

Recap of East Downtown Council's Business Forum
Thursday, March 21, 2013
Washington Avenue (County Road 52) Design Project

This business forum convened at the aloft Minneapolis Hotel located at 900 Washington Avenue South in the Downtown East neighborhood of Minneapolis.

- EDC President Jim Norkosky opened the forum by introducing himself and inviting guests to introduce themselves. Then he announced that the EDC's annual meeting would be on Thursday, April 18th at the Normandy Inn and Suites, 405 South 8th Street and that plenty of parking is available. Topics will include the year in review, accomplishments and future goals, election of the board of directors, and potentially the beginning of a 3-part series related to the new People's Stadium.
- Jennifer Lowry, Senior Design Engineer, Hennepin County Transportation Department, gave an audiovisual presentation on the proposed reconstruction of Washington Avenue between Hennepin and 5th Avenue South (reference the Project Overview distributed describing the purpose, round two meetings planned for spring 2013, and the round one summary of key themes). This total street reconstruction from right-of-way to right-of-way will include pavement, curbs and gutters, driveways, storm drains, sidewalks, and signal modifications and is scheduled to begin in 2014. The full design concept plan from Hennepin to I-35W they are developing in coordination with the City of Minneapolis and transportation consultants Zan Associates will provide design guidance for this portion of the corridor and, as funds become available, will allow reconstruction of the remainder of the corridor. They are also working closely with Metro Transit regarding its existing and future ridership and bus route system that would have an impact on the corridor. Currently they are working through the alternative designs in order to find a balance given space constraints and safety and traffic issues, and as a consequence do not have a final design proposal to present at this time. The County State Aid Highway Fund (CSAH) is funding this project.

In addition to the first design charrette held on November 30th and the first public meeting held on December 4th, they have conducted over 20 small meetings similar to the instant meeting with businesses and individual property owners, and have received over 1,000 responses to the online survey to help define the values of the general public as it relates to the project. A general consensus is to have a green corridor with a high-quality pedestrian realm, bike facilities, good connections across the avenue, full development with some on-street parking, and reasonable traffic flow. For more information visit <http://www.hennepin.us/portal/site/HennepinUS/menuitem.b1ab75471750e40fa01dfb47ccf06498/?vgnextoid=488e2e058f408310VgnVCM10000099fe4689RCRD>.

Responding to questions from the audience, Jon Wertjes, Director of Traffic and Parking, City of Minneapolis Department of Public Works, explained that their focus is how to get pedestrians across intersections as quickly and safely as possible. Some of the things they are doing throughout downtown is retiming traffic signals according to the crossing distance or, in locations where pedestrian traffic is low, providing a push button. Retiming will be implemented on this corridor this summer and both options will be implemented when the corridor is rebuilt.

Wertjes also explained the South 4th Street ramp to northbound I-35W (Hennepin County Project 1105) project intended to relieve congestion on Washington Avenue South and reduce traffic diversion to the University Avenue/4th Street SE interchange. For more detailed information about this project visit <http://www.hennepin.us/portal/site/HennepinUS/menuitem.b1ab75471750e40fa01dfb47ccf06498/?vgnextoid=0b12b5ecde8d1310VgnVCM10000099fe4689RCRD>.

Lowry encouraged those with additional questions to contact her at Jennifer.Lowry@co.hennepin.mn.us.

- Jim adjourned the forum by thanking Adam Herbranson, the General Manager for aloft, for hosting the event at his facility and thanked the audience for attending.