

# Central Entrance Steering Committee Meeting Summary

Friday October 8, 2021 | 10:00 AM–Noon

## Invitees

Ron Chicka, MIC  
Mike Wenzholz, MIC  
James Gittemeier, MIC  
Rondi Watson, MIC\*  
Bryan Anderson, MnDOT  
Michael Kalnbach, MnDOT  
Doug Kerfeld, MnDOT  
Jim Miles, MnDOT  
Duane Hill, MnDOT  
Adam Fulton, City of Duluth

Steven Robertson, City of Duluth  
Cari Pederson, City of Duluth  
Chris Belden, Duluth Transit Authority  
Vic Lund, St. Louis County  
Brad Hamilton, WSB  
Austin Hauf, WSB  
Samantha Lorenz, Terra Soma\*  
Angela Christo, AECOM

\*not in attendance

## Summary

- Welcome and introductions (Austin)
- Project Updates
  - Traffic Modeling (Angie)
    - Angie provided an overview of the final traffic modeling results.
    - *See slides for traffic analysis key takeaways.*
    - Level of service and operations for one-way pairs overall is strong.
    - Question regarding LOS level of accuracy.
      - This is a planning level analysis - threshold volumes and ability of roundabout to process anticipated volumes.
    - Question: Have we done any study on systems where traffic is being diverted? Can city and county systems handle diverted traffic? Note and consider what 3-lane section will do and what impacts there may be to other systems in the area.
      - Regional model analysis showed which routes traffic diverts to. Diversion numbers are thought to be high.
    - If reduced to 3-lane section, it will take people longer to get through corridor.
    - Comment: One-way pairs - Any consideration of cutting Palm St length to avoid major residential impact? Would this impact benefits of one-way pair? Consider where correct tie in point is.
      - Would likely not be a huge change to model results. Should discuss tie-in points if this option moves forward.
    - Question: Were roundabouts evaluated with 4-lane section?
      - Yes - see slide 11 for analysis takeaways.
    - City of Duluth does not support one-way pair.
    - From DTA perspective, one-way pair would not perform well in terms of transit operations.
    - MnDOT: One-way pairs make sense from the traffic analysis perspective, also opens up opportunities for more bike and ped options on the corridor. May warrant further discussion.

- City of Duluth: If we study this more, it must be led with an economic analysis. Land use constraints are key. Would need to evaluate cost of initial acquisition and tax base impacts. From a neighborhood perspective this option is unacceptable. Understand the engineering aspect, but LOS should not be the only consideration.
- Comment that this plan's goal is to have a vision of what it can be. What is the best option for the overall vision. LOS shouldn't be the final decision driver. How does this infrastructure spur new types of economic development along corridor?
- Comment that one-way pairs can induce demand by improving traffic flow and increase VMT. Can decrease tax base, create incompatible land uses. Creates sprawl which reduces housing and business in the city. Cities across the US are reverting from one-way to two-way streets.
- Comment from chat: "It looks like the three-lane will divert traffic on to Swan Lake Road and Maple Grove Road; I suspect that Eklund will take more traffic as well. We have studied cut through traffic in this neighborhood for years, and this will add more to it."
- 3-Lane Section Concept (Austin)
  - Austin shared a 3-lane design concept for Zones 2-4 to show an example of what was evaluated (see slides).
- Land Use (Austin)
  - Austin shared the results of the retail portion of the land use scenario analysis (see slides).
- CAC (Brad)
  - Brad gave a brief recap of the CAC meeting held 09/29/21. Only one member attended, but the discussion was productive.
- Survey Updates (Brad)
  - Brad gave an overview of preliminary results from the online survey. There were over 150 general public responses and five business responses.
  - *See slides for key takeaways.*
  - Comment shared that the number of responses seems low compared to other projects. Need to discuss opportunities for further engagement.
    - Needs for additional engagement will be build into the public engagement framework that will be part of the draft plan.
- BRT on Central Entrance (Chris)
  - Chris Belden gave a presentation on the proposed BRT plans for Central Entrance.
  - Central Entrance is one of two corridors for BRT implementation proposed in the Better Bus Blueprint plan.
  - Comment: It is important to increase service and frequency in this corridor. BRT can accomplish this. Ridership in this area is very high and expected to climb.
- Guiding Values Discussion (All)
  - Proposed change to business access goal: "Maintain "reasonable" access..."
  - Comment: Central Entrance is a primary route to hospital systems. How does the design impact emergency services? This is a sensitive subject with people. Should review safety plan for city and look at evacuation routes. Central Entrance is one of the main routes up and down the hill.
  - Comment: Central Entrance cannot lose its dual roles as a main street and a through route up and down the hill. It is not doing either very well right now. The street needs to have character. We now have free flow on US 53 from the Twin Ports Interchange to the mall, does this reduce burden on Central Entrance? All design decisions need to weigh that dual role.
  - Question: Is values/goals framework useful to MnDOT?
    - Yes - hoping to take study and wrap into pre-design. Engagement framework is a big part of what is needed to move forward with design, this framework will help with that along with cross section recommendations.

- **Action Item: Tying in Pippi Mayfield to engagement framework discussions and future meetings.**
- Comment that green infrastructure may not be the best option in this corridor, do not want to create unrealistic expectations. Change goal to “Explore opportunities for green infrastructure...”
- Comment: Congestion is a real issue for traffic, air quality, and ped safety. Need to make sure we do not dismiss vehicle use. Look at functional classification system - as an arterial, primary purpose of Central Entrance is to move vehicles. Maybe functional classification should change?
- Comment: Need equitable balance of all road users. Right now, Central Entrance serves mainly just cars, needs to do more. Excelsior Blvd in St. Louis Park balances this well.
- Comment: Do we want this to be a city street or arterial corridor? Steering group needs to give direction, so MnDOT knows what to accomplish.
- Next steps (Austin)
  - Finish analyzing survey results
  - Finalize draft values, goals, and recommendations
  - Revise concepts
  - Complete draft plan and draft public engagement framework