing community frustrations and concerns and resulting project delays and cost increases.

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) recently developed new [Context Classification Guidance](#) that could be a valuable resource if MnDOT decides to pursue this. The new guidance will help FDOT decision-makers consider existing and future characteristics

such as land uses, building configuration, and street connectivity to ensure that roads are designed for the right vehicle speeds and road users. It provides criteria to use in determining the land use context of an area – choosing from eight context zones such as “urban core,” “urban general,” “suburban residential,” and “suburban commercial” – which then inform the types of designs engineers can consider for the project.

FDOT's guidance could help provide a starting point for creating design guidelines that reflect the varying contexts of specific neighborhoods along key corridors. MnDOT would need to build on this framework by conducting conversations with the communities to draw out and incorporate their specific goals, needs, and the character they want to reflect.

In addition to the guidance on how the street would function, an inter-governmental agreement on the design guidelines could help spell out roles and responsibilities for landscaping agreements, bike lane sweeping, and guidance on rock walls and drainage feature appearance and art in the right-of-way.

Ongoing coordination between MnDOT, the Cities, and Counties

Further exploring possibilities discussed during the workshops through the cities' formal street reconstruction processes would require coordination between MnDOT, the cities, the counties, and other partner agencies in working toward common goals.

As the state agency, MnDOT can be a leader in convening closer coordination with the cities and counties on a region-wide basis. In addition to working with local communities and their established policies for determining the appropriate multimodal facilities along and across MNDOT right of way, MnDOT can also initiate policy conversations with its agency partners around key barriers raised during the workshops.

For example, MnDOT can work with localities to build a shared understanding of what a road's role should be in serving local community needs versus regional trips, a major step in making tradeoffs during design. If a road's primary function within the context of the broader network is to serve shorter local trips between destinations, it may make sense to prioritize the needs of people walking and biking, while a road that serves as a major regional connection might require more focus on high-speed car, and potentially

transit, travel. Convening policy conversations with partners and the community upfront and building agreement about the priorities for the corridor can help make it easier to come to agreement on project scopes and design decisions later in the process. In some cases these types of decisions have been made already during local planning, while in other cases MnDOT can help initiate the conversation to ensure that it encompasses the full network of both state and locally owned roads.

MnDOT can also work with the localities to make policy decisions around where certain design treatments will be permitted such as establishing a region-wide policy around where pedestrian signal treatments like Rectangular Rapid-Flashing Beacons will be allowed and which criteria to use to determine whether they are appropriate. MnDOT may want to work with its local partners such as the City Park and Recreation boards to update policies defining circumstances under which public art will or will not be allowed in state, city, and county right-of-way and define clear roles in terms of who will maintain it under different circumstances.

APPENDIX:

WALKABOUT FINDINGS

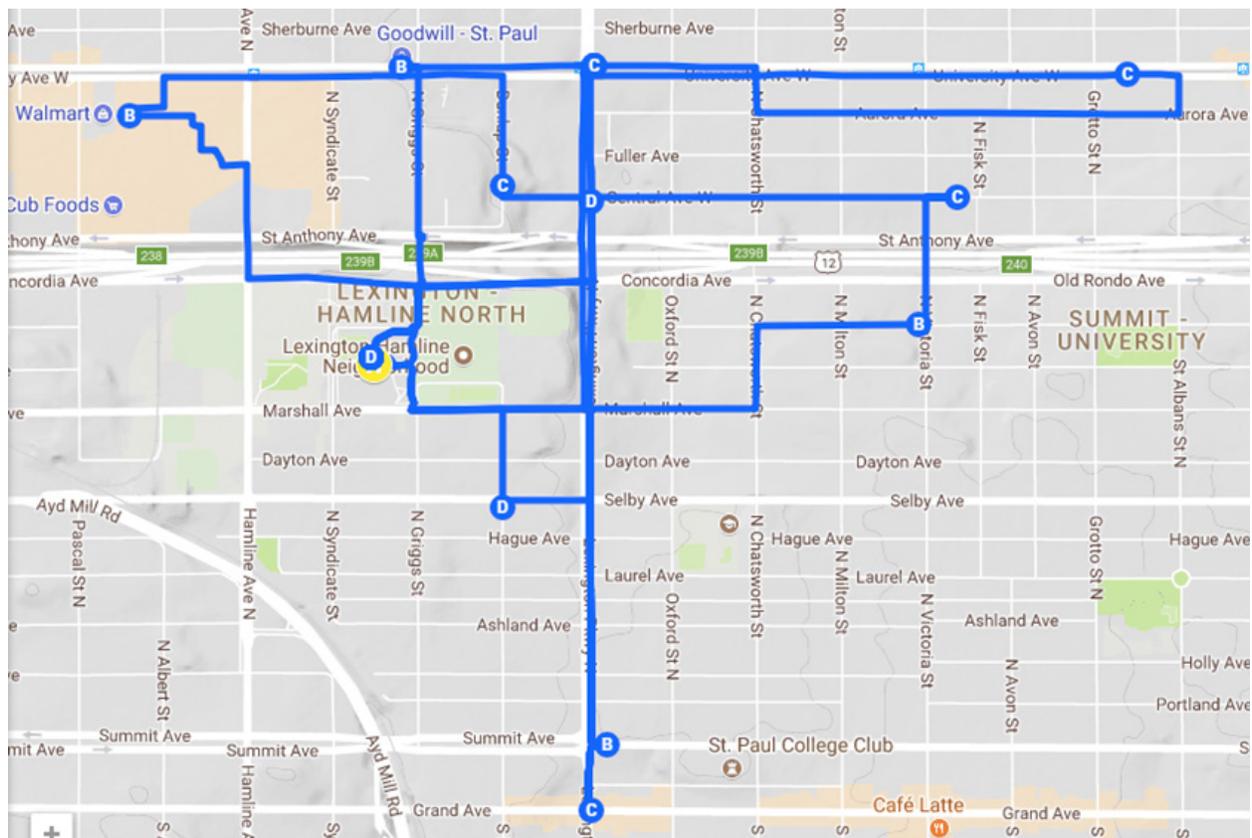
Lexington Parkway Workshop: July 24, 2017

Routes and perspectives

The Smart Growth America team assigned participants into one of four groups with different walking routes and “perspectives” to use in evaluating the area, including the following:

- Team A: A student and family walking to/from school
- Team B: A senior taking transit to/from church
- Team C: A person with disability
- Team D: A person biking

The following map shows the walking audit routes taken by each group.



Observations by group

Workshop participants gathered into small groups following walkabout to discuss their observations. The following section summarizes the major issues and observations raised by the four groups.

- Team A: A student and family walking to/from school
 - › Lots of school/institution land uses in the area
 - › Two-stage crossing: timing too short to make it across in one signal
 - › Sidewalk widths
 - › Overhanging trees
 - › Steep curb ramps
- Team B: A senior taking transit to/from church
 - › Lack of bus stop amenities
 - › Uncontrolled crossing at Lexington feels dangerous for people walking
 - › Poor sidewalk/pavement condition
 - › Free right turn poses safety issues for pedestrians
 - › Slopes/size of median is inadequate
 - › Poor lighting
 - › Bus stop placement could be revisited (some bus stops require multiple crossings to access – consider near vs. far side of intersection)
- Team C: A person with disability
 - › No audio cues for crossings
 - › Uneven/broken pavement
 - › High vehicle speeds in slip lanes
 - › No shelters, benches, or places to rest
 - › Inconsistent sidewalk widths
 - › Poor wheelchair access to pedestrian push button
 - › Short crossing times
 - › Conflicting needs for users with different abilities present a challenge
- Team D: A person biking
 - › Some wayfinding signage, but would be good to show destinations
 - › Lack of direct connections between destinations
 - › Bike detection
 - › Traffic calming needed
 - › Opportunities to reallocate space on frontage roads
 - › Bicyclists riding on sidewalks
 - › Lighting insufficient at night

