

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Council Work Session of the North Mankato City Council was held in the Council Chambers on July 26, 2021. Mayor Dehen called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm. The following were present for roll call: Council Members Oachs, Whitlock, Steiner, Norland, and Mayor Dehen, City Administrator Harrenstein, Community Development Director Fischer, and City Clerk Van Genderen.

### **Highway 169 Corridor Study Update.**

City Administrator Harrenstein introduced Bolton and Menk's Principal Transportation Planner Angie Bersaw. MAPO hired Bolton and Menk to complete the study. Ms. Bersaw reported that the study area extends from Lake Street north to Highway 60 on the south end. Ms. Bersaw reviewed the study goals, which include the preservation of community connections and economic vitality, reliable mobility for all users, safety of all system users, respect for the environment and people, financial responsibility, and agency and public support. The study is in the second of three phases of the study. The second phase focused on identifying and evaluating design concepts and working with businesses, focus groups, and public events. The final phase will develop recommendations and an implementation plan for phased improvements over time. The study will be completed by November 2021. The timing of improvements is to be determined based on funding availability but will inform several MnDOT projects coming up over the next ten years. The second phase included public engagement, which had good participation, including two focus groups with businesses adjacent to the corridor, online meetings, an online open house website, and pop-up events at Songs on the Lawn and the North Mankato Farmers' Market. Ms. Bersaw commented that there was lower participation from the freight industry.

Transportation Planner Bersaw reported the study looked at multiple intersection configurations and locations within the subarea. The presentation had several options mapped out. She noted Options 1A-1C close Lind Street and relocate the full access intersection to North River Lane with either signals, RCUTS, or roundabouts. One option that was eliminated was to combine Lind, North River Lane, and Webster Avenue into an intersection. Still, the project team dismissed it as having too many impacts on businesses and properties due to local road reconfiguration needs. One final option is a Freeway Option. This would complete the cloverleaf design at the Hwy 169/14 interchange and add a grade-separated interchange at Webster Avenue. The study also looked at other Hwy 169/14 interchange improvements, such as a ramp signal and a new design called a Diverging Diamond. All of the options include the closure of Lind Street due to crash issues and the proximity of Lind to the 14/169 interchange.

Transportation Planner Bersaw stated that with every transportation improvement project, the team must compare the proposed project to a "no-build" or what happens over the next 20 years if no transportation improvements are made. A review of the issues included traffic projections showing excessive delays at Hwy 14 ramp during peak hours, 5 of the seven intersections are spaced closer than MnDOT access guidelines, 159 crashes, two severe between 2015 and 2019, and crashes at Lind St. are more than three times the normal range. A rating of the corridor with no improvements scored a - 63 out of a possible 288 points. The numerical score represents how well a plan meets the project goals. The score includes the project goals, including community connections and economic vitality, mobility for users, safety for users, community and environmental impacts, fiscal responsibility, and agency support. She noted the "do nothing" is not a viable option.

Concept 1A closes Lind Street access and relocates that entire access point to North River Lane. The first option shows traffic signals at North River Lane and Webster Avenue. The score on the proposed change was 135 out of the possible 288 points.

Concept 1B closes Lind Street and shows roundabouts at North River Lane and Webster Avenue. The concept also included a different local road connection idea which included creating a

cul-de-sac on Range Street with improved connections at Cross Street. The suggested improvement would improve the Range/Webster intersection, which experiences crashes due to 169/Webster Avenue backups. Both communities do not support the cul-de-sac, but the roundabouts can work regardless of the Range Street improvements. The score for the proposed alternative is 202.5.

Concept 1C closes Lind Street and considers signalized RCUT intersections. The intersection and u-turn movements would need to be signalized to operate efficiently. The score for the proposed alternative is 115. City Administrator Harrenstein commented that the RCUT would not work for Webster Avenue. Council Members Norland, Oachs, and Whitlock noted they were against the RCUT possibility.

Concept 1D considers a Freeway Option with a full cloverleaf at the 169/14 interchange and a Webster Avenue interchange.

Concept 2A showed a full cloverleaf without an intersection at Webster Avenue revealing the required closure of intersections a mile away from the cloverleaf. It would essentially close the intersection past Webster Avenue. Concept 2C considered eliminating the South Loop at the Hwy 14 interchange and adding a traffic signal. The concept would work for mobility, and there would be no change at the Webster Avenue intersection. Concept 2D is considered a diverging diamond, a new interchange design that fits in a small footprint and serves heavy left-turn movements and substantial traffic volumes at intersecting highways.

Transportation Planner Bersaw noted that operationally any Option 2 concept could be paired with any Option 1 concept. Multiple combinations of intersection/interchange improvements can work together for an at-grade expressway corridor in the subarea.

City Administrator Harrenstein commented that feedback should be obtained from the freight and trucking industry concerning the intersection. He suggested a focus group with businesses in upper North Mankato and North Port to receive their feedback.

Transportation Planner Bersaw reviewed potential local road improvement ideas that focused mainly on Range Street. She showed three different ideas on connecting Range Street to Webster Avenue, including extending the median through the intersection and making Range Street a right/in right/out. Still, the cities do not support the option. Making Range Street a cul-de-sac, but the option is not supported by either city or the businesses and residents. The final option is to modernize Range Street, and both cities supported this option.

Transportation Planner Bersaw reported the project team considered three different locations for a pedestrian/bicycle grade separation in the area. The improvement could be paired with any of the at-grade roadway improvements.

Public feedback concerning the Northern Subarea included mixed support for a full cloverleaf interchange at Hwy 14 and a diverging diamond interchange, mixed support for roundabouts at N River Ln and Webster Ave, and interchanges Hwy 14 and Webster Avenue. There was a lack of support for signalized RCUTS. Many supported the Range St. modernization concept that keeps the intersection open to Webster Avenue. There was also support for the pedestrian and bicyclist improvement in the north segment, and most people preferred the crossing north of Lind St.

Transportation Planner Bersaw reviewed potential pedestrian improvements on the Veteran's Memorial Bridge. She reported MnDOT has a project planned to look at the bridge more closely in the next few years. Based on current analysis and public feedback, some low-cost investments could improve pedestrian access and visibility to a motorist when crossing the bridge. The improvements included tightening the radius and shifting pedestrian crossing to reduce crossing distance. She also reviewed the Belgrade Avenue Roundabout Concept, which was included in the Belgrade Avenue Corridor Study in 2017-2018. The improvement will be reviewed again during the upcoming MnDOT project. The roundabout would improve pedestrian crossings, improve traffic flow on Belgrade Avenue, and improve traffic flow into the west section of Hwy 169.

Council and staff discussion was held concerning potential locations for bicycle and pedestrian trails. Mayor Dehen commented on the difference between local bicycle commuters and tourists, accommodating tourists, and connecting all the trails.

Council Member Steiner moved, seconded by Council Member Norland, to adjourn the meeting at 12:46 pm.

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Mayor

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City Clerk