



Request for City Council Committee Action From the Department of Public Works

Date: January 27th, 2008

To: Honorable Sandra Colvin Roy, Chair Transportation & Public Works Committee

Subject: **City Comments to Hennepin County's Lowry Bridge Reconstruction Environmental Assessment Worksheet**

Recommendation:

- a. Recommend attached comments be presented to Hennepin County as the City's response to the Lowry Bridge Reconstruction Project's Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW).

Previous Directives:

- None

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Approved by:

Steven A. Kotke, P.E., City Engineer, Director of Public Works

Presenters: Jack Yuzna, P.E., Principal Professional Engineer, 673-2415

Reviews

Permanent Review Committee (PRC):	Approval	NA	Date
Civil Rights Affirmative Action Plan	Approval	NA	Date
Policy Review Group (PRG):	Approval	NA	Date

Financial Impact (Check those that apply)
No Financial Impact

Community Impact

Neighborhood Notification: Not Applicable
City Goals: A SAFE PLACE TO CALL HOME: the city's infrastructure will be well-maintained, people will feel safe in the city.
Comprehensive Plan: Not Applicable
Zoning Code: Not Applicable

Background/Supporting Information

Hennepin County's Lowry Avenue Bridge over the Mississippi River was permanently closed in April 2008 due to structural concerns. As the bridge can not be economically rehabilitated, the County has begun the process of developing plans to reconstruct the Bridge. The original bridge was constructed in 1905 and was renovated in 1958. Significant repair work took place in 2004. The Lowry Bridge is part of Hennepin County State Aid Highway 153 and carries approximately 15,800 vehicles per day. The County recently proposed designating Lowry Avenue and the Bridge as part of the National Highway System.

Over the last two years, Hennepin County convened a Project Advisory Committee (PAC); a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC); and hosted a series of public meetings to assist with developing the project scope and aesthetics. After considerable work by the stakeholders, the County determined the project should include the reconstruction of Lowry Avenue between 2nd Street N and Marshall Street NE. The project will include a new 872 foot river bridge crossing (river bridge); construction of a new 704 foot 4-span bridge over the west bank (the west bridge); and reconstruction of 722 feet of roadway.

A "basket handle" arch bridge was selected for the river bridge. The proposed river bridge will be two lanes in each direction with a four foot shoulder and 12 foot walkways on both sides. The west approach tapers to two lanes in each direction and the east approach maintains two lanes in each direction.

The proposed new west bridge will be constructed of pre-cast concrete girders. It begins just west of the Canadian Pacific Railroad Bridge (replacing the existing bridge & roadway supported by retaining walls) and will connect to the river bridge. Space on the west bank of the river has been preserved for a future parkway, trail, and utilities underneath the structure. The east abutment of the river bridge has also been adjusted to allow for a trail to be constructed under the bridge and along the east bank of the river.

Hennepin County currently estimates the cost of the project to be \$110.5 Million. Hennepin County has been seeking state and federal funds to help pay for the project. They have received \$30 Million in state funding and have committed significant amount of their own funding to finance this project. The County has not received any federal funds to date.

Due to the project funding shortfall and their desire to move the project forward, the County has proposed to build the project in two phases. The first phase would be the river bridge and is estimated to cost \$80Million. Phase 1 would begin with the removal of the existing bridge this year and construction is anticipated to be completed in 2010.

We believe Phase 2 will be the construction of the west bridge; the west approach roadway; and the east approach roadway. Since funding has not been secured, the schedule for Phase II has not been determined.

The project considered, and is consistent with, the 1999 Above the Falls Upper River Plan, the 2002 Lowry Avenue Corridor Plan, the 2004 Upper Harbor Terminal Plan, and the 2006 Above the Falls West Bank Study. City staff participated in technical advisory committees and have been consulted as part of the design process.

The comments below are in response to the release of the project EAW. The 30-day public comment period ends on January 28, 2009. Due to the limited time to submit comments, staff purposes to forward Hennepin County our comments after the Jan. 27 T&PW Committee and noting that the City's final comments will follow after the February 6th Council meeting. The EAW report and attachments can be found at the following link:
<http://www.lowryavenuebridge.com/Reports/Default.aspx#EAW>

Below are a summary of staff comments:

- The EAW refers to Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this project. However, Phase 1 & Phase 2 are not clearly defined. Their limits and the interim conditions between construction of the phases are not described. The EAW is inconsistent when defining the impacts of the project phases. The project phases and their impacts need to be more clearly defined. Additional graphics with specific phasing details would be helpful.
- The EAW analysis, impacts and cost of a “no build” scenario (bridge removal without replacement) should be more thoroughly discussed in this document.
- The EAW’s Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) identified potentially contaminated properties needing evaluation. The EAW listed the 15 sites with High or Medium Potential for Contamination. It would be beneficial for the list to include those sites with low potential as well.
- Though the corridor has not been identified as a future transit route, the EAW states the new bridge is being constructed to accommodate 80,000 lb transit vehicles. It would be advantageous to know the types of transit vehicles being considered.
- The allowed truck weights and projected truck volume assumptions should be more thoroughly discussed in this document.
- The EAW addresses existing and projected traffic volumes for this corridor and has determined that a four lane bridge section is required. The EAW needs to discuss how new bottlenecks created when lanes are reduced will be mitigated until future phases are constructed. Traffic impacts to adjacent neighborhoods as the result of a new bridge are unclear.
- A four foot shoulder along the bridge structure and approaches is not sufficient for on-street bicyclists. Although the shoulder is not being called a bike lane it will act as one and should be designed as such. The Hennepin County Bicycle Transportation Plan acknowledges the corridor as a bike route and requires that a 6 foot separated space be preserved for on-street bicycle use. It is recommended that a 6 foot shoulder and not a 4 foot shoulder be installed throughout the project.
- There is an existing 24 inch watermain on the old bridge. This main was placed on the bridge for redundancy in 1958 and allows the city flexibility in maintaining system pressure and flow in the water supply system. There are only a handful of river crossings throughout the city to get water from the Fridley/Columbia Heights plants to the rest of the city. Based on this fact, it is essential that the 24 inch water main be preserved for system redundancy in case another main is temporarily out of service. The EAW has acknowledged the watermain, however the need to maintain this utility should be emphasized.
- It is recommended that the project go before the Minneapolis Public Works Capital Project Task Force (CPTF) process to coordinate design and utility issues.

- Table 2 PERMITS AND APPROVALS notes that a City demolition permit is required. This is an error. Approval is needed from the City's Heritage Preservation Commission to demolition the bridge but no permit is required.
- The document appears to have good water quality improvement. A City Stormwater Management Plan will be required.
- The EAW mentions that existing stormwater outlet points have eroded the river bank and that the project may involve restoration activities in these areas. This may involve minor grading and/or placements of minimal amounts of fill into the river. Hennepin County will need to coordinate with the Minneapolis Public Works Surface Waters and Sewers Division to ensure that erosion is minimized.
- The EAW mentions that the new bridge alignment will also require realignment of the trunk storm sewer outfall from Marshall Avenue NE to the river. This outfall will need to be placed to minimize impacts on the adjacent park and sized in accordance with standard sizing procedures. Hennepin County will need to coordinate with the Minneapolis Public Works Surface Waters and Sewers Division on this issue.
- Architectural elevations of the bridge should be provided for contextual review.

Attachments.:

Attachment 1: EAW Appendix A - Figures

Attachment 2: Staff comments

Cc: Jacob Bronder, P.E., Hennepin County Project Manager