

Dear Neighbors:

I write to update you on a significant project that affects all neighborhoods touching I-35W from 46th Street to downtown Minneapolis – the I-35W Access Project. The City Council is considering a resolution (DRAFT attached) which will reaffirm multi-modal access – *transit* -- at Lake Street as the City's highest priority. This resolution will be considered at the Transportation & Public Works Committee meeting (Nov 6th) and then by the full Council on Friday, November 16th. I support the concepts articulated in this resolution and welcome your feedback.

This prioritization is critical in order to reduce the price tag and timeline for the Access Project (approaching ½ billion dollars by the time it is built, now anticipated to occur between 2024 to 2030). This approach will advance the goal of Lake Street Access and promote *transit first* as a way to improve access and reduce congestion in the areas of Lake Street and the I-35W Corridor.

The I-35W Access Project began in the late 1990's as a movement to increase critical freeway access to Lake Street. Improving access at Lake Street would help correct the historical inequity of the I-35W construction in the 1960's, which bypassed Lake Street and fostered the economic decline of area neighborhoods and businesses.

The project concept grew to include not only “access” at Lake Street (north and southbound ramps), but also expanding the freeway to add a dedicated lane for transit, adding ramps at 28th Street, removing the 35th/36th Street ramps, adding ramps at 38th Street, reconfiguration of the 5th Avenue ramp to northbound I-35W, and necessary mitigation measures for neighborhood streets that the project advisory committee to the Access Project worked so tirelessly to develop. Today, these components are estimated to cost \$430 – 480 million, or almost \$100 million per freeway mile. With our state transportation funding crisis, this means that the Access Project is going nowhere fast.

What has changed since the existing “Access Project” concept layout was developed?

- In September 2007, MnDOT was awarded a federal grant of \$133 million to implement BRT on I-35W (this grant is called the Urban Partnership Agreement). The UPA does not include funding for a Lake Street multi-modal transit station, one of the most important destinations for travelers to and from Minneapolis as well as a major employment hub. Re-prioritizing Lake Street Access will assist us in obtaining funding for a Lake Street Transit Station – we need this transit station now!
- MnDOT now claims that I-35W does not need to be expanded to accommodate a dedicated lane for transit (one of the Access Project assumptions) – a transit lane can be added by restriping the existing freeway.
- The Access Project currently does not provide for a future connection to the Midtown Greenway. Yet, the Midtown Greenway is now widely considered a great candidate for future rail transit, connecting the Hiawatha and Southwest LRT lines, and this potential must be accommodated in any Lake Street transit station/Access design.
- Global warming requires that our transportation models focus on increasing transit options and reducing congestion. Even Governor Pawlenty and his administration acknowledge that global warming must drive our decision-making.

What will happen to the rest of the Access project? The resolution states that portions of the Access project north of 28th Street and south of 31st Street should be reprioritized into a second phase or a second project, with funding sought after Lake Street Access is fully funded. As I have since done since I began serving as the 8th Ward Councilmember, I will continue to work to promote housing and economic development along the 38th Street Corridor and advocate for traffic calming measures on our residential streets, including on 35th and 36th Streets.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding this Resolution.

Elizabeth Glidden
Eighth Ward Councilmember
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612.673.2208