

Central Entrance Transportation Plan Steering Committee Meeting Summary

Friday, July 9, 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
 Samantha Lorenz, Terra Soma

Doug Kerfeld, MnDOT*
 Bryan Anderson, MnDOT
 Michael Kalnbach, MnDOT
 Jody Martinson, WSB
 Dan Pfeiffer, WSB
 Austin Hauf, WSB
 Brad Hamilton, WSB

*Not in attendance

Meeting Summary

- Welcome (Jody)
- Summary of June 25th and 29th Workshops (Austin)

Transportation Themes:

Zone 1 – Trinity Road to Anderson Road

- Potential bike connection to Arrowhead Road
- Importance of connections to existing and future land use
- Addition of center median/turn lane or tree row
- Raised crosswalks, especially at roundabouts, however there is potential concern with EMS
- Roundabouts at Trinity Road and Anderson Road
- Opportunity for 4 to 2 lane conversion?
- Pedestrian connections missing at Mall Dr
- Gateway at Anderson Road
- Direct connection needed from transit stop to sidewalk
- Importance of ramps for wheelchairs access

Zone 2 – Anderson Road to Basswood Avenue

- Transit stop consolidation along with BRT?
- Evaluate a one-way pair
- Need mid-block crossing with median and possible raised crosswalk

- 4 to 3 lane conversion possible?
 - Center boulevard/median
 - Safe bicycle facility on CE to access destinations
 - Potential for above grade pedestrian crossings?
 - Multiple bike routes? (on and parallel to CE)
 - Reduce number of accesses/driveways
- Zone 3 – Basswood Avenue to Arlington Avenue/CSAH 90
- Bike/walk access for businesses on one or both sides
 - Traffic movements for businesses – enter on CE and exit on backage road?
 - Roundabout at Arlington – major crosstown route and connection to airport
 - Limited R/W – reallocate from car-focused to people-focused
 - Opportunity for placemaking in empty lot next to Arlington Avenue
- Zone 4 – Arlington Avenue/CSAH 90 to Blackman Avenue
- Auto-oriented businesses, lots of driveways, parallel bike route may be more comfortable
 - Upgrade the ability of Palm St for walking and biking
 - Connection to campus connector trail (Blackman Ave)
 - Do ICE studies
 - Create gateway at CE and Blackman Avenue
- Zone 5 – Blackman Avenue to Mesaba Avenue
- Roundabout at Mesaba
 - Potential overpass at Pecan
 - Create gateways at Pecan and Mesaba
 - Need sidewalk lighting
 - Controlled intersection at CE and 13th St
 - Mesaba is dramatic spot with transportation network, more complex, views, etc.
 - Potential for unique transit to help people up hill – public streetcar/funicular
- Other items (not zone specific):
- Key connections across CE: Blackman, Arlington, and Trinity
 - Identify key crossings locations and provide supportive crossings such as refuge islands
 - Create sense of the surrounding neighborhood
 - Lighting and streetlights
 - Create a more welcoming, safe environment
 - Incorporate user perception
 - Separation and safety – walking and biking for all ages
 - Evaluate number of lanes (4 to 3 lane)
 - Intersection designs – roundabout to slow speeds
 - Reallocate R/W and maximize environment for walking and biking
 - Detached sidewalk with boulevard
- Questions/comments:
- Adam: Interested to hear more about Blackman – access to cross? Easier turning movements? Supportive of land uses? Need to consider traffic volumes. Land uses around Blackman will continue to change. Anticipate

how we could make this a dynamic area, and more supportive of amenities and aesthetic improvements.

Samantha: Opportunity for this intersection to become a gateway and hub/node.

- Interest in reduction of lanes discussion. Is there true value in this? Is it even feasible?
 - Some modeling will be completed to assess this scenario. Traffic volumes are very high, but we need more information to see what is feasible. Will look at different areas/zones, not just lane allocation changes for entire corridor. There may be some areas for alternative lane use.
 - Capacity issues: some people may choose to use other routes if roadway is changed which will affect numbers. Models will be helpful with identifying potential changes. Impacts of improving walking or biking may also have an effect. Potential to use Streetlight data to look at these uses.
- Add crossings at Mall Drive to key connections. Currently people struggle to cross.
- Comments on visualization with layers of roadway improvement options:
 - The example shown compliments transit. Per Chris, this concept type encourages transit use. These types of changes are not far-fetched, they are happening in many places. There is potential for CE to evolve and look similar to this someday.
- Bicycle facility and pedestrian crossing options (Jody)
 - Lots of detail - slides will be available on the website.
 - Raised crosswalks – is this an option?
 - MnDOT: All are options to consider and should be on the table, but need to wait for more details based on traffic modeling.
 - City: Nothing is completely off the table, subject to ongoing discussion with MnDOT and what they want to handle operationally.
 - Maintenance is a significant consideration in the design.
- Introduction of initial concepts (Jody)
 - Concepts are very early and high level.
 - Looking for high level feedback. Concepts will be available to share with other groups for comment soon.

Zone 1:

- Fits within existing R/W. Would have to look at transitions to next zone where there is less space.
- City likes inclusion of one-way separated cycle track.
- Would like to look further at maintenance advantages/disadvantages of each option.
- 10 ft boulevard: additional trees are compelling especially in center median – this would require a large dialogue between the City and MnDOT related to maintenance. Widen boulevard in center if trees are planted there to keep them alive. City has had issues with education related to snow plowing and trees.

- There will be maintenance with any boulevard grass.
- Could use boulevard space for building stormwater best practices.
- Trees for calming traffic would be a good addition to meet goal of slowing down cars prior to Zone 2.

Zone 2/3:

- Significant reduction in R/W compared to Zone 1.
- Maintenance concerns with narrowing center median (gutters, catch basins etc.)
- Lots of tradeoffs with 54 ft roadway width, including snow storage – 79.3 total section width.
- 4 ft median does not allow center refuge. There are still crossing options if 6 ft median cannot be accommodated.
- Design features should accommodate mid-block crossings. Very important because of ped usage in this zone.
- Drainage and splashing from roadway is unpleasant – need large ped buffers between road and sidewalk.
- Typical sections without boulevard space do not provide a lot of ped comfort.
- Need workable ped space with buffers on BOTH sides of the street to be an effective walkway year-round.

Comments on one-way pair concept:

- Double the maintenance - more roadway.
- Split needs to be addressed and discussed through traffic modeling.
- Potential for negative effects to adjacent residential land uses (noise, traffic speeds, etc.)
- Would need long-term land use changes.
- Existing residential neighborhood already impacted by CE.
- Palm St. would have to be studied extensively for speed issues.
- Transit perspective – very bad for BRT, especially ped access concerns.
- Harms walkability/ped network.
- Could help traffic on CE, but could be a huge issue for Palm St.
- Good to have option on the table to illustrate to people what it would mean for adjacent streets. Are there opportunities throughout CE and adjacent for solutions in traffic calming and use by peds?
- Existing Palm St has a comfortable residential feel. Do not want to disrupt that.
- Current one-way pairs in downtown Duluth are not calm, and speeding is an issue. Many cities are converting these pairs back to two-way.

Zone 4:

- Mid-block crossing important.
- Not desirable to lose snow storage.

Zone 5:

- Zone 1 and 5 options are similar.
 - Lots of R/W.
 - Opportunity to define area when entering roundabouts – create a sense of place and entering into something that is not a highway.
 - Do not sacrifice boulevard.
 - Separate one-way bike lanes if possible.
 - Bike/ped facility width comparison - can we look at what Duluth Lake Walk is as far as biking and walking space?
-
- Next steps (Jody)
 - Refine concepts based on what we heard today
 - Work with MIC subconsultants on traffic modeling
 - Mid-late July: First Community Advisory Committee meeting
 - 8/13: Next Steering Committee meeting
 - 9/10: Steering Committee meeting
 - Mid-September: Community Advisory Committee meeting
 - October: Draft Report