



Dakota County

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Title: Overview And Update On County Project 66-15 Needs And Alternatives For Trunk Highway 52 Interchange At County Roads 62 Or 66 In Vermillion Township

Sponsors: Transportation

Indexes:

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Attachments: 1. Project Study Area Map, 2. Summary of Alternatives

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9/13/2022	1	Physical Development Committee of the Whole	presented and filed	

DEPARTMENT: Transportation

FILE TYPE: Regular Information

TITLE

Overview And Update On County Project 66-15 Needs And Alternatives For Trunk Highway 52 Interchange At County Roads 62 Or 66 In Vermillion Township

PURPOSE/ACTION REQUESTED

Receive an update and information on planning and alternatives for a new interchange with Trunk Highway (TH) 52 at or near the intersections with County Road (CR) 62 or CR 66 in Vermillion Township.

SUMMARY

To promote a safe and efficient transportation system, staff proceeded with work on County Project 66-15 under Contract No. C0033927, authorized by Resolution No. 21-191 (April 6, 2021). The contract includes studies to evaluate needs and alternatives for transportation infrastructure to improve safety and mobility around TH 52 at or near the intersections with CR 62 or CR 66. The work completed to date includes traffic studies to document the need for a project and to review a wide range of alternatives. Dakota County is the lead agency, and County Staff and our consultants have worked regularly with many stakeholders, including Vermillion Township, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR), other agencies, and several property owners. The discussions and evaluations of project needs and alternatives have also included two public open-house meetings held on September 28, 2021, and on July 27, 2022.

Throughout the planning process, staff has presented the complexity of the study area within the

context of balancing transportation safety/mobility objectives with the area's valued natural resources and community features. These resources and planning factors include:

- The Vermillion River, including MnDNR-managed Aquatic Management Areas
- Unique small-acreage specialty crop farms near the junction of TH 52 and CR 66
- The area's many other farmlands, residential/neighborhood sites, and other natural resource or community features

The needs that justify an interchange design solution are based primarily on long-term roadway safety while also providing County Road connections and crossings at TH 52. These needs have been recognized in high-level planning for more than 20 years and are reflected in many sketch-level interchange planning concepts. Minnesota Department of Transportation has also managed the safety problems with projects in 2014 and 2017, constructing lower-cost restricted-crossing U-turn (RCUT) intersections. However, staff's current work helped clarify the long-term limitations of the RCUT designs, with crash rates and crash severity still higher in the area today than at similar Minnesota intersections. Future growth in traffic will result in greater long-term concerns, as fewer and smaller gaps in traffic will cause delays and increased crash risks for all vehicles.

Dakota County and consultant staff are now concluding the first phase of the project need and alternatives studies and are documenting work to date in a Feasibility and Location Study Report. This phase has included many stakeholder outreach activities, including the public open house on July 27, 2022, attended by approximately 100 persons. Other recent activities included meetings and communications with many property owners; meetings with Vermillion Township, Empire Township, and the City of Vermillion; and meetings with representatives of MnDOT, MnDNR, the Vermillion River Watershed, and the Hmong American Farming Association. In community and stakeholder meetings, staff initially presented up to eight conceptual interchange alternatives, reflecting options to serve long-term transportation needs while avoiding or minimizing adverse impacts (balancing many factors as noted above).

At the July 27 public open house meeting, staff presented the eight interchange alternatives and the recommended first steps in screening to move forward with more detailed study of four alternatives:

- Two alternative concepts at CR 66 & TH 52
- One alternative concept at CR 62 & TH 52
- One alternative concept with partial connections at both of the locations (a split interchange)

The staff's identification of four alternatives will support a greater focus on feasibility issues and the balancing of objectives with impacts. Specifically, the four remaining alternatives:

- Reflect greater feasibility compared to alternatives dismissed from further study
- Retain the range of tradeoffs seen in the initial eight concept alternatives
- Will help sharpen focus on the key issues and clarify the most promising designs

Next, staff will be working with stakeholders to refine and evaluate alternatives, including comparisons of the four interchange alternatives with the No-Build alternative. Schedule objectives include identifying the preferred alternative by late 2022/early 2023 and completing preliminary engineering design and environmental documentation by late 2023.

RECOMMENDATION

Information only; no action requested.

EXPLANATION OF FISCAL/FTE IMPACTS

- ☒ None ☐ Current budget ☐ Other
☐ Amendment Requested ☐ New FTE(s) requested

RESOLUTION

Information only; no action requested.

PREVIOUS BOARD ACTION

21-191; 4/6/21

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment: Project Study Area Map

BOARD GOALS

- ☒ A Great Place to Live ☐ A Healthy Environment
☐ A Successful Place for Business and Jobs ☐ Excellence in Public Service

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT LEVEL

- ☐ Inform and Listen ☐ Discuss ☒ Involve ☐ N/A

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