

The Current State of Randolph Avenue

Randolph Avenue (between Brimhall and Interstate 35E), has serious structural defects which contribute to a short service life for a resurfacing project. Businesses and residents have shared their concerns about the condition of Randolph Avenue for more than ten years.

Randolph Avenue has not been constructed with a modern engineered road base. Roads which have an engineered road base can generally be resurfaced successfully every 12 to 15 years. Resurfacing projects on roads with poor bases last closer to 3 to 5 years -- before potholing and large cracking patterns return. There are sections with no curbing at all, and the lighting is not as safe, attractive, or energy-efficient as most residential streets in Saint Paul. Each time Ramsey County has done a mill and overlay it has lasted a shorter time, and especially in a winter like 2014, this means bigger potholes and more challenging experience for drivers on Randolph Avenue.

Possible Actions by Ramsey County/ City of Saint Paul

Whatever action Ramsey County and the City of Saint Paul take, businesses and schools and emergency vehicles will have the access that they need.

Some have suggested that the either Street Resurfacing / Repaving or a Full Street Reconstruction would have the same result. That is certainly not true.

Street Resurfacing / Repaving

Street resurfacing generally consists of removing and replacing the top 1 to 3 inches of bituminous pavement. Resurfacing only addresses problems on the surface of the roadway, such as potholes and cracking. It is one of the tools used to maintain a roadway over the course of its life and is considered to be a temporary or short term measure.

Street Reconstruction

Full reconstruction of streets provides an opportunity for long term upgrades to the roadway and the associated infrastructure, which can include improving the road base, curb and gutter, storm sewer, sidewalks, traffic signals, utilities, lighting and landscaping. Full reconstruction can also address improvements to safety and operation of the road, and provides an opportunity to improve geometrics and enhance the overall streetscape. Once reconstructed overall maintenance costs are reduced. Full reconstruction

should also address lead water service and turn lanes at Lexington which would really improve traffic flow between Lexington and Hamline.

1. **Sidewalk/pedestrian/street lights** – The city and county would build consistent curbs and new sidewalks and fully compliant ADA facilities. They would also add pedestrian scale lighting.
2. **New Utilities** – while we cannot yet define what utility upgrades or installations will occur, public and private utility providers do view new road construction as an opportunity to replace, expand, or upgrade utility features. Randolph Avenue was constructed over 100 years ago and many utilities like sewer and water are the same vintage. There still remain 86 lead water services that would be replaced at City expense.
3. **City Levy** --Property owners often lament the City's standard assessment levy of \$100 per front foot. That is a fixed rate so on a 40-50 foot lot the full assessment of \$4,000-5,000 spread over 20 years at 4% interest is a nominal annual amount while the full improvement is delivered up front. Supporters of both a full reconstruction and a repaving agree that buildings on new streets have higher values. more attractive, easier to sell and yield an incremental investment return well in excess of the City rate assessment.

Comparative Cost

Reconstruction costs more than mill and overlay but mill and overlay can be more costly in the long run.

1. **Greater Mill and Overlay Frequency** – If mill and overlay needs to be redone every 3 years, or an even shorter time in the future, it could cost almost the same as a full reconstruction with many less amenities. And the costs of either treatment will be much greater in 3 to 5 years.
2. **Maintenance costs** on a worn out road are extraordinarily expensive. Snow and ice control, pavement patching, pavement markings, drainage structures, curb, boulevards, sidewalks, take additional materials and labor to keep the

roadway intact, continue to rise as deeper degradation occurs. These costs are hidden but very real as they are a big part of the city budget every year.

3. **User Costs** are measurably higher – There is another hidden cost to driving or riding on poor roads. Few of us really think about it as we regularly purchase fuel and have vehicle maintenance performed but there are a number of studies that have attempted to quantify those costs. One AASHTO study estimated the national average annual cost at \$335 more per vehicle for gas and maintenance on a road in poor condition. That same study went on to indicate those costs are substantially higher in urban areas with annual costs as high as \$746 more per vehicle. With Randolph carrying roughly 11,000 to 14,000 vehicles every day, the hidden cost to area users is anything but insignificant. These same costs matter to bicyclists too, for whom replacing a wheel can be a large percentage of the value of the whole bike, and that is not to even speak of the chance of injury in such a situation.