

June 29, 2021

Present: Betty Wheeler, Ray Bryan, Pat Thompson, Kim Frair, Scott Jensen, Marcus Young

Absent: Bailey Waters, Karen Nelson, Nick Studenski

Guests: MnDOT staff: Melissa Barnes (North Area Manager – Anoka and Ramsey), Tony Wotzka (North Area Coordinator), Kaare Festvog (Speed Limits/Traffic), and Cherzon Riley (Speed Limits/Traffic).

Neighbors: Manny Comstock, Dave and Alice Duggan, Mary Boyd-Brent, Karen Williams, Charlotte Osborne, Jon Schumacher, Betsy Reed, Len Jennings, Billie's iPad, Saraj Shahi, Dori Graff, Debbie Meister, Carol Krauze, Carol Herman, Barry Riesch, Susan Claire, Cindy, Susan Dean, Elizabeth & Marcia, H Kazemi, Virgil Larson, Diane, Theodore Lee, Aaron Lorenz

1. Minutes of April 2021 were approved (Wheeler/Bryan, unanimous). Minutes of May 2021 were amended to include the fact that Betty Wheeler was present and then approved (Bryan/Wheeler, unanimous).
2. **MnDOT staff presented information on Highway 280**, first on the speed study and then on plans related to removing the left turn signal at Broadway.

Melissa Barnes introduced the speed study.

She said they will coordinate with the city of St. Paul (and we assume Lauderdale?). They are still studying.

They have a response to the SAPCC resolution against raising the speed limit, will send in writing. Most of its content is also covered here.

Why MnDOT performs speed studies: to advise drivers of the maximum reasonable/safe operating speed in favorable conditions. The basis for speed enforcement should be fair. Trunk highways are supposed to be assessed 10 years for appropriate speed limits because conditions may change.

There are statutory and engineering studies (MnDOT does engineering studies). The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) governs. Data is collected when the road is free-flowing.

They look at the 85th and 50th percentile data (speeds those % of drivers are going), 10 mph, crash data, and do test drives. Also road type and condition, adjacent land use, number/type of access points, geometry.

Safety is the #1 priority. "The majority of drivers take all factors into consideration when choosing their speed."

Deviating from the 85th as the speed limit is only done when indicated by a large number of factors, generally reduces safety, and requires continuous heavy enforcement.

Case studies were offered: University Ave in Columbia Heights had 45, 50 and 55mph speed limits, but the 85th percentile was about 54mph in one direction regardless, and 52 - 55 in the other direction. Nine other case studies found only small increases (1 to 5mph) over the new speed limit when they were changed to reflect the 85th percentile (note: none of these examples were limited access highways)

Currently the 280 speed study so far shows 60-62mph as the 85th percentile, with the 50th percentile at 58-59mph. The posted speed of 55mph is below 15% at the south end of the applicable speed zone, and below 40% at north end of the zone

Annual average daily traffic (AADT) is 39-62K

"55mph speed limit does not reflect the road design and surrounding environment"

Tony Wotzka then spoke about removing the Broadway light.

MnDOT did a 2019/20 traffic study.

They would keep the southbound on-ramp from Broadway and the westbound turn lane the southbound lane. They would install a double-sided plate beam guardrail across the current opening.

The major question is where would the current turning traffic go? Hennepin/Industrial Blvd can accommodate the increased traffic and "provide better network operations"

The current 5-6K ADT would shift from 280/Broadway (out of 14K currently on Broadway). About half — 3 or 3.5K — would go to Hennepin (added to Hennepin's current 15K). The dual left turn lane that was added at Larpenteur back in 2009 will accommodate the added traffic.

They have projected to 2045, but it was very hard to decipher where they think the vehicles go in general, and they didn't spend much time explaining this (and this is more Minneapolis's problem)

At the 280/Broadway intersection, they expect 90% fewer crashes ("conflicts").

They consider the current crash rate at Broadway "critical" because it above 1 (1.66) on the measurement compared to similar intersections (signalized, high volume intersections). Between 2015 and 2019, there were 69 crashes (which = 1.15 per month). 51 rear-end, 13 side-swipe, 3 ran off the road to the right, 1 left turn main line, and 1 other. 53 were property damage only, 16 were minor injuries.

No serious injuries or deaths.

Community questions and comments

Barry: The Como ramps are more dangerous than the Broadway light. Too many trees are being used for sound walls.

Debbie: This has implications for Rethinking I-94. Changing the speed limit on 280 is disingenuous to the Rethinking I 94 process. Changing the speed limit based on the 85th percentile because people are speeding is old thinking. Climate change needs to be the primary thing in planning.

Betsy: It makes no sense to have a higher speed limit on 280 than 94.

Jon: You want to raise it because people don't comply? Makes no sense. It's a short stretch, even without the Broadway light, there are trucks merging – some people now go 70 and dart among the trucks.

Jockeying for position. The existence of the Broadway light creates gaps in the southbound traffic so people can merge coming in from Como and Hennepin. This is a solution looking for a problem.

Karen agrees with Debbie (from the chat)

Manny: Used to run the FedEx terminal off of Broadway, made much use of the Broadway/280 access. 280 is tricky, you have to have your wits about you. Industrial seems like it wouldn't take that much traffic.

Dori: Enters 280 at Como daily. Higher speed increases noise. This is a poor use of funds. Pavement changes and sound walls, doing something about the racing cars.

Dave and Alice: Oppose removal of the light and the speed limit increase. Entries and exits require almost instant stops or merge problems that will be aggravated by the speed increase. Driver's ed is no longer taught as an inexpensive option in school, there's more distraction, more tailgating and weaving, not yielding to merging. Immigrant and international drivers, proximity to the U. Aging drivers with slower reflexes. Speed differentials from heavy trucks entering near Kasota/EPD and University/Territorial.

Carol K: 30 years on 280. Will there be a speed study on 94 and 36? (Answer: no study on 94; 36 study may be this year or next.) There seems no logic in changing the speed limit on 280 if the connecting highways on either side are at 55mph. Teaching new drivers to drive on 280 is already bad enough.

Merges are the worst... money to make it safer should be spent on the merges. Stop and go, ability to get up to speed. There is no gain in time (20 seconds) for the whole length of the highway by going faster.

Drag racing is a bigger problem.

Charlotte: 5mph saves 16 seconds.

Ray: bad weather, bridges are a recipe for disaster

MnDOT response:

Driver compliance at 55mph is not there: raising the speed limit means less conflict with those who are going slower. Arbitrary enforcement is possible with the current speed limit. You are making law-breakers of your neighbors.

Marcia: I have a hard time accepting that. 5mph over the limit is what drivers think they can get away with... raise the limit, then people will go 5 more than the new limit. The speed limit indicates the safe speed to many drivers.

Pat: The slow-speed drivers are not doing that speed from choice but from physical reality, as with

heavy trucks entering the highway. Also, I have seen a study done for MnDOT (by a consultant called CH2M), about the time when speed limits were raised post-1997, which found “higher speed limits were associated with increases in fatal crashes that were substantially greater than would be expected based on the increase in VMT.”

Melissa (MnDOT): We would have to look at that study. There is a pavement project to improve sound that way in planning. Ramps can be improved.

Betsy: 280 is a unique road, other roads’ studies will not apply. It’s an outlier. Increasing the speed limit between two highways that have lower speed limits makes no sense.

Karen: Noise and safety were much better when the speed limit was 45mph. Put it back.

Betty: Taking out the turn light is justifying the speed limit, it’s tautological. Originally 280 was a lower speed highway, not necessarily a limited access highway, the elements that made it slower were sequentially removed. Disproportionate impact – we are cut off from our neighbors to the west, people don’t know Westgate is in Saint Paul/St. Anthony Park. This is going the wrong direction. State law requires stakeholder viewpoints. Forcing people to own a car is not the future, crossing the highway is being undermined. Climate change – you can’t grow your way out of it with more speed. Slower speeds use fuel more efficiently, create less air pollution. Look to the future.

Melissa (MnDOT): Remote speed monitoring works (but is not allowed in Minnesota). Advocate for that kind of enforcement. They did study truck speeds specifically, found they were often going faster than the cars.

Debbie: Downsize it to make it a city road / boulevard.

Carol H: 280 is a connector rather than a true highway, why does it have to fall under the same classification?

Carol K: It’s not a typical road, making us lawbreakers... that’s a fallacy. That lawbreaking is everywhere so what is to be done? Don’t patronize us – listen to us. We use this road daily.

Kaare (MnDOT): Urban highway speed limits are a legacy of the 55 federal limit, speed studies would dictate that all urban highway speeds should be higher.

Debbie: This is in the Rethinking I-94 study area, why is this being done now? St. Paul’s city council resolution is clear on what the city wants in the highways in the city.

Melissa (MnDOT): The interchange is in the Rethinking I-94 area, but the 280 highway itself is not, the highway was on a schedule for this study and other work.

Sunny: 35E speed limit is 45mph, what about that?

Kaare (MnDOT): That was from an arbitration agreement. People don’t go 45mph on 35E. Has not done a speed study. Trucks are banned there, causes truck traffic on Snelling.

Carol K: People on 35E seem to go more like 55... which indicates they don’t go 60 70 or 75. I’ve never seen anyone get a ticket on 280.

Barry: The last year (during COVID) the speeding and highways have been crazy. This was not the time to conduct a speed study.

Broadway light removal comments:

Ray: Removing it would make my life and work much harder. Harder for the businesses off of Broadway.

Carol K: Would repaving the turn lane to make it longer make it safer? Having the light definitely allows openings in the traffic for the drivers entering at ramps south of the light.

Betty: Modeling has GIGO (garbage in, garbage out) problem. On the traffic redistribution, for instance, Cemstone trucks coming from Energy Park Drive currently go to 280 to Broadway. Will they go up Raymond instead? Was that considered?

Melissa (MnDOT): Concern about potential for serious crashes, death. Longer turn lane wouldn’t help. Risk of a left turn broadside (someone running the southbound red) especially. They use cell phone data to track where vehicles go. They are not done with outreach to the Minneapolis businesses nearby.

Wrapping up

Melissa (MnDOT): The \$452K listed in the TIP is now \$250K because they’ve changed the design of

the barrier. The speed study may be done this fall, maybe next year. The cities will have input. The reconsideration that appears to be underway of the 85th percentile rule and MUCTD is mostly about their application on city streets. Not so much on highways. Speed limits do not change the speed. There are opportunities to make changes to the safety of the roadway. (Editorial note: Will not address the pollution or climate/VMT and most likely not the sound issues.)

Pat: As requested before the meeting (but there wasn't time to get it from the archives), we would like crash data for a five-year period before the 35W bridge fell, the time after the bridge was rebuilt but while the speed limit was 50 south of Como, and then after the speed limit was raised to 55. (There was no speed study done when it was raised to 55.) Because there are different speed limits north and south of Como, it would make sense to also see the data of those time intervals by those segments, if it exists with that level of detail. Also, if you have a date listing of what the speed limit has been on 280 over time, that would be helpful.

Betty thanked all the attenders of the meeting for sharing their real-world experience.

3. Action item on Highway 280:

Betty Wheeler moved the following: SAPCC opposes removing the Broadway light and should make official comments in the TIP process. Ray Bryan seconded. Passed unanimously.

Future topic: should we work on a resolution or motion on supporting automated (camera) enforcement of speed limits, as a fairer way to make our streets and highways safer and also fairer for all, without the pitfalls of selective enforcement? Overcoming the legal challenges?

4. Rethinking 94: Betty and Scott gave suggestions to a MnDOT consultant on improving the presentation, pare it down, make it easier to read/user friendly. Also on the content particular to SSAP.

5. MnDOT Livability Workshop: Next workshop's topic is Trust – July 22 (they are always the 4th Thursday at 10 a.m.). To get the link (it's done with Webex), email Hannah Rank, Hannah.Rank@state.mn.us

6. Semi truck parking on city streets: Do we want to urge the City Council to ban this if Minneapolis is considering a ban, so it doesn't all get pushed into Saint Paul? We had a brief discussion with no consensus.

7. Construction effects on street parking in South St. Anthony Park. Pat shared that Kathryn had an email exchange with one of SAPCC's former office neighbors from the Security Building about how tight street parking is, given all the construction and the construction workers parking. It was suggested that the Security Building owners talk to the Baker Court owners to see if they can work something out.

8. Updates:

- The Territorial Road sidewalk started work today. The contractors got lots done already! Will probably be done this week, but the contractor will have to come back to finish up around the dry well afterward. Benches, crosswalks and our project will be a major focus of our July meeting when we have final info on our grants.
- Environment Committee (with CEZ) will be planting 100 trees in SSAP this fall (probably October). Maybe look into root-watering stakes (Noll Hardware can get them). Find out about the project here: <https://creativeenterprisezone.org/trees>
- Cleveland reconstruction has been put off mostly until 2022 and 2023. Some work will happen behind the sidewalks after the Fair this year, but no street closures.
- Tree branch trimming: photos were taken and given to Saint Paul Forestry. One branch on Como is from a tree on private property, Kathryn will reach out to them.
- Parking minimums citywide policy: Eliminating minimums passed the Planning Commission last week, will be going to the City Council at some point relatively soon.
- Your Speed sign was finally moved, is now north-facing on Raymond just north of the co-op. Next location: northbound on Raymond north of the RR bridge. Given the construction on Territorial, probably drop that location? Add Hampden back. Both Hampden and Franklin have 25mph speed limits, so grouping those two together makes sense in terms of switching out the metal sign.
- The bike lane painting on Territorial is on hold waiting for repair of a camera that's needed for painting at night (due to high traffic levels) and also because of the current construction. We assume the roadbed

will be put back in the same condition it started in after they are done. (Charles is also closed north of the Yellow Tree project near McDonalds.)

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Photos of the Territorial sidewalk installation



Looking west from Carleton



The new bumpout next to The Ray.



Looking east from Seal.