

# **Highway 5 / Shepard Road Access Options Study**

**Open House #1 Summary**

April 23, 2015

## Open House Overview

An open house was held for the Highway 5/ Shepard Road Access Options Study on April 23, 2015. The purpose of this open house was to provide updates on the study, review current conditions in the study area, highlight other projects in the neighborhood and collect feedback from attendees.

- **Date/time:** April 23, 2015, 6:30 – 8:00 PM (attendees began to arrive at 5:45 PM)
- **Location:** St. Paul Jewish Community Center, 1375 St. Paul Ave. St. Paul, MN 55116

The meeting included attendance from approximately 50 members of the public, excluding those who did not sign-in, and not counting project staff.

## Open House Promotion

The open house was promoted to the public in a number of ways, including the following:

- **Direct Mail:** The city completed a direct mailing meeting announcement to approximately 700 residents in the Shepard Rd./Davern St. area.
- **Flyer Distribution:** Flyers promoting the open house were distributed in the Shepard Rd./Davern Street. area. They were distributed primarily in area apartment and condominium complexes, as well as some businesses in Sibley Plaza. The City of Saint Paul also posted the flyer on their website.
- **Media Promotion:** The City of Saint Paul issued a news release to advertise and promote the open house. They also sent it out to their own distribution list on April 16, 2015. The following news outlets and organizations published the open house information. Kent Petterson, of the Community Reporter, also sent the notice to a list of his contacts.
  - *April 14, 2015- St. Paul Pioneer Press:* [http://www.twincities.com/transportation/ci\\_27910564/st-paul-highway-5-shepard-road-project-open](http://www.twincities.com/transportation/ci_27910564/st-paul-highway-5-shepard-road-project-open)
  - *April 14, 2015- Highland District Council:* [http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org/ai1ec\\_event/highway-5shepard-road-access-options-study-open-house/?instance\\_id=](http://highlanddistrictcouncil.org/ai1ec_event/highway-5shepard-road-access-options-study-open-house/?instance_id=)
  - *April 16, 2015- Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County:* <http://friendsoftheparks.org/highway-5shepard-road-access-study-open-house/>

## Meeting Format

The meeting was an hour and a half in length and conducted in an open house format with visual display boards. Saint Paul City Councilmember Chris Tolbert provided an introduction prior to the presentation welcoming attendees and thanking them for their community involvement. A presentation was conducted by Mark Finken, City of Saint Paul, and Josh Maus, SRF Consultant Team, to provide an overview of the study purpose, the study area's boundaries and current traffic patterns in the study area. The presentation was followed by a question and answer session in which participants asked questions and gave input and project staff provided responses.

Interactive activities were conducted and display boards explaining the project and other projects in the area were available for viewing. Staff from the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County Regional Railroad

Authority (RCRRA), the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and members of the consultant team were available to answer questions about the display boards and the projects in general.

## Activities to Collect Comments/Feedback

As part of the open house portion of the meeting, participants were encouraged to provide feedback. Opportunities for feedback included the following:

- **Interactive Exercises:** Participants were asked to participate in three interactive exercises, including a goals exercise, a destination mapping exercise, and a barrier mapping exercise. The results of these exercises are summarized below, beginning on page 2.
- **Comment Sheets:** A comment sheet was provided for participants to submit written comments. Participants were asked to provide responses to the following questions/statements on the comment sheet:
  - What would you like this study to achieve?
  - What are the top three destinations you visit in your neighborhood?
  - What barriers do you encounter when you are biking or walking?
  - Additional feedback and comments?

Participants also provided feedback via email or post mail to project staff. The feedback collected from the comment sheets and email/post mail is provided in below, beginning on page 3.

- **Question and Answer Session:** Following the presentation, feedback was collected via a question and answer session. The questions and responses are provided in the following pages, beginning on page 7.

### Interactive Exercises

- *Goals exercise:* Participants were asked the question “what do you want to get out of this study” and responses were recorded on a large notepad. The following are the responses provided:
  - Safe Intersections and walking at W. 7<sup>th</sup> St./Davern and Davern/Shepard
  - Efficient Transfer from Highway 5 to W. 7th
  - No trucks on Norfolk
  - The public needs to be involved in making the decision
  - Lower speeds on Highway 5 and West 7<sup>th</sup> and Shepard Road (35 mph)
- *Mapping exercises (destinations and barriers):* Two aerial maps showing the study area were available for viewing. Participants were provided with color coded stickers or “dots” to designate where they live, their place of work and frequently visited locations. A map was also provided to collect feedback about barriers to walking and biking in the neighborhood. Participants were encouraged to write comments on post-it notes and attach them to the maps. The results from the map exercises are in Appendix A (page 8).

## Feedback from Comment Sheets

The following are the responses from the comment sheet questions at the open house. The open house yielded 20 comment cards.

### 1. What would you like this study to achieve?

- Reduce amount of traffic on Edgcumbe Rd./Fairview Ave. going north and south
- Find ways to improve traffic flow
- Improve pedestrian safety
- Preserve quality of the residential properties in this area
- Make it easier for people to get around in the area without using a car
- A better riverfront park
- Hwy 494 right by the Hilton: the freeway splits and one part goes across a long bridge. The other part goes to St. Paul. Please put a St. Paul sign there. Too much traffic has been diverted across the bridge and river out into the sticks, missing St. Paul altogether. Thank you.
- We need a big box store to walk in for exercise, like a large Target store in the Ford plant site. –Sidewalks are icy in the wintertime and an indoor walking path is needed, especially for older folk. Going to the Mall of America requires using the freeway and traffic is too heavy and fast, so it's not a good option.
- I don't want the neighborhood further divided by building a bypass on Norfolk Ave. I also don't want five lanes of traffic next to my windows and deck. Also, consider what the old gentleman said [during the questions and answer session]: traffic flows on W. 7<sup>th</sup> St Consider traffic arrows and a couple of pedestrian overpasses. The Norfolk Ave bypass would also make it more difficult for people in The Pointe area to get to the river and its amenities.
- Some sense, maybe, of what people in the neighborhood want, besides considerations elsewhere.
- To not spend any more money on stupid "transit" issues
- A reasonable traffic plan that considers needs/wishes of current residents over the wishes of Johnson Bros. to make more money.
- Making walking and biking possible in the neighborhood, not just driving.
- Roadways are barriers to neighborhood access and cohesion.
- Redevelopment of the "highways" that are now W. 7<sup>th</sup> St and Shepard Rd.
- It seems best to make a more direct connection to Shepard Rd. to alleviate traffic on W 7<sup>th</sup> St in order to make it a calmer street.
- Potentially designate Shepard Rd. as MN-5
- An understanding of all feasible options to make W 7<sup>th</sup> St a more walkable, shoppable, livable urban street rather than a highway
- A safer walkable neighborhood!
- Advise a consistent 35MPH on 7<sup>th</sup> & Shepard Rd.
- Stated goals that make both Shepard Rd. and W 7<sup>th</sup> safer to cross.
- Creation of a safer neighborhood with message to commuters (all drivers) to slow down. Speed limit mandatory, both roads on the west side of the bridge.
- Listen to neighborhood and respond and care.
- How to get more traffic to Shepard Rd. – from Hwy 5 and downtown St. Paul.
- Find out exactly why folk want to use W 7<sup>th</sup> and access neighborhoods?
- Access 35E North?
- Ascertain destinations on W 7<sup>th</sup>?
- Uninformed of how to use Shepard Rd?

- I would like to see an integrated study that forecasts traffic patterns on Shepard/Davern and Ford Plant site area developed. How will THW5 bridge accommodate major increases in residential housing/multi-family in the area?

2. *What are the top three destinations you visit in your neighborhood?*

- Restaurants:
  - Taco Bell
  - McDonald's
  - Buca di Beppo
  - Famous Dave's
  - Burger King
  - Seventh Street Social
- Shopping:
  - Trader Joe's (2)
  - Shopping Center
  - Cooper's Market (2)
  - Mississippi Market
  - Sibley Plaza shopping (4)
  - W 7<sup>th</sup> Street businesses east of 35E
  - Sibley Plaza out to Mall of America
  - Highland Nursery
- Samuel H Morgan Trail
- W 7<sup>th</sup> Community Center
- Highland Village (6)
- Airport (2)
- Summit Church
- Crossing Hwy 5 bridge
- Shepard Rd. to downtown/35E/Montreal & W 7<sup>th</sup> crossing
- Highland Park
- Downtown to St. Paul
- JCC (2)
- Post Office on W 7<sup>th</sup> St (2)
- Home (Fairview Ave & Highland Pkwy)
- 35E North
- Going up Cleveland Ave via River Road and further north to Marshall Ave or E River Road N.

3. *What barriers do you encounter when you are biking or walking?*

- Crossing Shepard Rd (3).
- Major crossings
- Not a lot, a bit by Homecroft and Sibley Plaza, street crossing
- More traffic congestion in Highland due to cars using Fairview Ave and Edgecumbe St to Hwy 5
- Traffic flows fast on W 7<sup>th</sup> St. Signals are not timed well. Unsignaled intersections often don't have pedestrian refuges.
- Fast moving traffic on Shepard Rd. and West 7<sup>th</sup> St. (2)
- Fast moving traffic
- 7<sup>th</sup> St. traffic (2)

- Speeding traffic
- Potholes
- Terrible street quality in neighborhood and bike trail pavement on Shepard Rd.
- Not enough ways to connect to the trail across Shepard Rd. and nowhere to safely bike once you cross Shepard Rd. into the neighborhood.
- Literal barrier between the river paths and Shepard Rd. Need more crosswalks and guardrail cuts.
- None! I learned to look both ways before crossing a street. Stop the “bike” lanes. Put this money into our streets and reduce taxes.
- I never walk/bike to the river on this stretch: too unsafe.
- Consider driving barriers too: there are parts of the area that are almost equally impossible to drive to.
- Bluffs
- Shepard is easily crossed from our residence at Gannon Rd. light to use the walking paths. It won't be easy to access river area if Norfolk is a Shepard Rd. access

4. *Please write any additional feedback, comments, or input in the space below:*

- Consider alternate public transportation (a metro) from airport to St. Paul – not University Ave. More southern route –Shepard Rd.?
- Has the decision already been made?
- It should mostly be about slow traffic on W. 7<sup>th</sup> St.
- If you can get more cars on Shepard Rd., great. But you need a pedestrian/bike crossing at Rankin St.
- Has the W. 7<sup>th</sup> St business community been contacted and notified about the plan to decrease traffic on their street?
- Don't slow down traffic. It will cause even more congestion. If this is the gateway to St. Paul, then put up a large pretty arched sign over West 7<sup>th</sup> St. saying this is the gateway to St. Paul. Otherwise only the locals know this. Why not capitalize on the fact?
- I'm concerned that the speed on Shepard Rd. might be reduced. I think it's crucial to maintain Shepard Rd. as an efficient way to move traffic and keep the speed limit where it is. I'd like to see W 7<sup>th</sup> St become more of a city street and less of a thoroughfare.
- I echo others' concerns about using Davern St. between W. 7<sup>th</sup> St and Shepard Rd. as a main road, as it would divide the neighborhood. I am all for doing something with visual impact, as the Hwy 5 bridge transitions into the neighborhood (signage, street lamps, trees, etc.) That makes it an obvious transition. It's important to keep it attractive and inviting.
- Don't slow down Shepard Rd., whatever you do with W 7<sup>th</sup> St. Something could be done with W. 7<sup>th</sup> St. for whoever they affect (they don't really affect me so much)
- No money for these “projects.” Our taxes are out of sight.
- If it is not broke, don't fix it. Fix what we have before more “projects.”
- I don't want Norfolk Ave to become a busier street. That would lower the value of condominiums facing it. There's much open land, some of which could be used for traffic diversion.
- Lower the speed limit on W 7<sup>th</sup> St. to 25 MPH and enforce it. This would discourage through traffic.
- A Hwy 5/Shepard Rd. solution would be hard to implement without a Shepard Rd./35E solution.
- Adding ramps from Shepard Rd. to north of I-35E would be a good idea. Since 25% of traffic is to/from Edgcumbe St, it would be good to study a bus route from Highland Park to the airport/MOA. Please get pedestrian counts for the study area. In general, try to extend/restore the street grid while realigning the roadways. Keep the idea of right-of-way for Riverview corridor service in mind as well.

- W 7<sup>th</sup> St really should not exceed 35 MPH.
- Save commuters time by creating a smooth Hwy 5 exit to Shepard Rd. East.
- Slow everybody down to create a safer walkable neighborhood.
- Every traffic calming strategy should be deployed along with better signage, traffic control
- Nick Carpenter, MnDOT, will carry message to supervisors to slow down Hwy 5 West of the bridge.
- Do not even think of using Norfolk to access Shepard – in fact, close Norfolk exit! Adding another busy intersection to Shepard access for walking and even driving will not solve W 7<sup>th</sup> issues.
- Use better signage at Shepard Rd. exit from Hwy 5 i.e. “To downtown St. Paul”
- Make a 35E North access at Shepard Rd.
- Make entry and exit at present area off Shepard Rd. easier to access – 2 lanes?
- Provide light rail transit, connect airport with downtown St. Paul
- Would bridges (pedestrian & bike) help crossing, especially on Shepard?
- The exercise this evening may have been “politically correct” and allowed residents to vent vs. city- especially on road maintenance, but it accomplished little, if anything. I thought the presenters were far too coy. Have decisions been made and the session is used only to say that the “public input” was solicited?

*Other Comments Received (email and post mail)*

After the open house on April 23, feedback on the study was received via email and post mail. The following is a summary of the emails received:

- Great River Road Passage plan seems incompatible with the goals of the Highway 5/Shepard Rd Access Options Study. The Great River Road Passage plan seems to call for lower speeds on Shepard Road to create a more park-like environment, but this study seems to want to divert traffic to Shepard. If the speed limit is too low, people will not want to divert to Shep Rd.
- Businesses are currently on W. 7<sup>th</sup> and likely want to maintain high traffic volume to attract customers. If traffic is diverted to Shepard Rd. will businesses move to Shepard Road and interfere with the Great River Passage plan?
- Improve traffic distribution by building a northbound on-ramp off of Shepard going N. on 35E
- What would direct access to Hwy 5 from Shepard Rd along Norfolk accomplish other than create a barrier between Johnson Brothers/US Bank site project and the rest of the neighborhood?

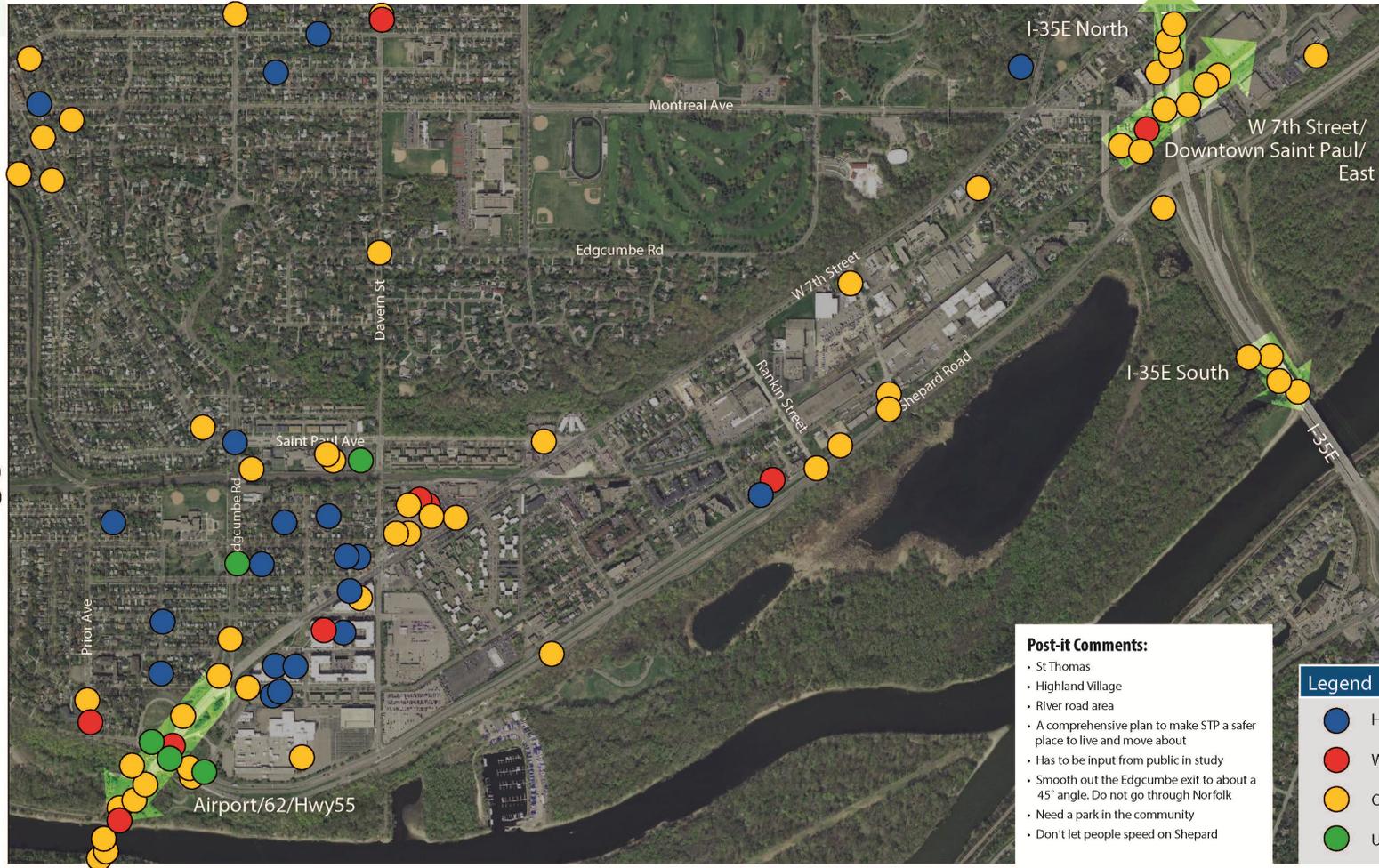
## Discussion Comments and Feedback

The following is a summary of the general discussion and the question and answer session.

- Question: What is max number of cars the bridge can carry?
  - Answer: *Josh Maus (SRF) - 20,000 cars per lane is a planning level estimate. That number can vary based on traffic characteristics. The Highway 5 bridge still has some room for growth.*
- Question: Can we have numbers for both directions?
  - Answer: *Josh Maus- The numbers presented reflect both directions.*
- Question: Why don't we just fix our roads? We already have so many existing things that need work so why are we doing this? Fix St. Paul Ave and Cleveland Ave because cars are breaking when they drive over pot holes on these streets.
  - Answer: *Mark Finken (City of St. Paul): We would like to both fix roads and slow traffic.*
- Question: Why can't we just lower speed limit? (25 mph was suggested)
  - Answer: *Mark Finken - Lowering speed limits is something that can be looked into, but 25 mph is not is feasible.*
- Question: Is there data on truck traffic?
  - Answer: *Yes, truck data will be factored into the evaluation.*
- Question: Johnson Brothers already have plans out. Are they the ones running the show? Have decisions been made politically speaking and we are just going through the process?
  - Answer: *Mark Finken - No decisions have been made and no money has been allocated or set aside for this project.*
- Question: If the goal is to balance traffic you must already have ideas and we want to hear them. When can we hear them?
  - Answer: *Mark Finken - At the next open house. The City would like to eliminate concepts that are fatally flawed before coming back to the public.*
- Comment: I'd like to see the recognition that the Shepard/Davern area is a neighborhood.
- Comment: There should be a bypass between The Pointe and Johnson Brothers.
- Comment: Don't sense togetherness in the room or neighborhood. This area is the first thing people see when they enter Saint Paul from the airport.
- Comment: We should use rumble strips on W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Comment: There should be turn arrows at some stoplight.
- Comment: Johnson brothers, Victoria Otto and the Ford Site redevelopment will come first and the neighborhood will be stuck with the current roads.

# Appendix A : Open House Mapping Exercise Results

# Where do you go in your neighborhood?



Highway 5 / Shepard Road Access Options Study



## Where are the walking and biking barriers?

### Post-it Comments:

- Shepard Road should remain a 4-lane road
- No truck traffic on Shepard? No trucks fine on Shepard
- Do not extend Wheeler
- Widen clover leaf - no impacts to blgs or Bucca etc.
- More direct connection off bridge to Shepard with giant curve
- At grade signalized intersection with Edgcombe
- ROW for Riverview within this? Widen Hwy 5 or put 2nd level?
- Do not consider Norfolk as access to Shepard. Cuts neighborhood again 1. 7th, 2. Norfolk, 3. Shepard.
- The W. 7th St and St. Paul Ave and McDonalds intersection needs to be straightened out literally.
- Lack of transit options between Shepard Davern and Highland Village
- Close W. 7th up to Wheeler or Davern
- Very difficult to drive or walk southbound from Edgcombe to the river, Bucca, etc.
- Close Norfolk Ave exit, changing Norfolk to Hwy would reduce many pedestrians access to the river.



### Legend

- Walking Barriers
- Biking Barriers
- Undefined

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