

DALE STREET LISTEN SESSION • NOVEMBER 29, 2016

ST. JAMES AME CHURCH, Dale & Central Avenue

Funding for community engagement activities is provided by the Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.



Dale Street Bridge and Roadway Project

The Dale Street Project is a joint initiative to improve pedestrian safety, walkability, accessibility, and traffic safety on Dale Street by replacing the bridge over I-94 and making improvements from the bridge to University Avenue. Ramsey County is the lead organization and works in collaboration with a community-based coalition led by Summit-University Planning Council to implement an inclusive and meaningful community engagement process.

Session Focus

St. James AME is one of the oldest African American congregations in St. Paul. Its current church at Dale and Central Avenue was completed in the last part of the 1940's. The Dale Street Project will have direct impacts on the building and the congregation. The November 29, 2016 listening session was designed to share information about the project and to hear not only concerns but also ideas for how the project can benefit the community.

Snapshot

Rev. Smith convened the meeting and turned it over to Erin Laberee, the Ramsey County Public Works Engineer who is in charge of the project. After Ms. Laberee's overview of the project, she fielded a number of questions about the project and engaged in a general conversation.

Participants

(from Sign-in Sheets)

C.E. Crutchfield, MD
Anthony Galloway
Laurel Gardner
Harold L. Golden, Jr
Lorene Hall
Mel Henderson
P.J. Hubbard
Allan Ige
Heather McCants
James McQuirter
Trennar Ross
Rev. Stacey Smith
Rev. Gloria Roach Thomas
Irene Weaver

Erin Laberee, Ramsey County Project
Manager
Jens Werner, Executive Director,
Summit-University Planning Council
Carol Swenson,
District Councils Collaborative

Notes and Observations

Erin Laberee provided basic information about the project.

Project description: complete replacement of the bridge over I-94, roadway pedestrian safety and accessibility improvements, new lighting, and potential to add trees, public art, etc.

Project area: Iglehart Avenue to University Avenue

Target construction date: 2018; can be delayed until 2019 if necessary

Lead Organization: Ramsey County

Other organizations: MN Dept. of Transportation and City of St Paul

Status: preliminary concepts for bridge developed based on input from Dale Street Leadership Circle; more community input needed before moving ahead

After the presentation, the group asked several questions of Ms Laberee raised issues and concerns, and engaged in a conversation about the project. Questions and comments have been organized by common themes and documented below. Ms. Laberee's responses to questions and comments are identified by her initials: "EL".

General Project Questions

- What is the timeframe?
EL: Project is currently scheduled for construction in 2018. A more detailed and accurate schedule will be available as we move forward with the design.
- Is the bridge structurally unsound?
EL: No, the bridge is not structurally deficient rather there is inadequate space for necessary turn lanes, shoulders and sidewalks.
- Will the 20,000 cars a day be compacted into a narrower roadway?
EL: No, the project will widen the bridge and allow for two through lanes, left turn lanes, shoulders and sidewalks on the bridge.
- Why not build a separate pedestrian bridge?
EL: Options were considered to separate the pedestrians from the traffic, which presented several challenges including adding walking distance and safety concerns caused by isolating pedestrians.
- Will the sidewalk grade by the church be improved?
EL: Design evaluations include options to improve the sidewalk slopes on the north side of the bridge.
- Will there be trees and beautification as part of the project?
EL: This is an option up for consideration.
- Will there be bike lanes?
EL: A shoulder will be included on the bridge.

- How will the turn lanes work?
EL: Full length left turn lanes to enter onto I-94 east and west will be included in the project design.

Project Financing

- Has there ever been a bridge project that wasn't completed?
EL: Once construction begins, stakeholders are committed to completing the project. I am not aware of any bridges that haven't been completed after construction starts.
- Will \$7 million cover the cost?
EL: \$7 million in Federal funds was received for the project. Additional funds will be needed such as County State Aid and local funds for the project.
- Will there be assessments to property owners?
EL: We will need to discuss assessments with the City of St. Paul. They are the authority who would levy any assessments.
- Will there be takings for Right of Way acquisition?
EL: We do expect some property impacts and will try to minimize them as much as possible. We currently do not know what the property impacts will be.

Cultural Impacts

- Proposal to name the bridge "Rondo Bridge" rather than "Dale Street Bridge."
EL: Yes, this is something the community can determine.
- How will construction impacts on historic buildings be addressed? Can the County provide assurances regarding vibrations?
EL: Vibrations can be monitored and requirements put on the contractor to prevent damage.

Hiring and DBE Goals

- What is the economic impact of the bridge in terms of jobs, Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) contracting, etc.?
EL: There are federal requirements the contractor must meet as far as DBE goals and OJT hours for the construction contract.
- Can contractors be incentivized to reach hiring and DBE goals and provide on-the-job training hours? (Proposed by community who's worked on projects where this has been done.)
EL: We will inquire about this at the Federal level.
- What is the source of funds? Is it public?
EL: Funds come from Federal State Transportation Program funds, County State Aid Highway funds, and local funds.
- What are the DBE goals when a project goes out to bid?
EL: MnDot will determine the DBE goal.
 - Community member shared he's an expert in vertical, not horizontal, construction, but thinks the goals [jobs?] are minimal. State reviews contractors plan to meet hiring and DBE goals.

Construction Impacts and Management

- How will construction be managed? Will the bridge be closed?
EL: Construction phasing and road closures have not yet been evaluated. Additional meetings will be held to inform the public of the plan for construction in the future and receive feedback, prior to the construction contract being awarded.
- What will the detours be?
EL: This has not been determined yet, but will likely be Lexington Avenue.
- Request for ramps to stay open during construction? Church members need good access during construction.
EL: Noted.