



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

Guiding the Future of Transportation for the Twin Ports Area

April 4, 2022

Steve Krasaway, Project Engineer
Carol Andrews, Multi-Modal Project Advisor
St. Louis County Public Works Department

Subject: Woodland Avenue Mill & Overlay, Anoka Street – Snively Road
MIC Bike & Pedestrian Advisory Committee Recommendations

Dear Steve and Carol:

In July 2020, St. Louis County Public Works (SLC PW) requested that the Metropolitan Interstate Council's Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) review and provide recommendations regarding the following project:

Name: Woodland Avenue 2023 Mill and Overlay (County Project # CP 0009-565027)

Lead Jurisdiction: St. Louis County Public Works; **Other Key Players:** City of Duluth and DTA

General Description: Mill and overlay project for 1.5 miles of Woodland Ave between Anoka St on the north end and Snively Road on south. Construction, which was initially considered for 2022, is now scheduled for 2023.

Funding Sources: Federal and state funding

MIC's Related Plans:

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Duluth-Superior area, the MIC has adopted transportation plans that offer guidance for project development. Relevant plans include the MIC's Bike and Pedestrian Plans, and the Long-Range Transportation Plan. A summary of this guidance related to St. Louis County's Woodland Avenue project follows.

BIKE PLAN: Woodland Avenue is recommended as a “future bikeway” in the 2019 MIC Bike Plan. The Anoka to Snively segment of Woodland Avenue connects with existing bikeways on Wallace Ave, Snively Road, Oxford St, Anoka St, a proposed bikeway on Arrowhead Road, and the bike lanes added by SLC in 2019 on Woodland Avenue from Anoka St to Calvary Road.

PEDESTRIAN PLAN: Woodland Avenue serves as a pedestrian route, with existing sidewalks along both sides of the road except for the stretch between Minneapolis and Northfield avenues where there is a sidewalk only on the east side of the roadway. From an

221 West
First Street
Duluth, MN
55802
Tel 218-529-7541
Fax 218-529-7592
www.dsmic.org

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"all ages/abilities" standpoint, Woodland Avenue can be a barrier for pedestrians trying to cross the road, particularly during peak hours. The only marked pedestrian crossings occur at stop signs and/or stop lights at Arrowhead Road, Snively Road, and Oxford Street.

DULUTH-SUPERIOR LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN, SUSTAINABLE CHOICES 2045: This plan identifies goals and objectives that call for the transportation system to provide an integrated multimodal network that supports and encourages a physically active everyday transportation routine and promoting a more equitable system. Goal 4 states "Ensure the Duluth-Superior area transportation system is an integrated multimodal network that supports people and goods getting to where they need to go in an efficient manner." The plan calls for ensuring direct connections between modes of transportation. It points out that "the projected increase in the elderly portion of the MIC area population presents a real challenge to our transportation system. It is expected this will require expanded and/or different transportation options than currently exist. Some of the anticipated needs for an aging population overlap with the stated needs of disabled people, who have provided comments requesting numerous changes to our system (see Appendix D)."

BPAC Findings and Recommendations:

At its regular quarterly meeting on August 6, 2020, MIC's BPAC reviewed the Woodland Avenue project and offered comments. Some BPAC members subsequently participated in an on-site visit?? This led to an iterative design development process, incorporating input from BPAC members to SLC PW.

The proposed project includes a "road diet" to convert the existing 4-lane undivided roadway to 2-through lanes for vehicle traffic and a center turn lane for left-turning traffic. This cross section will match the newly reconstructed section of Woodland Ave from Anoka St to Calvary Rd. BPAC members discussed appropriate locations for enhanced pedestrian crossings given the location of DTA bus stops, the roadway sight-distance, and adjacent land use. Enhanced pedestrian crossings were recommended at:

- Northfield Ave because the sidewalk on W side of road ends there; Minneapolis Ave because the sidewalk ends there and to provide access to the south-bound bus stop;
- Fairmont Street/Carlisle because the cemetery is a popular walking and biking destination that connects to the adjacent city park;
- Lewis and St. Andrews Streets or just Lewis to meet MnDOT crossing guidance; and
- A median-protected pedestrian crossing just north of the entrance to Hartley Park.

BPAC members recognized that the proposed conversion from 4 to 2 through-lanes for vehicle traffic will have multiple benefits for pedestrians including traffic calming, greater separation between drive lanes and sidewalks, and make it easier to cross Woodland Avenue.

Subsequent Design Developments: (As of March 2022 by SLC PW)

DULUTH TRANSIT AUTHORITY: Chris Belden, DTA Director of Planning & Grants, provided SLC PW with the location of bus stops per the DTA's Better Bus Blueprint plan that will be implemented in 2022. SLW PW has since worked closely with DTA on bus stop design.

Related City of Duluth Trails and Projects: In 2021 the City constructed a new sidewalk on the north side of the Hartley Park entrance drive. The sidewalk will provide an accessible route to the DTA's bus stop from the Hartley Nature Center and to the sidewalk on the east side of Woodland Ave. The Duluth Traverse Mountain Bike Trail and Superior Hiking Trail (combined) also cross Woodland Avenue at the Hartley Park entrance roadway.

SLC PW Proposals:

- A median is proposed in place of the center turn lane from Anoka St to the Hartley Park Entrance. A protected pedestrian crossing through this median is proposed near the entrance to Hartley Park. This will serve the Duluth Traverse/Superior Hiking Trail, DTA bus stop, and will align with the sidewalk constructed in 2021 by City of Duluth along Hartley Park entrance road.
- An enhanced pedestrian crossing with a median refuge is also proposed at Minneapolis Avenue where DTA plans an upgraded bus stop.
- It may be possible to add more enhanced crossings later if deemed necessary. The need for a crossing at Northfield was eliminated because SLC PW plans now call for extending the sidewalk on the west side of Woodland to Hartley Park entrance.
- SLC PW plans to add an on-street bike lane in each direction from Anoka St. to Snively Road. County engineering staff have determined that the average daily vehicle traffic (ADT) in this portion of Woodland and available road width are suitable for this approach.

MIC Staff Summary:

The Woodland Avenue project being advanced by SLC PW will substantially implement MIC's adopted plans and has incorporated recommendations offered by MIC's Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. As indicated above, it is evident that SLC PW's design process has further improved the design to incorporate the needs of transit patrons, trail crossings, and other needs for pedestrian safety. Based on the current design proposed by SLC PW the project is expected to provide significant improvement to bicyclist and pedestrian safety. The 4 to 3 lane conversion will create a buffer space between the drive lanes and sidewalks, allowing the installation of bike lanes and making the sidewalk more pleasant for pedestrians.

rchicka@ardc.org

