

# HENNEPIN COUNTY

## MINNESOTA

## Active Transportation Committee

Date: Monday, January 27, 2025

Time: 4 – 6 p.m.

Location: Microsoft Teams conference call

### Committee Members:

- Tammy McLemore, Dist. 1
- ✓ Nicole Armstrong, Dist. 1
- ✓ Billy Binder, Dist. 2
- ✓ Seth Stattmiller, Dist. 2
- vacant, Dist. 3
- Dave Carlson, Dist. 3
- Larissa Lavrov, Dist. 4
- Haley Foydel, Dist. 4
- ✓ Lou Dzierzak, Dist. 5
- ✓ Henrik Kowalkowski, Dist. 5
- ✓ Luke Van Santen, Dist. 6
- vacant, Dist. 6
- ✓ Greg Anderson, Dist. 7
- ✓ Clara Sandberg, Dist. 7

### Ex-Officio Members:

- ✓ Jordan Kocak, HC Public Works
- ✓ Dan Patterson, HC Public Works
- ✓ Tristan Trejo, MnDOT

### Guests:

- ✓ Jason Staebell, HC Public Works
- ✓ Kristine Stehly, HC Public Works
- ✓ Andrew Montgomery, Damon Farber
- ✓ John Chelikowsky, resident
- ✓ John Jarvis, resident
- ✓ Craig Vaughn, TC^2
- ✓ Steve Elmer, Metropolitan Council
- ✓ Julie Aldrich, MPRB
- ✓ Nick Turner, Alliant Engineering

## Notes

### • Introduction of new members

**4:02-4:11**

- Chair Greg Anderson welcomed two new members:
  - Seth Stattmiller introduced himself as the new ATC member from District 2. Seth is the owner of Recovery Bike Shop. He bikes as his main form of transportation.
  - Nicole Micheel Armstrong lives in Robbinsdale. She runs and bikes fairly frequently. In her day job she works with people with varying disabilities.
- Lou Miranda has resigned from the ATC.
- The rest of the ATC members introduced themselves and their history with the Active Transportation Committee.

- **Approval of the December 2024 minutes** **4:11 – 4:13**

  - Billy Binder moved to approve the December 2024 meeting minutes. Henrik Kowalkowski seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by voice vote with one abstention.
  
- **Midtown Greenway trail expansion** **4:13 – 4:36**

  - Steve Elmer from the Metropolitan Council introduced himself as the project manager for the project and consultant Craig Vaughn from TC<sup>2</sup>.
  - The idea of extending the Midtown Greenway has been around for decades, since the Greenway opened in 2000.
  - Study created by the Legislature to investigate extension. Out of Omnibus Transportation Finance law in 2023. It gave limits to the project.
  - The intent is to extend the shared bike and pedestrian trail east into St. Paul across the Mississippi on Canadian Pacific Kansas City short line bridge parallel 94 toward Allianz Field. Need to include spur northwesterly parallel 94 to the U of M at 27<sup>th</sup> Ave SE.
  - Portions of it would be adjacent railway, portions would go next to streets.
  - Purpose is to develop conceptual plan for extending the greenway to provide new transportation and recreational opportunity and to advance the concept into project development.
  - Currently in Phase I, Pre-Planning from November 2024 to March 2025
    - Review local and regional plans and implications for construction and maintenance
    - Existing conditions review
    - Develop project base map
  - Phase II, conceptual planning and design February 2025 to September 2025
    - 3 parallel efforts
      - Concept layout for preferred alignment
      - Phasing analysis of trail segments to determine timing and interim alignments
      - Analysis of three design concepts for the Short Line rail bridge or independent crossing of the Mississippi River. Retrofit and rehab with trail and rail; full reconstruct of bridge on existing piers for trail only; contingency to the preferred alignment potential for future trail-only crossing near the existing bridge.
  - Phase III, summarization and conclusion August to December 2025
    - Lay out detailed steps to complete design and project approvals and permits
    - Land purchase or easement requirements
    - Identify government roles for leading project environmental review, permitting and construction for owning, operating and/or maintaining the trail
    - Phasing plan and timeline for implementing segments on or off the rail corridor
    - Documents steps involved for potential abandonment of any rail line segments
    - Comprehensive Final Report that documents and summarize the overall conceptual planning process, including outreach and engagement activities.
  - Canadian Pacific Kansas City is the owner of the corridor, the railroad is the Minnesota Commercial Railroad, they run traffic across bridge into Minneapolis. Because it's so important to the project, we have a subconsultant to act as key liaison between the two

railroads and the project team. The tasks are interwoven between planning and design. They would take lead role in identifying phasing and timing for on-rail corridor alignments.

- Craig Vaughn with Transportation Collaborative Consultants, subconsultant to Kimley-Horn. The other subconsultant is Michael Baker International for the rail portion.
- Engagement and outreach
  - Technical work group assembled
    - Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
    - Minneapolis transportation planning and programming
    - St. Paul Public Works
    - MnDOT rethinking 94
    - Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority
    - Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority
    - Metropolitan Council
    - Regulatory and permitting agencies
    - City districts/ward, neighborhoods
    - Community stakeholders and advocacy groups
  - Engagement and outreach methods
    - Project information fact sheet
    - Online surveys and interactive mapping
    - Pop-up meetings along or near potential corridor
    - Neighborhood organization presentations
    - Potential open house(s); need to determine whether that's appropriate for this project
- Luke Van Santen: This is so exciting. Hopefully it will move beyond planning. On the eastern end will there be a connection to the Ayd Mill Road trail? Steve Elmer: That isn't specifically part of this project scope, but we certainly would have that in mind as a possible future connection. It is in St. Paul's plan. We certainly would not want to do anything to preclude that. Craig Vaughn: In one of our initial meetings with St. Paul they did bring that to our attention.
- Seth Stattmiller: Any plans to connect to East River Road bike path? Steve Elmer: The consultant team will be looking specifically at that. The trick will be to get back up to the rail corridor if the trail-only facility ends up being the only viable option.
- Nicole Micheel Armstrong: Are you guys consulting with the University or people commuting to there? Steve Elmer: We undoubtedly will be meeting with someone from the University, specifically on the spur. The University owns a lot of land there, and with the expansion of the local park (Luxton Park) at the end of the spur. Steve Vaughn: In talking with Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, we talked about connections near the park and the local network. The University wasn't top of mind, so thanks for the reminder.

- **Grand Rounds Missing Link**

**4:36 – 5:08**

- Julie Aldrich from Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board introduced herself and Andrew Montgomery from Damon Farber, who is consulting on the project. Carrie Christensen

updated the Active Transportation Committee on the project a while back and has since left the Park Board.

- It's a 140-year-old trail gap in the Grand Rounds, near the eastern border of Minneapolis north of the Mississippi River. It's a complex urban condition with railways, roadways and parcel ownership.
- Goes from Stinson Parkway and St. Anthony Parkway in Northeast Minneapolis to East River Road and Franklin Avenue in Southeast Minneapolis.
- 2009 master plan was not adopted due to lack of interagency agreement on alignment.
- Planning was revisited in 2019.
- The Park Board has \$800,000 to \$1.5 million for implementation from 2024 to 2027 for design, acquisition and construction. The full project will be close to \$30 million.
- Andrew Montgomery with Damon Farber is consulting on this along with Toole and HDR. Did charrette in May 2024 along with an open house.
- Developed preferred concept plan and alignment to be published soon; we will ask for online input.
- Open house in Saint Anthony Village next week.
- Alignment is fully off-street, which is a change from previous versions in Saint Anthony Village.
- Some big ideas to match the rest of Grand Rounds.
- Andrew walked through the concept:
  - North end 12-foot trail off-street without road reconstruction on north side of road.
  - Separate sidewalk
  - At New Brighton Blvd, includes safety improvements with reduced turn radii, pedestrian overpass, amenities within Trillium Park
  - Connects to Diagonal Trail
  - Width reduction at golf course
  - Improvements at Gross Golf Course to become a trailhead in addition to its use as a golf course
  - At Ridgway Parkway, showing wayfinding. Trail exists under 35W.
  - At Industrial and Broadway, one of Andrew's favorite parks of the project, replace two of four lanes with bike trail and linear park. It's going to start to feel like the parkway you find elsewhere in Minneapolis. Imagine biking through a prairie, but also an industrial landscape. We currently don't have Grand Rounds in an industrial area.
  - At Hennepin Avenue, intersects with county's current 4- to 3-lane conversion. Proposing to bump up the curb and consolidate the trail with sidewalk on south side of Hennepin, going west to 27<sup>th</sup> as the preferred alternative.
  - If we can get an easement with the University of Minnesota, we can keep the boulevard trees, get a trail in.
  - Luke Van Santen: Love the 12-foot widths!
  - Showing closure of redundant road on south end, would replace with neighborhood park and trail.
  - New park on north side of railyard with picnic pavilion, overlooks, boardwalk. One concept is a bridge over the Burlington Northern Santa Fe mainline with only trail. Another option includes motor vehicle traffic going under the rail line.

- Connects south to Kasota. Another consultant looking at potential bridge over railyard to near Surly Brewing.
  - Partial reconstruct of Fourth Street, on the south side to create off-street facility and sidewalk.
  - Then south on 27<sup>th</sup>, which is a county road (CSAH 5). Trying to carry off-street facility and sidewalk on east side. Raised crossings at Essex and Delaware. There are some grade challenges to be ironed out around 20 percent design; we're at about 10 percent now.
  - Then meet up with the spur Midtown Greenway extension you just heard about. It'll be incredible if we can get both of those projects built.
  - Follow historic rail alignment near Luxton Park, then bridge over 94 with a protected bikeway with minimal modifications to the bridge.
  - Roundabout study at Franklin and 27<sup>th</sup>. We're trying to limit it to four-legged roundabout with East River Road T-ing into Franklin on the south side just east of the roundabout. It's a roundabout that also functions as part of the Grand Rounds open space network. Overlook of Bridal Veil Falls.
- Billy Binder: That is a great deal of work. For years and years and years the Village of St. Anthony was opposed to routing the Grand Rounds through the village. What's changed? Why are they saying yes? Andrew Montgomery: We've had a few working sessions with their council. They have a new mayor. They have grant funding for an active transportation plan and they see the Grand Rounds as a way to spearhead that idea, particularly with an off-street option. Billy: It's fundamental to get it off-street to be what the Grand Rounds should be. Looking forward to that.
  - Jordan Kocak: There's public engagement that will be kicking off. Looking ahead to next steps, what could the committee expect? This is high-level conceptual, will you be drilling down to individual projects. Will it be more specific segments coming forward or more of this concept development before specific segments? Andrew Montgomery: This effort is to develop a cost estimate, strong concept plan and implement a phase I project using that \$6 million. We haven't gotten to that concept yet. We want to make sure it's solid and we have public input before that. Will be going to MPRB and partners for approval. We would be bringing a Phase I project to this group once we get past the 10 percent design phase.
  - Seth Stattmiller: This is the coolest thing ever. What do you think stands in the way of this, the things you're most afraid of? Andrew Montgomery: In my mind it's the rail crossings. They're the reasons it's a 140-year gap. This was thought of in the 1880s and that's why we don't have a Grand Rounds — we have a Grand Crescent. Julie Aldrich: The railroad is first in my mind, but also there's a fair amount of complexity, including acquisition. Not necessarily becoming the owner, but other ways such as easements. It can take time to work through those components. That can push things to 10 or 15 years instead of three to five. The dollars never go as far as we'd like. At some point we need to take a close look at how to implement. This establishes the vision, but getting into nuts and bolts, there might be utility work that weren't foreseen and we need to adjust. Not necessarily barriers, but possibly delays. But that timing may allow use to seek funding. But without this concept vision none of it moves forward.
  - Billy Binder: I've been working on completing the Grand Rounds for years. If we can get the golf course to 35W you can literally go from St. Anthony Parkway all the way through

St. Anthony on the parkway to 35W with just MPRB and St. Anthony. If we can get that done and underway that would be really significant without too much difficulty with the railways further down. Go from north to south at this point. Andrew Montgomery: We applied for \$1.5 million with National Scenic Byways for just that segment. It makes sense to work from the ends so segments aren't isolated. Keep your fingers crossed for us.

- Seth Stattmiller: Is that to say the pieces will proceed before a full connected plan is complete? Andrew Montgomery: Yes, it will be incremental. Cost-estimated in 2019 for \$30 million, probably \$40 million now. MPRB has \$6 million now. It's probably 20 years.
- Jordan Kocak: There are a number of county roads the alignment intersects or runs on. Lot of opportunities to partner with MPRB. In our Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is Kenzie Terrace reconstruction up to St. Anthony Boulevard. I've been involved with the project and coordinating with MPRB project managers to be sure we don't miss opportunities like that. I think there are others not yet in the CIP but not too far off. Another in the CIP is reconstruction of Industrial where it meets Hennepin. Hopefully MPRB will be able to take advantage to build parts of it and at less cost. I think the county will have a substantial role in how this gets built.

- **Minnetonka Boulevard Reconstruction Phase 2**

**5:08 – 5:26**

- Jason Staebell from Hennepin County Transportation Design introduced himself, the Minnetonka Boulevard Phase II project and Nick Turner, who is the consulting project manager from Alliant Engineering.
- Just getting started on the project. No design yet.
- In St. Louis Park, CSAH 5, Minnetonka Boulevard project. Phase I from 100 east to just past France Ave in Minneapolis is under construction now. Phase II is Xylon to Vernon Avenue. It's about 1.8 miles.
- Existing conditions
  - Generally two-lane with some left and right turn lanes
  - On-street bike lanes
  - Boulevards
  - Sidewalks
- Scope
  - Full reconstruction
  - Improve bike and ped facilities
  - Signalized Intersection improvements at Texas, Louisiana, Hampshire, Dakota, Vernon
  - Updating drainage to meet current and future needs
  - City will replace water mains and sanitary sewer updates. Corridor has had newsworthy breaks in the past few years.
- Timeline
  - Preliminary design in 2025, including outreach
    - Doing survey, traffic counts. Expect outreach in February or March to learn what issues people have on the corridor and find ways to address those.
  - Final design 2026
  - Construction in 2027 to 2028

- Seth Stattmiller: Are there any lessons learned from Phase I? Will that be cut and paste?  
Jason Staebell: They are different. The CSAHs 5 and 25 intersection was very complex. Phase I simplifies that a lot. The main part was four-lane undivided. We're putting in three-lane with shared use paths. For Phase II, don't know whether we'll go to three lane – maybe some turn lanes in places – but we may keep it a two-lane. Seth: Plan to connect to Cedar Lake Trail at Xylon? Jason: Yes. City has desire to connect that. We'll look at whether that's part of our project or something we can set up for the city to do later. Seth: Will it stay with bike lanes? Jason: Generally I'd say it'll be protected, we don't know exactly how yet. I don't think it'll be unprotected on-street bike lanes.
- Greg Anderson: Is the railroad bridge an issue? Jason Staebell: It shouldn't be too big an issue; we should have clearance there. But it's a railroad. We're always prepared for the worst.
- Luke Van Santen: Can you say more about why you don't think it'll be protected on-street? [Notetaker's note: I think Luke might have misheard Jason's previous comment about it not being on-street *un*protected.] Jason Staebell: The city and county have it as all ages and abilities. I'm just guessing at this point at where it will end up. Luke: Is curb protected adjacent the street protected? Jason: Typically behind the curb, doesn't necessarily mean right behind the curb, could be boulevard. Could be on-street protected by curb. Jordan Kocak: Based on best practices, the speed and volume of the road points to us doing something with some level of separation between motor vehicles and people biking. Luke: My memory of biking through there, as soon as you try to put a bike lane immediately adjacent a sidewalk then a boulevard before the road, you end up taking trees. If you basically took the current on-road bike lane and elevate it, you reduce those impacts. Jason: I see that, that's probably an alternative we'll end up sharing. Nick Turner: We'll be looking at options to reduce impacts to the trees. Whether the trail be close or we shift the centerline to create more space on one side, those will be options we'll consider.
- Seth Stattmiller: Are you planning to maintain 35 mph speed limit? Jason Staebell: The speed limit always is a fun one. It's set by state statute. We're going to design elements in the 30 mph range, so we'll have the tools to persuade people to drive less and we can go through the process to reduce the speed limit.
- Nicole Armstrong: Do you have more information on intersection with Louisiana? That's a bit busier with traffic in both directions. Jason Staebell: I don't have anything more specific right now. It's a once in a generation opportunity, so we'll look at options whether a signal, roundabout, something else. We will do that analysis later this year.
- Henrik Kowalkowski: I always forget the county roads are 35 mph. I think it's great thinking about the bikeways going in, it's not just the bikeway, but also how people driving feel and getting them to drive slower. Jason Staebell: Engineering is part of the hierarchy on controlling those speeds. Enforcement can't be everywhere at once. We try to design so people naturally drive at an appropriate speed.
- Luke Van Santen: I hope places where whatever trail design ends up being preferred, will there possibly be raised road crossings? Or will the bike path dip down? Jason Staebell: In my experience with Phase I, all the connecting streets are city streets. The city has not gone that route yet.

- Luke Van Santen: I don't know what the counts are, it seems there'll be a challenge fitting a roundabout at Louisiana, but maybe at Hampshire? Jason Staebell: It would be tight and probably would require property acquisition. We'll have to work through that.
- Jason: We'll work with Jordan and probably get back here in spring or summer. We'll get a Web site up and share that, too.

- **Member announcements**

**5:26-5:29**

- Jordan: For the next meeting, it'll be the fourth Monday of the month again due to Presidents Day. It'll be February 24.
- Jordan Kocak: Next month we're going to have Hannah Pritchard talking about the new AASHTO manual on bikeway facility types.
- Luke Van Santen: The 2025 BikeMN Legislative Day on the Hill is on Feb. 27. Registration is open now. I hope to see you all there.

John Jarvis introduced himself in the meeting chat: I'm here as a consequence of a timely Facebook advert for folks interested in listening in on ATC. I'm in the beginning stages of organizing a bicycle advocacy group in Eden Prairie. I'm currently trying to make sense of the quagmire of responsibilities between city, county, and Three Rivers groups.

I've researched pedestrian/bicycle plans for surrounding communities (Bloomington, Edina, Hopkins, Minnetonka, Chaska.) As best as I can figure Eden Prairie doesn't have a current plan. Perhaps 2013 was the last time this was broached. I'm reaching out to the City to see if that is a correct assessment.

In particular, I'm interested in the 2030 Hennepin County Bike Plan for on-street bike lanes on Baker/Mitchell Road. Also any other insight.

About me... I'm a 25 year resident of Eden Prairie. I use bikes as my primary mode of transportation. During the latter part of the pandemic, we were a zero-car family. We are currently a one-car family. I have road, gravel, fat, tandem, and cargo bikes.

- **Adjournment**

**5:29 p.m.**

- Henrik Kowalkowski moved to adjourn the meeting and Nicole Armstrong seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 5:29 p.m.

Next meeting: February 24 | 4 – 6 p.m.

Microsoft Teams