

Meeting Minutes of Highland District Council Transportation Committee
November 30, 2015 6:30 p.m.
1978 Ford Parkway
St. Paul MN 55116
Highland Park Community Center

HDC Transportation Committee Meeting - November 30, 2015 (December Meeting)

Committee Chair Kevin Gallatin called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.

Committee Members Present: Kevin Gallatin, Laurie Krivitz, Anne Langford, Brian Cleaveland, Jack Dobier, Patti Brady, Charles Decker, Kathy Carruth

Citizen Attendees: (need names from sign-in list)

Approval of the November 10, 2015 was made with no changes.

Snelling Ave Median Options

Committee Chair Kevin Gallatin introduced the topic and explained that the idea of medians came out of the HDC Transportation Committee based on resident concerns about pedestrian safety and excessive vehicle speeds. Kevin introduced Councilmember Tolbert who discussed the history of constituent concerns on Snelling and shared examples of medians having a positive effect on this in Ward 3, including on Snelling adjacent to Macalester College and on Ford Pkwy. The portion of Snelling recommended for medians is Randolph to Highland Pkwy because there are no signalized intersections in that stretch to help pedestrians get across Snelling safely. Kevin Gallatin then introduced John Mazcko from Public Works.

John Matzcko reiterated that the medians are conceptual and there are no plans for construction and no funding at this time. The design he presented includes 10' wide raised medians (curb height) with grass or mulch and planted trees. It does not include walls or other vegetation like the medians next to Macalester College (those are funded by the college). John said that city studies have found vehicle speeds go down an average of 2-3 MPH adjacent to medians. Kevin Gallatin pointed out a study that found 46% fewer vehicle-pedestrian crashes on busy 4-lane roads with medians vs. similar roads without medians¹.

Mr. Matzcko showed diagrams of the existing road and where the medians could go. To get the desired safety benefits the median would need to block left turns onto or off of Snelling at some intersections with smaller residential streets. This could be done on the side streets that already do not extend across Snelling: Juno, Watson, Bayard, and Eleanor. Full access to cross Snelling, or turn left onto or off of Snelling, would be maintained on Niles, Hartford, and Scheffer. This would be accomplished with center turn lanes in place of the median (a different design may be needed to support left turns from southbound Snelling to eastbound Highland Pkwy, due to the position of the new A-Line bus station). Medians would not affect Randolph or Highland Pkwy. To achieve the desired 10' median while maintaining the full width of 2 travel lanes in each direction, parking would be affected. There is approximately 100' of public right-of-way to work with. Numerous options were presented, including reducing the width of the median,

parking lane, travel lanes, or boulevards, or some combination of those. Keeping each component at its full recommended width would result in the loss of all parking on Snelling south of Juno. In any scenario parking would be maintained on the east side of Snelling north of Juno. To mitigate the losses to the south, parking bays could be installed at key points. Or, parking could be allowed in the travel lane during off-peak times, similar to Cretin Ave adjacent to the University of St. Thomas.

Multiple community members and committee members expressed concern with the potential for parking loss. Representatives of Parkway Family Physicians, Deaf Life Church, and the John G. Griep Insurance Agency shared specific concerns about access for their visitors, particularly those with reduced mobility or hearing. Residents also shared concerns about access to their homes and asked how they could reach them if medians block access to their accustomed route. Mr. Maczko explained that it would involve going an additional block past their street, then turning and making their way back. He noted that this would shift some traffic from one residential side street to another, but all the traffic is local. When medians were installed on Snelling next to Macalester the city measured traffic on each street, particularly during each 3-hour rush in the AM and PM. The side street that was most heavily impacted gained 300 cars in the AM and 3 in the PM. This is relatively small, less than 2 cars per minute in the morning. He was not aware of concerns from those residents after the project was completed.

Additional questions from the community:

- Q: Some medians in the area are only 8' wide and still have raised planted medians. Would that help the parking situation?
 - Yes, 10' is considered the standard, but an 8' median would likely allow parking to be maintained on one side of Snelling for the whole stretch. (With this answer there was a strong response from community members and committee members that this is a good compromise).
- Q: There is a lot of speeding between Highland Pkwy and Montreal where the median is not proposed. Why not put it there?
 - A: The median is designed to improve safety for pedestrians as well as reduce excessive speeds. Pedestrians already have the protection of traffic signals at Highland Pkwy and Ford Pkwy. Further south there are no destinations for pedestrians on the east side of Snelling, so the pedestrian benefit would be minimal.
- Q: Where would pedestrians cross Snelling if the medians are installed? What would the design look like?
 - A: Pedestrian crossings would be upgraded and well-marked at the intersections where vehicle left turns are blocked. That assures pedestrians that they only need to monitor vehicle traffic from one direction at a time. Each crosswalk would be ADA compliant and would begin with a bumpout into the street to reduce crossing distance. The center median would serve as a pedestrian refuge while traffic from the other direction clears. The median would also have ramps, and could be designed at an angle so that as pedestrians cross it they are forced to look upstream into traffic. This can reduce crashes due to pedestrian distraction.
- Q: Could traffic lights or pedestrian activated beacons be installed with or instead of medians?

- A: The low volume of the side streets along this stretch does not merit a traffic light. Further north Snelling crosses more collector and arterial streets such as Jefferson and St. Clair, but this stretch simply doesn't have streets of enough size to merit the cost and delay to Snelling traffic. Pedestrian beacons are an option but they would be an added expense. Some community members suggested installing one on Niles to provide Safe Routes to School and to improve safety for members of the Deaf Life Church.

After public questions the meeting broke into 4 small groups to review large diagrams of the proposed median. Each group carried on discussions and asked questions of each other. Comments were documented on provided comment cards and are attached.

New / Old Business

No new or old business was discussed.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

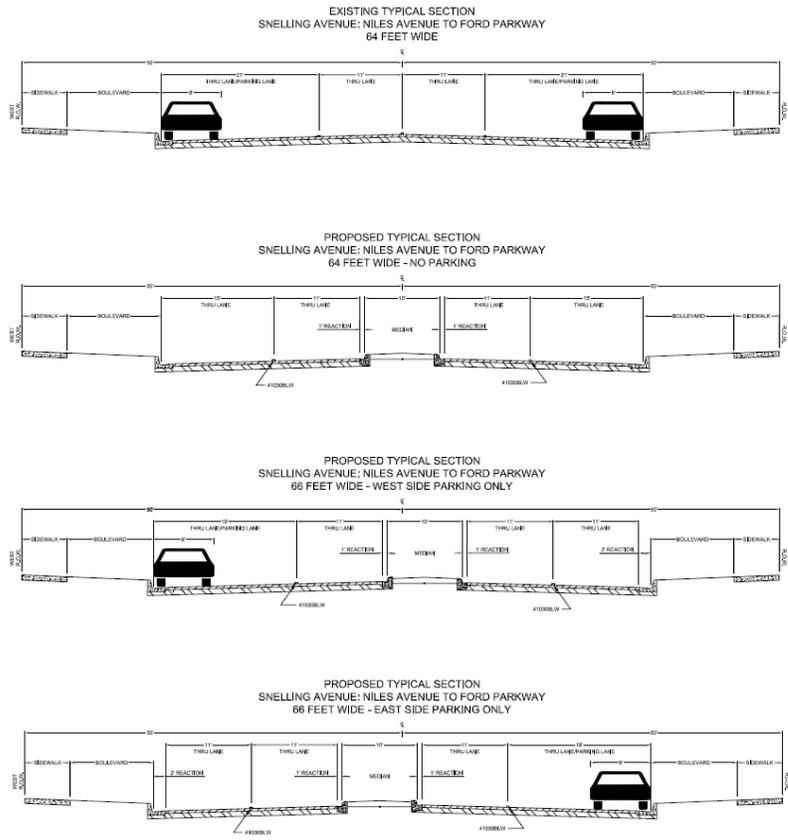
ⁱ Federal Highway Administration Office of Safety Research and Development. *Safety Effects of Marked Versus Unmarked Crosswalks at Uncontrolled Locations*. Charles V. Zegeer, et al. <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/04100/>



PROPOSED



EXISTING



NOT TO SCALE

Comments From 11/30/2015 Snelling Ave Meeting

Safety

- If a median is installed on Snelling between Ford and Highland and parking is eliminated in front of the Parkway Family Physicians, 721 Snelling Ave S, the number of people crossing Snelling to get to our clinic from some other parking place will greatly increase. The increased flow of pedestrians in such a case would negate proposed safety benefits! In addition, loss of parking would severely negatively impact our business both from a patient convenience stand point and from a business stand point and people would go elsewhere. Where access is more convenient. If we lose parking –I and my patients will oppose the median from Ford to Highland Parkway. (Brad Langley, MD, Parkway Family Physicians, 721 Snelling Ave S., St Paul, MN 55116, 33 years Highland Business Owner)
- Losing parking spaces means loss of parking for St Paul Businesses. It also makes it more dangerous because customers can't find parking and will drive more reckless trying to find a spot
- Only having to deal with traffic from 1 direction at a time would help. A HAWK signal would help.

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- We recognize that there is a cost issue, but we wonder if some form of light/beacon (similar to the one at Jefferson could be considered further (Tim and Diane)

Traffic

- Cars are pretty fluid they will figure out how to move.
- Speed is excessive on this stretch. Not the trucks –the cars are the problem. Tim and Diane
1490 Scheffer Ave

Neighborhood Impact

- Where will people park that live in the apartment buildings? Will they be forced onto the side streets?
- It might make Snelling look less like a car sewer

Comments on Parking

- **Consensus at one table** - Medians no more than 8' wide and keep parking on one side of the street the whole length
- We need to be business friendly
- I will try not to worry about parking –“Neighbors are concerned about traffic and parking”