

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
ST. FRANCIS, MN
ANOKA COUNTY

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION NOTES
OCTOBER 23, 2019

1. **Call to Order/Roll Call**

The Work Session was called to order at 6:00 pm by Mayor Steve Feldman.

Roll Call: Present were Steve Feldman, Kevin Robinson, Robert Bauer and Sarah Udvig. Joe Muehlbauer excused. Also present were City Administrator Joe Kohlmann, Public Works Director Paul Teicher and City Engineer Craig Jochum. Business representative of County Market, Jeff Kearney.

2. **Discussion with MnDOT on the Hwy 47 Corridor Improvement**

MnDOT representative Melissa Barnes, North Metro Area Manager along with Beth Engum, Senior Project Manager working with MnDOT and Bill Klingbeil, Roundabout Design Specialist of Kimley-Horn introduced themselves.

Barnes said at the last council meeting we attended there were a number of questions and concerns. So we thought we would come back and talk through those and update the council on what we heard from the public open house. Plus give an update on the schedule.

Barnes went through a power point presentation. First off, the reason we came out here was with a problem statement. At the first open house we asked people what are the problems on Hwy 47. We heard a lot the speeds are too fast, people use it as a passing zone, we need to have people to be able to walk and bike safely across Hwy 47, plus people having trouble getting onto and off Hwy 47 especially during the peak hours. Heard that Hwy 47 doesn't fit the community. What we heard from you (council) agreement with two lanes, heard a desire of traffic signals at Pederson Drive and 233rd Avenue, slow down Hwy 47 traffic, people are not crazy about the reduce conflict intersections, safety of an underpass, question what is a safest pedestrian crossing, concern about public safety vehicles using roundabouts, and roundabout impact to businesses. One of the questions, was the Kwik Trip traffic analysis included in the study, yes it was. Another thing is traffic signals are not warranted and they also won't work here. Traffic signals won't come in as a solution because we know they actually operate worse than what is out there today and will operate worse than roundabouts. Signals don't slow traffic. I did speak with our traffic engineers about putting roundabouts on both ends and signals in the middle. They said they believe the speed will actually go up to about 50 mph. So we worked to get it down to 45 mph and they think they would go back up. Most of the fatalities happen at signal intersection, so we know that speed kills. If the speed goes up that is where we get out fatalities at high speed signaled intersections. We also looked at the speeds if we put in roundabouts.

They would actually help speeds lower around the corridor. RCI's proposed would not be signalized. With all the negative feedback from council, businesses and people not liking the RCI's I think we are pretty comfortable that there would not be a RCI put in at this point. We did talk about underpass safety and we did receive a lot of mixed feedback about whether or not an underpass is necessary, what it would mean for maintenance. I think that is more of a conversation between the council and school district. As to what the preference is for a tunnel or not. MnDOT feels roundabout provides a safe crossing and a tunnel doesn't really solve the problem. There was also questions about safe pedestrian crossing at a roundabout. Sometimes people hesitate; maybe they don't look the right direction. There are things we can do to help with that. We can talk about intersection lighting, flashing lights, offset them to give people little more space for people that are walking. Also heard there might need to be additional education. That is something we can bring to the table. There are a number of ways and places we can help push out information such as schools, community functions, etc. The other benefit with roundabouts and pedestrian safety is that they have wide medians, with traffic going one direction at a time. Slower speeds and less conflict points means less risk. There likely still be crashes at roundabouts but so much less likely they will get seriously hurt. It is a risk base calculation. In regards to trucks and emergency vehicles, roundabouts are designed to accommodate larger vehicles. Roundabouts impact of businesses; reduces the speed, easier and faster for people to turn off and on to Hwy 47. We spoke to businesses at an open house and called 42 but only heard back from 22. Of the 22, 16 supported the roundabouts. Some didn't really know and a couple were against roundabouts. So the majority supported or really didn't have an opinion or maybe didn't care. Kwik Trip thought a roundabout would be an improvement. We met with Bob and Jeff of County Market as well. We gave them some examples of other places where grocery stores have roundabouts in front of them. We also met with some students and staff at the middle and high schools. We heard again everyone liked reducing Hwy 47 to two lanes was very popular. We also heard that students don't feel safe crossing at the temporary signal. The high school students and teachers were very supportive of roundabouts. They think the ones on Bridge Street work very well but agree there needs to be more education for drivers and walkers. We went to the Anoka County Transportation committee they were supportive of the three roundabout concept. We attended the senior meeting, they were very supportive of the four roundabout option. Regarding the online survey and the open house. We heard mixed feelings but a strong dislike for the reduce conflict intersections. Continued theme was slowing traffic and pedestrian safety. We haven't gotten around to cost at all. We can talk about the different grant funding. We can help put the applications together especially the ones that have to come from the local entity. Those grants can take a lot of the time but can pay for the city's portion, if enough grant money is acquired. Little chance the city would receive a grant money for a traffic signal(s). I think that was experienced on Bridge Street when they first tried for grant money with a signal included. You can get grant money for roundabouts because they work so well for safety and mobility.

Mayor Feldman said there was a traffic signal on Poppy Street and Bridge Street but it did come down to the funding. That traffic is not any different on Poppy Street now with the roundabout in versus the traffic light. They use it as a short cut. I want to thank MnDOT for everything you have done. It is a no win for you and understand there are

bosses above you who will make the final decision. Commend you(Melissa) and Beth for all the work, time and patience you put into this.

Barnes stated she kind of wanted to go over a schedule. By December, we need to select an idea on what we will move forward with developing a layout. We will need to work through aesthetics, cost, getting grant funding going, tweaks to the layout regarding the trails/sidewalks, accesses, and environmental process. We had a very compressed schedule to do this in 2021, so now we are looking more at 2022. But we do need to start making some decisions even to start in 2022. We are hoping for a recommendation from the council tonight on what option has any viability to move forward. Once we receive your recommendation, we would move forward with the design work. Thank you for inviting us tonight.

Udvig said she is glad to hear about the removal of the RCI's. Still have concerns about the roundabouts. After the homecoming football game kids were scared to cross at the roundabouts. Because people are in a hurry to leave. I think the tunnel is out too. Talking with staff and kids at the middle school, they agree. Saying Kwik Trip is in agreement with a roundabout. I think anything would be better than what is there now. Question about improvement versus ideal. I worry about the Hwy 47 corridor. Is it going to make or break our city? If people don't like that corridor they will find other ways to get around. They won't be stopping at our shops, gas stations. That is what happens if people don't like the road. My main concerns. I thinks flashing signs that a roundabout is approaching will help. But I would like to thank you for all the time and listening to people you did. After the temporary signal went in, I went out there to be a crossing guard because my schedule at the time allowed me to do that. My schedule does not allow be any more Kids do feel safer when an adult is there.

Bauer said I want to start out by saying our city has a lot of east west traffic. Businesses on the west side and residential on the east side. My biggest concern is getting them to the business district. I have brought this up many times, crosswalks and pedestrian crossing of Hwy 47 can be reduced. I would like doing some right out and right in turn lanes with the least amount of conflict points. Would like pedestrians to cross at a specific point. Not sure if we need to do this on all of the roundabouts. Bill Klingbeil of Kimley Horn stated bigger is not always better with roundabouts. Are we unique with pedestrian crossing on a state highway. Bauer questioned about putting a possible red light. Klingbeil spoke on the flashing lights and roundabouts in busier intersections. People's ideas have changed over the years on their idea of roundabout. Just like your seniors stated. Regarding businesses and traffic flow, I think it will work fine. Referenced other cities. Bauer said he heard about putting a turn lane south bound by Pederson Drive. Concern with bike and pedestrian existing trail in that area. I would only support if the business wanted it. We need to get our residents safely to our businesses.

Robinson said amazing how fast this came to fruition since the young ladies were in the accident. One question, did police and fire offer any input on these designs. Feldman said during the one work session the fire chief gave his comments.

Barnes said we did speak to both police and fire and brought the plans to them. Police didn't have many concerns. The fire department had a concern with their water trucks. So we did contact some firefighters along with East Bethel Fire Department. They were okay with the RCI's that are on Hwy 65 and County Road 22. I also checked with some EMT's doing chest compressions going around a roundabout. They said they are hard no matter where you are. They didn't think the roundabouts made a difference.

Robinson asked regarding the businesses that attended the open house, do you know how many were from the corridor per say.

Barnes said we have a list and can provide that but I think they were a number from the corridor. Engum said maybe more than half.

Robinson said safety is his first concern, businesses is my second and something that will work hand in hand. I believe the north south traffic will stay constant. The alternatives are not very good going north south. I am not for a tunnel or RCI's. If the city wanted fund a traffic light at Pederson, could we.

Barnes said with Hwy 47 being a State road we would not permit a signal. As a short term, we signed a memorandum of understanding that this would be a temporary signal.

I agree with the signal lane Robinson noted. The education portion is fantastic. There were a lot of nay sayers regarding the roundabout a couple years ago. I didn't think it was a good idea either but if you focus on what is going on around you and go with the flow it works. Was wondering about the bike path and the turn lane. Four roundabouts, lighting, education, people will have to learn. If it slows the traffic down and safety. Really impressed with your open houses. Found out that some of the MnDOT had actually been to the intersection when it was busy and recommended to the ones that had not to come up during a busy time.

Feldman asked Jeff Kearney if he would like to speak. A right in right out, 18 years we wanted it but it was not in the design or accepted. Being it wasn't designed for it so it would be almost impossible to do something with it at this time. There are people using the bike trail. For 18 years, we wanted a stop light and we got one. Fortunately, I don't see where that is going to stay because I am pretty much sure there was a decision there was going to be a roundabout there before the temporary light was even put in. We like the stop light, the customers like it. Never heard anyone say I wish there was a roundabout there. The stop light slowed things down and made things a lot safer. There were accidents every 2 months and none since it went in. We have wanted change for 18 years and RCI's don't appeal to us at all. Our preference would be to have a stop light but that is a personal preference because it has worked well. I don't have enough information on a roundabouts to have a reason to fight against it. Hoping something is permentally changed that fixes the problem that has been going on for 18 years. Feldman said does Bob (King) feel the same way. Kearney said Bob is happy with the light and we are happy with what we see at this point. That's our input.

Bauer said I drive it almost every day. My perception it hasn't changed the intersection. I am still leaning towards safety to get our pedestrians across. The traffic pattern has not changed for the drivers. I don't think they have slowed down.

Feldman said years ago there was a four way stop on Bridge Street and Poppy. Then it changed to a stop light then a roundabout. My point is, it didn't change the speeding on Poppy Street. Because it is a short cut. Doesn't matter what type of traffic measure is, it's only as good as the enforcement.

Feldman then went on to read the statement from Councilmember Joe Muehlbauer.

"My stance remains the same as stated from previous meetings align with most of the council. Roundabouts entering and exiting the city make sense. Having dropped my niece off at school and using the current light at 47 and Pederson, it is crucial to keep the light in place. I cannot imagine the mess that a roundabout at that intersection would cause. While I am not a traffic expert I am a resident and the concern of east to west traffic is the biggest concern. I respectfully must disagree with the State saying money isn't an object in making this intersection safe. With all due respect, to MnDOT reps present who all have higher ups to answer to, I must say that the low cost of maintenance on roundabouts and the lack of fed funding in regards to the stoplight are evidence that money is a factor. The 4 roundabouts will be in my opinion inhibit business and also be more troublesome for east to west traffic, not to mention also be more dangerous for pedestrians. As I stated that most people do not look right for pedestrians as they are more worried about other vehicles looking left. My apologies for not being present this evening as I have a family event that came up last minute".

Feldman stated I was at a JLEC (joint law enforcement council) meeting today with many police chiefs and mayors were there. After the meeting, I spoke with Blaine and Andover mayors. Their concerns are the same as mine about roundabouts and that is crosswalks. This road for many years has been neglected. We have been working on this since 2017 when myself, Joe Muehlbauer and Rob Bauer got on but even many years before that. I believe the only reason we have the stop light now is because of the accident. No degrading to you of any kind, but I wonder if that accident happen if we would have just the crosswalks we had before. Because this corridor has been neglected for years and years. We have 11,000 vehicles now with more development being proposed to the north and south of this corridor. Our town is growing. I understand we are not Hwy 65, 169, 494 or 694 I understand that but what it is, is a main artery to our city. What I am more concerned about is the east/west traffic. There are people that use this road to get to Hwy 169 from the east. Kwik Trip hasn't been here long enough to know what works. For them to say roundabouts will be fine to them, anything is better than what is there now. I went around to talk to the businesses along the corridor. The only ones that want the roundabout is Kwik Trip and the day care. I do believe the passing lane has to be removed. A single lane, reduced speeds and a median will help. I don't like a tunnel. I wish MnDOT would just come out and say if they are not going to allow stoplights here, period. If you say it to us, we will learn to live with it but just say it.

Barnes said, stoplights will not be an option.

Feldman said I want it on record that stoplights are not going to be here. Now that we know stoplights are not in play, what is in play? I am not a fan of roundabouts right now. Agree, education is the key. Don't believe roundabouts work everywhere and should not be a blanket cure for everything. Therefore, if we are not getting stoplights; single lane with median and slower speeds year around are a must. Don't want to see five roundabouts. This is a vital area for us. What decision you make here is going to affect us for a long, long time. The businesses along the corridor have a lot of money invested here. Whatever MnDOT puts in, we the city council will get the heat for it, not MnDOT. I finally have it on record that roundabouts are going in; I think that is a mistake. Of the other business I spoke with would rather go with lights and not roundabouts. If had to go with roundabouts, maybe two lights and two roundabouts. That is what I was told by all the businesses except the daycare and Kwik Trip. The one concern the bank had was if a roundabout goes in are you going to have a mound in the middle or flat.

Klingbeil said there would be a mound so you can see the tops of the car but not the headlights. Not the giant one like on Bridge Street. Will be about 3-3 ½ feet high.

Feldman said I appreciate you finally being frank with us and telling us there will be no stoplights. But I am totally against RCI's. Will they work on Hwy 65 or any other part of the state or city I don't know but what I do know I don't think they will work here. Not sure how people can't figure out how to drive at a four way stop either. Not for a tunnel, the cost is ridiculous and surprised that the school is for it.

Udvig stated the school district is not for a tunnel. Feldman said I heard the superintendent was for it at the beginning.

Feldman said I hope you take into consideration; no RCI's, no tunnel, no four way stop, be concerned about the east/west traffic, and how to make a roundabout more obvious for crosswalks would be a big help because people don't give pedestrians' the right away and yield. The studies say the roundabouts work but I question that. A study is a study. There was an accident on Hwy 65 and they say it didn't have anything to do with the RCI's but trust me people will be thinking that. The public fought about the roundabouts on Bridge Street but seem to like them now. But pedestrian crossing is still tough because they are hesitant not knowing if the car is going to stop or not. So if you are going to do roundabouts because it sounds like that is what your going to do, we can get rid of all the extracurricular thinking that our input is going to matter about stoplights off the table. Then please make them as safe as possible. Make the crosswalks so people understand the pedestrian has the right away. Make it as safe as possible, keeping the mound low, make the crosswalks more dedicated and full proof as you can so people feel they can cross them safely and not get hit by a car. Here for the safety and care of our businesses and residents. Mayor of Andover doesn't think crosswalks work well either on roundabouts. Not taking it out on you tonight because you have done a good job but MnDOT has neglected this road over many, many years. Lets do as much prevention and long term thinking because we are growing. Please take into consideration what you do here we have to live with. Safety is our biggest

issue, smoother traffic flow and access east and west to our businesses and residents now that we know roundabouts are going to be here.

Feldman asked engineer Craig Jochum if he had anything further to add. Jochum said nothing more than what has already been said. Feldman also asked Public Works Director Paul Teicher. Teicher said I have nothing further to add. Feldman then asked Jeff (Kearney-County Market). Kearney asked what about the lighting of the corridor. The biggest thing about the stoplights is that they actually light up the intersections properly. It was way under light before and think lighting is going to be a key element to the whole situation. Feldman said I would agree with you on that. Kearney also asked about staging of construction so it doesn't tie up the whole side of the city.

Jochum said I do want to add I think the smaller corridor is key to this project. It solves some of the problems we have now. I hope a lot of consideration is taken into account where you put the new alignment so maybe the city could get back some of the right of way for future development. A nice curb and gutter, landscape corridor will be the key. Don't just put it down the middle of the right of way.

Feldman said if I have to live with the roundabout I will but it is more than just that piece of the whole project. This area is a vital business district for us to build on. Feldman referenced different cities where infrastructure was neglected too. It always comes down to money. We tried to emphasize what we wanted looks like it is not going to work and realize we are now getting roundabouts; make it safer, smoother and accessible to our businesses are the three big things for our city and I hope the rest of the council agrees.

Udvig asked about the curve by 227th, is anything still going to be done with that?

Barnes stated yes, we are going to make it flatter so it is not so much of a racetrack. Feldman said I am glad you brought that up. That has been neglected too. If done right, I agree with Jochum people will notice our business district and not just a throughway.

Bauer asked about police and fire. The road needs to be wide enough to pullover for emergency services that is key. Feldman said education is the key, wish there was more out there.

Klingbeil said the roadway needs to be large/wide enough to get a large snowplow through too. Size of different vehicles, sign placement is all taken into consideration. Also in regards to some of the concern here tonight. I worked on a lot of roundabouts in Woodbury before development happened so it didn't prevent development from happening but it has been safer.

Feldman said can you put up signs that say yield to pedestrians'? What about the blinking lights that says your speed, will you keep them there?

Barnes stated I believe there will be signs that say yield to pedestrians or something similar. There are also signs that say stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. People seem to see them better. In regards to the blinking lights, we are going to be doing another

speed test this fall to see if they are working but yes, I think they can be kept there if they keep working.

City Administrator Joe Kohlmann asked if we followed the construction plan you laid out, when could we expect construction completion.

Barnes stated we first have to work through what we are going to build first. It could be possible if fully funded possibly in a year. If not fully funded then we will talk about the implemented and prioritize installation so that could be a three year thing but construction only in two of those years.

Kohlmann asked what is the maximum it could go out to.

Barnes said 2025.

Kohlmann said that is important to know.

Feldman asked in the meantime would the stop lights stay here?

Barnes said yes, in the meantime. As we agreed upon in the MOU. (Memorandum of Understanding) until a change is made.

Feldman said all the components discussed have to be completed to make it work. What about detours, etc...

Barnes said that is a little bit more into the future. The next step is if these are the alternatives to work with. Or if you would rather only have three roundabouts our project management team, which include city staff and specialist will review the recommendation. Three would be at Ambassador Blvd, 233rd Avenue and Pederson Drive.

Feldman said again everything has to be put into play in order for the roundabouts to work.

Engum said we do have to go through details with the team.

Barnes said we agree with the single lane, we have talked about how we are going to bring that aesthetic piece together and who wants to be involved, opportunities for businesses and councilmembers as we talk through things. We would bring back the ideas to see what direction you would want to go. Also include cost and maintenance implementations.

Feldman said let us know when you need a work session. I have said all along, flexibility compromises the key to everything.

Bauer said what are we going to do at 229th if we don't put a roundabout there. Most of our east west traffic used that intersection. I use it almost everyday.

Engum asked what would you like to see at 229th? The least wait to get through would be to put a roundabout there.

Bauer said I am not a big fan of four roundabouts but I think it is necessary for our east west traffic. If we would force to put Bridge Street through the school district property then we could have 229th with something different.

Engum said putting the road through from Bridge Street to Hwy 47 is not going to happen with this project.

Bauer said I would be in support of the fourth roundabout. Feldman said you can't go with how the traffic is today because of the four lanes.

Barnes said you will wait longer without a roundabout.

Feldman asked about putting a roundabout at 227th instead.

Engum said the reason for the one at 229th we looked at operations, pedestrian crossings and safety reason for this one instead of 227th. It makes more sense to us.

Bauer said make sure our roundabouts big enough for the future.

Udvig said if we put three in now and then decide a fourth one is needed, not sure about that.

Feldman asked Kearney if he had any comments. He said no, but I drive it all the time. Everything you talked about that intersection happens. Problem started back when Bridge Street was never connected to Hwy 47 that would have alleviated a lot of things.

Feldman said all the components together should make this work.

Barnes thanked the council for their time.

Feldman said it sounds like to me it is probably going to be the four. I will try to be open minded as I can possibly be.

3. **Adjournment**

Mayor Feldman adjourned the work session at 7:36 pm.

Submitted by,



Barbara I. Held, City Clerk