Minnesota Department of Transportation

Transportation Building
395 John Ireland Boulevard
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

September 25, 2007

The Honorable Mayor R.T. Rybak
The Honorable Council President Barb Johnson
The Honorable Councilmember Sandy Colvin Roy, chair, Transportation and Public Works Committee
City Hall
350 So. 5th St.
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Mayor Rybak, Council President Johnson and Chair Colvin Roy:

I am writing to confirm agreements between the City of Minneapolis (City) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) in response to recent requests to provide certain accommodations on specific issues related to the St Anthony Falls (I-35W) Bridge reconstruction project and the City's pending municipal consent.

To begin with, I am pleased to report that through our joint City and MnDOT efforts, we will construct the bridge in accordance with the City's principles. Specifically:

1. The bridge will be designed to improve vehicle capacity and also provide transit capacity.
2. The new bridge design will incorporate options for future transit improvements, including making the new bridge structure light rail transit and bus rapid transit (BRT) ready.
3. The bridge will be built to meet all current environmental and safety standards.
4. The new fifth lanes on the bridge will be dedicated to transit in the future, including high occupancy vehicles (HOV), managed lanes and BRT.
5. The new bridge will be built to allow future transportation needs under the University and 4th Street bridges without significantly raising the two bridge profiles and impacting the adjacent properties.

Further, I am also pleased to report that Mn/DOT can and will accommodate the City's additional requests, as outlined below, within the final design of the bridge project. For this reason, procedurally, the City can move forward in providing municipal consent to the project. Resubmittal of the final project layout to the City, for purposes of municipal consent consideration, is not necessary to accommodate the City's requests unless further changes occur in access, capacity or right-of-way.

Specifically:

1) The City has requested that, "the new bridge preserve significant access on the North bank for a future bikeway, parkway and trails as well as provide access for 2nd St. and needed utilities." Mn/DOT agrees to support this request, as reflected in the project's RFP and it will be reflected in the project's final design. Changes to the project layout, as submitted to the City for municipal consent approval, are not necessary to accommodate this request.

2) The City has requested that, "the new bridge allow for extension of the Bridge 9 bicycle trail on the south side of the bridge." Mn/DOT will accommodate this request in the project's final design, pending a cost participation agreement. When a cost participation agreement is reached, the design changes can be added to the project by contract addendum. Changes to the project layout, as submitted to the City for municipal consent approval, are not necessary to accommodate this request because cost agreements are not subject to the municipal consent process.

3) The City has requested that, "the final project design address impacts related to closure of 14th Ave. on the south side of the bridge." Mn/DOT agrees to support this request and concluded that 14th Ave. can remain open as a one-way street, as it is today. Mn/DOT also supports restoring some lost parking in the area and is working with City staff to finalize design details. Where necessary, this request will be reflected in the project's final design. Changes to the project layout, as submitted to the city for municipal consent approval, are not necessary to accommodate this request.

4) Mn/DOT and the City are in agreement that the bridge project will make changes at exit ramps to University and Washington Avenues to improve pedestrian safety. Mn/DOT agrees to support this request, as reflected in the project's RFP and it will be reflected in the project's final design. Mn/DOT has extended the construction limits of the four impacted ramps to the termini at the intersections with University and Washington Avenues. The lighting at the intersection of the northbound I-35W exit to University Ave. will be improved (all other intersections have lighting), in addition to reconstructing the pedestrian facilities at all the impacted intersections. Mn/DOT is working with City staff to finalize design details, which, where necessary, will be reflected in the project's final design. Changes to the project layout, as submitted to the city for municipal consent approval, are not necessary to accommodate this request.

Beyond the scope of the bridge, issues related to Washington Avenue and transit along the 35W corridor have been discussed by the City and MnDOT and will be addressed. Specifically:

- <u>Northbound freeway access.</u> MnDOT proposes that jointly, the City, MnDOT and Hennepin County will equally fund and conduct over the next three to four months a feasibility study to determine how best to provide northbound freeway

access from Third and Fourth Streets in downtown Minneapolis. This will reduce traffic congestion on Washington Avenue during the peak afternoon rush hour, reduce weaving on the new bridge and could also provide a future transit advantage for northbound traffic. If the study determines that the project is feasible the Administration will support joint funding for the project by the City, MnDOT and Hennepin County.

- Transit along 35W corridor: The Metropolitan Council will examine, as part of its 2030 Regional Development Framework for transportation policy, the feasibility of a transit corridor along 35W north of downtown Minneapolis that could include HOV, HOT or BRT.

Again, I am pleased Mn/DOT has been able to accommodate the requests put forward by the City, thus allowing the municipal consent process to move forward for the bridge. Further, I commend the City staff and policy makers for their hard work on these issues. Continuation of this strong partnership and cooperation in pursuing this important project will serve to restore a vital link for the citizens of the City and state.

Sincerely,

Carol Molnau

Carol Molnau
Lt. Governor/Commissioner