

Central Entrance Steering Committee Meeting Summary

Friday, June 11, 2021 | 10-Noon

Invitees

Ron Chicka, MIC
Mike Wenholz, MIC*
Rondi Watson, MIC
Adam Fulton, City of Duluth
Kris Liljeblad, City of Duluth
Cari Pederson, City of Duluth
Chris Belden, Duluth Transit Authority

Doug Kerfeld, MnDOT
Bryan Anderson, MnDOT
Michael Kalnbach, MnDOT
Jody Martinson, WSB
Dan Pfeiffer, WSB
Austin Hauf, WSB *
Samantha Lorenz, Terra Soma

*Not in attendance

Better Central Entrance Event:

- Significant feedback on future signals and/or roundabouts
- Discussion on not-allowing left turns out of access
- Significant number of transit stops
- Past studies identified a few new roadways
- Heard need for continuous and improved sidewalk conditions
- Heard discussion of Palm as backage road

Existing conditions and recommendations from past studies

Zone 4 is Arlington Ave. to Blackman Ave.

Comment that the layouts captured past recommendations. City (Adam) was asked to expand on local street connections. How committed is city? The City noted the whole area is potentially developable. Good development sites on north side. City has been hearing quite a bit about traffic speeds. Not having sidewalks on northside is a big problem. Many people are crossing in this area.

Enterprise car rental is located on north side with small lot. They store some vehicles in another lot. They have an agreement to park on other side of street and people are trying to cross in that area without crossing or signal (Ron).

Upham Road by Blackman is very close to Central Entrance. West of Upham is partially vacated. Numerous auto-oriented businesses are located on this roadway. Surprised it is not reflected more in past studies. May want to spend time to think about it with this group. There appears to be right-of-way encroachments. Local business is seeking changes. City is having some discussions with Pawn America. Upham Road should be highlighted during virtual walk to get feedback.

Zone 5 trails

- Missing segment between Blackman and east to 13th. Stream is immediately adjacent. It is an important part of the bicycle transportation network
- Pecan/Skyline Drive has a missing link in the mountain bike trail
- Cross city trail is in rough shape
- Affordable housing (Harbor Highlands) on hill across from MnDOT is important to connect to the mall along trail.

Should this project encourage the consolidation of accesses?

- Local access is important to businesses and we don't want to exacerbate speed issues
- Access modification can improve pedestrian movements
- We want to limit ped-vehicle conflicts but we don't want to continue speed conditions at 45 mph
- Get the speeds down with a design that encourages the safety for the people
- Myrtle Street to Central Entrance has very steep slopes (Myrtle is 20-25 ft higher)
- The frequency/impulse decisions to fast food is scary for cyclists along Central Entrance which warrants considering bikes routes that are off Central Entrance to limit the bicycle-vehicle conflicts

One-way Pairs with Central Entrance (WB) and Palm (EB) as an alternative

- Past study in early 2000s did not consider roundabouts (it looked at transitions between Anderson and Arlington on west end and Blackman and Pecan on east end) (MnDOT)
- Will affect the residential community in Zone 3
- Depending on traffic volumes potential to use roundabouts at Arlington and Blackman
- If we consider One-way Pairs as a long term solution we may want to do some microsimulations
- One-way pairs should be considered in the solution set, but there should be consideration about the neighborhood west of Arlington
- Date on drawing from 2002 pre-dates a lot of public engagement and industry practices
- Negative aspects of a couplet - seems too far toward accommodating cars compared to other users (it does not get to speed reduction)
- It does provide more room to accommodate other modes in the right-of-way
- From a transit perspective, one ways pairs are difficult as it increases crossings

General Comments:

- Being pedestrian on this corridor is horrendous most of the year. If traveling to the mall or Hermantown a few extra minutes is not horrendous

- Reducing from 5 lanes to 2 lanes slows down the roadway
- We need to get creative within the ROW
- Need to enter a distinct traffic flow and environment between roundabouts that will slow people down
- Part of it relies on thru traffic finding another way if speed is their concern
- If we double the signal operations to get people across, it may slow down traffic, but it doubles Operation and Maintenance costs
- Central Entrance has high traffic volumes, comparing 2019 counts there is more traffic on CE than I35 downtown
- Trinity is option from downtown to mall
- Many examples at 25K AADT that are better operations (find examples)
- Speed limit signs do not change people's speeds, drivers need to recognize the different space; look and feel changes people's behavior
- When its congested it improves pedestrian experience because people are going slower

Transit

- Bus stops are too close together (partly because the lack of sidewalks)
- Would like to see fewer bus stops but that depends on design
- Townhome residents go through trees to get to the bus stop.

Zone 5

Segment 5A Blackman to Pecan

- Few businesses, do not have access onto CE, not driving pedestrian
- Blackman needs a signal at some point, not there yet

Segment 5B Pecan to Mesaba

- More challenging due to terrain
- Northeast quad has Brewery Creek
- South side is a giant hill
- Pecan from CE up to school the school district will need to rebuild street and add sidewalk
- Transit dependent population on the northside
- Is there innovation (cost effective solution) in pedestrian systems such as a pedestrian bridge but who would maintain it May be solutions that are cost effective.

General comments:

- Existing old high school site is a nice recreational attraction and view
- Pecan and CE is project crossing for Superior Hiking trail and the Traverse trail (easements are getting in place for these)
- Traverse and Superior trails drive ped and bike traffic
- Trails, especially mountain biking and single track are driving visitors

Engagement

Samantha – How to redesign for people while still accommodating the car
Virtual workshops/engagement

Focus to bridge the past plans and analysis and the community pulse to put the tools that might be in the tools box and start to apply to Central Entrance. What are the tools we want to start with?

First part is focused on grounding to the human scale – bike and walkability. Meant to be informative and build common language and somewhat interactive. First day is project overview, high-level streets as places and explore some principals to street design – how through design do we achieve the speed we want, what does walkability mean, why do people walk in some places and not others. Use videos to be out walking. What are the challenges and experiences in the virtual walking audit. Each breakout will summarize through their top 3 ideas.

The second part builds on starter concepting ideas, spend majority of time in thinking through tools and big picture concept ideas. Goal is to involve community members in designing shared ideas. Building informed consent.

Questions/comments:

- Do you want steering committee members to attend? Yes
- How do you plan to announce this? Dan to be sending information to all email registrants and Steering committee
- Is sound available for the video and whether Samantha would present design?
No
- Samantha indicated the presentation would highlight other projects and locations that have tackled challenges
- Access to transit is important
- Is there a Vision Zero policy? No, adopted policy but working to get more local control. There was discussion on the Toward Zero Deaths campaign
- Initiative to lower VMT over time
- Duluth also is driving Safe Communities initiative – focus on walkability
- Arlington – apartment building with low income and people with disabilities accessing transit
- Duluth Heights Community Center north of Arlington
- Looking for a variety of examples to show what the potential might be for transit