

January 4, 2009

James E. Tolaas, P.E.
Project Manager
Ramsey County Department of Public Works
1425 Paul Kirkwold Drive
Arden Hills, MN 55112

Re: Comments on the Highway 49, Rice Street, Hodgson Road Concept Study

Dear Mr. Tolaas,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the concept study for Highway 49 from Roselawn Avenue to County Road J. Shoreview Green Community, a Sierra Club group of some 60 Shoreview citizens, is interested in the impact this highway redesign will have on our community.

Highway planning needs to focus on the following critical goals for future decades:

- Increased use of mass transit and reduced use of single-occupant vehicles,
- Increased use of bicycling for commuting and general riding,
- More diligent control of storm water runoff, and
- Maximize energy efficiency in street and traffic signal lighting.

Mass Transit and Alternative Modes of Transportation

Given that we cannot continue to build enough highways to eliminate congestion in our overall metropolitan area system of roads, and given that there is a growing body of evidence that global climate change is occurring, any future road and highway improvements should be undertaken with mass transit and alternative modes of transportation in mind:

In view of the requirements for highway safety and state aid funding, we support a design option that adheres to the following conditions:

- Meet AASHTO and MnDOT Guidelines for bikeways,
- On-road continuous marked/striped bike lanes,
- Sidewalk or trail on each side,
- Meet American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and AASHTO & MnDOT guidelines for walkways (including best available signal technology),
- Meet Metro Transit recommendations for bus related facilities,
- Three lanes overall, including a center turn lane or median (not a 4 lane highway),
- Forty mile per hour speed limit throughout, and,
- Incorporation of "Complete Street" concepts.

Additional comments are provided here:

1. Design primarily for mass transit and bicycling. This means that there will be space allocated for bus stops, bus shelters and bicycle lockers. We realize there may be challenging space limitations at some intersections due to width of through lane, turning lanes and sidewalks/trails. When these difficulties arise, bus stops, shelters and bicycle lockers must not be eliminated. Safe pedestrian crossings at every bus stop are needed to facilitate walking or biking to bus stops.

Improvements to Highway 49 should be done in such a way as to promote mass transit, and not to encourage its use as an alternative north-south highway route. If traffic levels increase, any such increase should be accommodated by additional busing.

2. Design for and allow for buses to travel on the shoulder along stretches of the highway that are often congested. This may mean traveling within a bike lane, such as leading up to a traffic light. If we are going to make busing work better for commuters, the buses need to be able to bypass and get around single-occupant vehicles. If necessary, signs could be posted that would indicate that buses may use the shoulder area.

3. Design for a speed limit to 40 miles per hour. The number of residential and commercial driveways and side streets demand 40 miles per hour or lower speed limit for safety. Segments however, of the highway south of Gramsie Road and north of St. Marie Street do not have driveways. Since a center turn lane is only needed for Rustic Place within this stretch, we recommend a landscaped, rain garden median. Besides assisting with run-off immediately next to Lake Vadnais, a rain garden median would help ensure that the roadway would not be seen as so wide that cars may try using the bike lanes as extra traffic lanes.

4. Design for bicycle commuting with 5-foot (minimum) wide bike lanes in both directions that are marked with striping throughout the whole highway and at the intersections (striped traffic lanes, striped bike lanes leading up to the intersections, marked right-turn lanes "outboard" from the bike lanes, and striped or dash-marks for bike lanes through the intersections). Bicycle lanes should not be viewed as potential lane growth roadway in the future. The striped bike lanes should be an integral, permanent part of the design.

5. Sidewalks or trails on both sides of Highway 49. If residents are to get to bus stops, they need sidewalks or trails on both sides of the highway. This is especially important during the winter months when it is dark much of the time when people are going to and from work. It is unsafe for people to walk in the street when it is dark and the streets are snowy.

Our preference would be to have a sidewalk on the east side of Highway 49 and a 10 foot wide asphalt trail on the west side. Such a trail would provide for a continuation of the trail, which already exists north of Highway 96. (An asphalt trail is preferred by joggers and runners, rather than concrete.) Besides using sidewalks or trails for getting to bus stops, it is important to consider their value for pedestrian shopping and recreation trips. Shoreview residents are proud of our wide options in sidewalks and trails and we

encourage continuation of these alternative travel options south of Highway 96 and south of our city.

6. Design for potential transit/business hub development at the intersection of I-694 and Highway 49. The vacant Ramsey County property south of the I-694 and Highway 49 interchange could serve as an important site for mass transit and should be designed for all transit modes, including safe bicycling and pedestrian use. The Shoreview Green Community group would like to work with Ramsey County to more fully understand the design options for this major bridge intersection, along with other bridge intersections such as Highway 49 and Highway 36.

Control of Storm Water Runoff

Conservation of groundwater should maximize pre-development bio-infiltration levels and achieve the requirements of water management organizations. Minimum roadway runoff capacity should follow the "one-inch-per-24-hour" rule throughout all segments. We support best water management practices including infiltration devices, which would be supplemented by rain gardens, grassy swales and vegetated filter strips. These specially designed areas, planted with native grass and plants, would trap pollutants from storm water picked up from driveways and streets and optimize bio-infiltration.

Beyond the minimum roadway infiltration needs, storm water from heavy rain events should bio-infiltrate through existing shallow marshes and shrub marshes in designated wetlands near Highway 49, such as portions of Snail Lake Regional Park and Turtle Lake Open Space. These are areas of highest groundwater flow paths that are most efficient in accepting bio-infiltration. Our groundwater supply and local lake levels are dependent upon infiltration from the surficial drainage-way west of Highway 49.

Energy Efficiency

Use the most efficient lighting options available for both general street lighting and for traffic signals. Examples of efficient lighting include LEDs.

Thank you for consideration of these comments. We are available for questions at the e-mail addresses listed below and we would appreciate being kept informed as to the progress of your work and of any additional opportunities to provide input so that we can maintain a two-way dialogue regarding this project.

Sincerely,



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