

RESOLUTION
By Gordon and Osman

Expressing the City's priorities for the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Rethinking I-94 Project.

Whereas, the Minnesota Department of Transportation is planning for the full reconstruction of I-94 between I-35W and I-35E in its Rethinking I-94 Project; and

Whereas, the condition of the roadway has deteriorated to the point where reconstruction or removal is required; and

Whereas, the completion of the Minneapolis portion of I-94 in 1968 destroyed businesses, homes, places of worship and other community assets, and physically divided neighborhoods all along the corridor; and

Whereas, the residents of neighborhoods adjacent to I-94 in the project corridor, including Elliott Park, Ventura Village, Cedar-Riverside, Seward, and Prospect Park are subject to noise and air pollution from the high volume of traffic on I-94; and

Whereas, the City of Minneapolis has adopted the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan, a policy framework that prioritizes walking, bicycling, and transit, with goals of increasing equity in our transportation system, reducing carbon emissions, improving human health through improved air quality and increased active travel, and enabling the safe movement of people, goods, and services across the city; and

Whereas, transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota, and the City of Minneapolis set a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050; and

Whereas, the Minneapolis Climate Action Plan has stated goals to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in the city and support the Metropolitan Council's goal of doubling regional transit ridership by 2030; and

Whereas, low-carbon transportation modes are essential to providing transportation choices and accessibility while combating climate change and reducing economic disparities; and

Whereas, the vast majority of the vehicle trips originating in this corridor are short distance local trips; and

Whereas, the recent development of electric bicycles has made decarbonized private trips of three to five miles more accessible and affordable; and

Whereas, new mobility infrastructure such as bicycle highways and protected bicycle lanes create local travel opportunities that are inexpensive, safe, fast, and convenient, rendering many local trips by interstate highway unnecessary; and

Whereas, observed traffic in the study area ranges between 140,000 and 160,000 vehicles per day, emitting carbon emissions and generating air toxins and fine particulate pollution that drifts into communities within one-half mile on either side of the highway; and

Whereas, research shows exposure to pollution from traffic can result in fetal and newborn illnesses, asthma attacks among children and adults, plus impaired lung function, impaired cognitive function, cardiovascular illness, multiple cancers, and premature death; and

Whereas, childhood asthma is a significant cause of school absenteeism and, since I-94 runs through communities of color, contributes to educational disparities; and

Whereas, high-speed urban highways are an anomaly of post-WWII civil defense planning and have since been recognized as injurious to economic development, livability, and safety within the dense travel sheds they were intended to serve; and

Whereas, the proposed project area is a rich and diverse community wherein 42% of residents are people of color and 32.6% of residents live below the federal poverty threshold; and

Whereas, the land near an attractive, revised multimodal transportation corridor would be valuable for residential and commercial development delivering new jobs and tax-base; and

Whereas, Hennepin County and the Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul have all invested significant resources to build critical bicycle facilities on Ayd Mill Road and the Midtown Greenway, but there are three crossings over I-94 which pose significant barriers to connecting these regional assets to each other and to major destinations like the University of Minnesota; and

Whereas, the I-94 shoulder between downtown Minneapolis and Highway 280 which was used by buses to avoid congestion, and which was converted to a general purpose traffic lane after the I-35W bridge collapse but then not restored by MnDOT after the new bridge opened, so the transit advantage was lost; and

Whereas, the METRO Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) from the southern suburbs to downtown Minneapolis will open in 2021 and the Gold Line BRT from the eastern suburbs to downtown Saint Paul is planned, a logical and necessary next expansion of the highway BRT system should connect the two downtowns and maximize the value of the investments we are already making; and

Whereas, the regional transit system should include fast and frequent express service between downtown Minneapolis and downtown Saint Paul, complementing Green Line Light Rail Transit service on University Avenue, which was never intended to be an express service, but has been extremely successful in its intended goal to serve all the neighborhoods along the 18 stations in that corridor;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by The City Council of The City of Minneapolis:

That the City of Minneapolis strongly opposes the repair or reconstruction of I-94 in its current form and categorically rejects any roadway expansion within its boundaries or any right of way expansion.

Be It Further Resolved that the Rethinking I-94 Project must include Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service connecting the two downtowns and serving additional intermediate stations enroute by converting an existing lane to a High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) or High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) lane, and include an online station at Snelling Avenue to connect to the METRO A Line and a station serving the University of Minnesota should also be considered and reinstate the transit advantage that had existed prior to the 35W bridge collapse as an interim solution and on a more immediate timeline.

Be It Further Resolved that the Rethinking I-94 Project must avoid or fully mitigate any negative impacts to livability, safety, or environmental burden to adjacent and connecting neighborhoods.

Be it Further Resolved that the Rethinking I-94 Project must take a systems-level approach to planning for the corridor such that mode shift from single occupancy vehicles is not only encouraged, it becomes the easy choice through the creation of safe and comfortable non-motorized connections and strategically placed mobility hubs that provide access to shared-use bikes, scooters, transit, and car-share and that serve to close the “last-mile” that is often the biggest barrier to mode shift.

Be It Further Resolved that parties to the Rethinking I-94 Project must analyze existing structural barriers to walking, biking, and transit access that result from the freeway and provide recommendations to repair those harms, improve access, reduce levels of tire wear emissions, traffic noise, difficult pedestrian crossings on feeder roads, and increase equity in our transportation system for those in the I-94 corridor who are most negatively impacted and in need.

Be It Further Resolved that the Rethinking I-94 Project must provide continuous bicycle/walking connections over the freeway from Ayd Mill Road in Saint Paul to a future Prospect Park Trail to 27th Avenue Southeast, improving the pedestrian bridge at Seymour Place as part of the All Ages and Abilities Network, an improved pedestrian bridge near 22nd Avenue South and a future extension of the Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis.

Be It Further Resolved that the Rethinking I-94 Project must minimize impact and crash-related fatalities and injuries for all transportation users and pedestrians in the study corridor.

Be It Further Resolved that the Rethinking I-94 Project must redesign the highway corridor to prioritize healthy, safe, affordable, accessible, and equitable mobility.