

**Regular Meeting**    Public Hearing    Action Item    Consent Item    Resolution    Ordinance  
                                   Presentation    Other:  
**EDA Meeting**    Action Item    Resolution    Other:  
**Study Session**    Discussion Item    Written Report    Other:

---

**TITLE:**

Highway 100 Reconstruction Update

**RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the project, particularly with regards to the municipal consent process and public hearing comments, and seek Council input on possible layout changes.

**POLICY CONSIDERATION:**

Staff seeks Council input and feedback on the following:

- Does Council desire a 4, 5 or 6-foot striped shoulder on the proposed Minnetonka Blvd bridge?
- What involvement, if any, should the City consider in preserving the Rock Garden?
- Does Council agree with how staff proposes to cast the City votes for the noisewall south of Minnetonka Blvd. on the east side of Hwy 100?
- Does Council have any specific questions or concerns related to granting Municipal Consent for this project?
- Should staff schedule consideration of Municipal Consent for the Council meeting of December 3, 2012? Should a special mailing to area residents be provided notifying them of this?

**BACKGROUND:**History

On November 5, 2012, a public hearing was conducted to consider MnDOT's request for municipal consent for the reconstruction of Highway 100. Municipal consent is required when any of the following three conditions are a result of the improvement: Access changes, capacity increases or decreases, and the acquisition of right of way.

The project was presented by MnDOT staff and included a review of the following:

1. The proposed improvements
2. Right of Way Impacts
3. Estimated construction costs
4. Project schedule
5. Next steps

After presentation of the layout by MnDOT staff (Attachment 1), the City Council and public were provided the opportunity to offer comments and ask questions. Following is a general summary of items that received more significant amounts of comment and discussion:

***Minnetonka Boulevard Bridge*** – Comments and discussion revolved primarily around proposed design widths for off-road trails and on-road biking in addition to the roadway itself. Bicycle

advocates expressed a desire for a 5 to 6-foot striped bike lane with an absolute minimum of a 3-foot striped shoulder. As presented at the public hearing, the plan presented proposed 10-foot wide off-road trails on both sides of the roadway along with 3-foot striped shoulders for on-road biking. Through design and striping adjustments, MnDOT has informed the City and County staff that 4-foot wide shoulders can be provided (in addition to the 10 foot wide off-road trails) without widening the bridge. However, MnDOT cost participation policy requires either the County or the City to pay all additional costs associated with widening the bridge from that currently proposed. Hennepin County has informed MnDOT that a design with 10 foot wide off-road trails and a 4-foot wide striped shoulder is acceptable to them. Therefore, if the City desires on-road striped shoulders wider than 4-feet, the City would be expected to pay all associated bridge widening costs; MnDOT staff estimates widening costs of about \$125,000 per foot of additional shoulder width (i.e., about \$125,000 for 5-foot striped shoulders or about \$250,000 for 6-foot striped shoulders). As a part of this discussion, Hennepin County has requested and MnDOT has agreed to install a striped bike lane on the north side of Minnetonka Blvd on the west end of the bridge to match the striped lane west of Vernon Ave.

***Rock Garden Features/Remains*** – A desire was expressed to preserve the Rock Garden - a water feature with a small water fall, a circular concrete water storage area and a concrete slab to walk across the circular water area. The Rock Garden was evaluated by the City, MnDOT, Three Rivers Park District, SLP Historical Society, SLP Park Commission and some interested residents at the same time the Beehive was relocated in 2009. A history and narrative of this evaluation process is provided and attached (Attachments 2 and 3). The Rock Garden appears to be very deteriorated and there seems to be general agreement by all parties involved that it is not salvageable. MnDOT has indicated that if there is a desire by the City to preserve this, they will work with the City to cordon the area off and attempt to protect the garden until it can be relocated by others.

***Operational Issues on Local Streets (Utica Avenue)*** – Comments and concerns were expressed with regards to snow removal, signage, and other issues with regards to Utica Avenue and the alley serving properties on Toledo Avenue. At least some of these issues such as snow removal and cut-through traffic have historically been an on-going challenge and will continue to be dealt with by the City as needed, including appropriate signage and enforcement as necessary to address specific safety concerns.

***Construction Staging*** – Concerns were expressed with regards to access and maintenance of traffic during construction. During the final design effort MnDOT will develop construction staging plans and inform us how work will be staged and sequenced. MnDOT, however, has stated their intent not to close the Minnetonka Boulevard and Highway 7 bridges simultaneously.

#### Other Concurrent Activities

##### *Noise Walls and Environmental Assessment*

Concurrent with this Municipal Consent process, MnDOT is conducting a parallel process with approval of an Environmental Assessment (EA) and whether or not to remove noise walls from the project design plans. MnDOT has indicated intent to release the EA for public comment sometime late this year or early 2013.

Noise walls are presently included as part of the project layout and design. The State of Minnesota, in accordance with federal regulations, follows a process that allows for adjacent property owners to remove the walls from the project should they desire through a voting

procedure. Additional informational meetings to provide residents further information and clarifications as needed were held on October 16 and October 18.

MnDOT has determined the trail area on the east side of Hwy 100 south of Minnetonka Blvd benefits from the installation of a noise wall. The trail is deemed a 4(f) property and as custodian, the City has been assigned votes as a part of the noise wall voting process in this area of the project. City staff proposes to discuss this with other impacted area residents and vote as the majority desire. If the City does not vote, that is essentially a vote to retain this noise wall in the project.

*Visual Quality and Project Advisory Groups:*

MnDOT has also commenced the process of developing a Visual Quality Process Manual Development for the project. This process involves a committee to allow for articulation of community values and objectives to ensure sensitivity to visual quality and aesthetics (including public art) in the design, similar to procedures utilized for the Highway 7/Louisiana Avenue project. A committee comprised of representatives from adjacent neighborhoods, institutions adjacent to the highway, staff, and other interests has been assembled. This committee will be meeting monthly over the next several months to insure that these values are incorporated into the design.

MnDOT is also working to form a Project Advisory Committee. This group will meet on a biannual basis through the design phase and more frequently during actual construction. The purpose of this committee will be to allow MnDOT to provide current project information and receive feedback from stakeholders to help better understand and address the many issues that arise during a project of this magnitude. Specific committee members have not yet been determined, but it is expected that members will include a wide variety of interests, including representatives of the many agencies involved (both elected representatives and staff), such as the City, County, State, the business community, and other stakeholders as appropriate.

Project Schedule:

Based on the current project status and progress made to date, the following schedule is anticipated at this time:

Municipal Consent Approval Process	
City Holds Public Hearing	November 5, 2012
Deadline to Approve / Deny Request	February 3, 2013
Public Environmental Assessment (EA) Released	Late 2012 – Early 2013
Noise wall Voting Process	
Ballots and Information Mailed	Early October
Information Meetings	October 16 and 18, 2012
Voting Period Expires	December 28, 2012
Development of Construction Plans and Specifications	Fall 2012 - September 2014
EA Process Completed	Early 2013
Right of Way Acquisition	May 2013 - May 2014
Open Bids and Award Contract	May 2014
Construction	Late 2014 - 2016

**NEXT STEPS:**

The City must approve or disapprove the MnDOT municipal consent request within 90 days of the Public Hearing or let the time period expire, in which case it is deemed approved. As a result, the Council has until February 3, 2013 to either approve or disapprove of this project. If the Council does neither, then on February 3, 2013 the time period for action expires and the MnDOT project will be deemed approved. If acceptable with Council, municipal consent approval could be considered on December 3, 2012.

As stated in previous reports, if the City denies Municipal Consent for the project, MnDOT's options are:

1. Make the changes requested by the City (if any)
2. Refer the proposed layout to an Appeal Board
3. Stop the project
4. Modify the project so municipal consent is not required
5. Prepare a new final layout and start the municipal consent process over from the beginning

**FINANCIAL OR BUDGET CONSIDERATION:**

As described in MnDOT's request, the City's share of the MnDOT project cost at this time is estimated to be approximately \$60,000. As the City continues to work with MnDOT through final design, including visual quality and public art considerations, the City's share of the project cost may increase, depending on the level of improvements desired by the city. In addition to cost participation in the actual MnDOT project, the City also has several other obligations related to this project:

Engineering Expenses:	
Previous Expenses and Studies	\$90,000
Additional Engineering Expenses	\$150,000
Utility Relocations or Improvements:	
Stormwater Facilities	\$600,000
Sanitary Sewer Facilities	\$1,000,000
Water Facilities	\$900,000
Utica Ave Reconstruction	\$250,000

**VISION CONSIDERATION:**

The following Strategic Direction and focus area was identified by Council in 2007:

**St. Louis Park is committed to being a connected and engaged community.**

Focus will be on:

- Promoting regional transportation issues and related dedicated funding sources affecting St. Louis Park including but not limited to Highway 100 and SWLRT.

**Attachments:** Attachment 1 - MnDOT Staff Approved Layout 3D  
Attachment 2 - Lilac Park and Beehive Narrative and History  
Attachment 3 - Rock Garden Photo or Depiction

**Prepared by:** Scott Brink, City Engineer  
**Reviewed by:** April Crockett, West Area Engineer, MnDOT  
Michael P. Rardin, Public Works Director  
**Approved by:** Tom Harmening, City Manager

## Attachment 2 – Lilac Park and Beehive Narrative and History

Here is a quick update on the status of the Beehive Committee:

The Committee began meeting in November of 2005 to discuss the options to relocate the Beehive and Picnic Table at Lilac Park (official name) at Hwy. 100 and Minnetonka Blvd. The Committee has representatives from City staff, MN Dot, Three Rivers Park District, SLP Historical Society, SLP Park Commission and some interested residents. Our goal is to present a plan to Council/Staff for the process, timeline, budget and long term use plan for the two structures at Lilac Park.

### Background:

We have two significant roadside park areas in St. Louis Park both built in 1939.

The first is Lilac Park which is the on Hwy. 100 and Minnetonka Blvd. This park has four structures of interest, the beehive, a large picnic table, an old parking area wall and what is referred to as a rock garden (this is an old water feature with a small water fall, a circular concrete water storage area and a concrete slab to walk across the circular water area). The only features we can potentially move from this park are the Beehive and the picnic table. MN Dot has suggested they would prefer not to move/store the two primary structures (Beehive and large limestone picnic table). MN Dot/City Staff also believes the Rock Garden and parking wall cannot be moved and both have deteriorated to the point the only option would be to harvest some of the limestone blocks for future renovation projects. MN Dot did note that if the City would like to save/restore the Beehive and picnic table they would support the City taking a lead/ownership. MN Dot also noted all structures need to be removed because the proposed Hwy. 100 expansion project will utilize most of the Lilac Park property. SHPO (State Historical Preservation Organization) has been contacted regarding the parks and structures and no longer recognizes the artifacts as registered/historically significant.

The second park is St. Louis Park Roadside Park (official name), located at Hwy. 100 and Hwy. 7 just west of Nordic Ware. This park area will not be impacted during the proposed Hwy. 100 project. This park contains a council ring, four picnic tables, stone fireplace, and stone refuse container. All structures have deteriorated significantly.

The Committee to this point has met to discuss all the issues surrounding the relocation of the two structures, reviewed historical construction documents and photos, toured potential relocation sites in St. Louis Park and met with the State Historical Preservation Organization.

Next Step: The committee had initially been of the understanding that we could not consider moving the two structures from Lilac Park to the SLP Roadside Park because SHPO would not allow it. After meeting with SHPO to discuss the issue they would support this concept. This is great news as I believe the committee would prefer this option. A letter recommending support of the relocation is in process from the SLP Historical Society and will be sent to SHPO soon. I would speculate now that the recommendation from the committee to Council/Staff will look like this;

1. Relocate the Beehive and picnic table to SLP Roadside Park
2. Restore all historically significant structures which can be saved
3. Salvage limestone block from the Rock Garden and parking wall to restore structures/build new features
4. Create a bike loop from the LRT trail down and around the Roadside Park
5. Rename Roadside Park to Lilac Park (most believe it was all one long “Lilac Park” before the exit ramps were constructed)
6. Implement interpretive signage about the park and features

7. **Add a drinking fountain for trail users**
8. **Maintain the area as a City Park**
9. **Propose to City Council not to install a sound wall at this park location during the proposed Hwy. 100 expansion as visibility from the highway maintains some of the historical integrity**
10. **Purchase, quick deed or lease property for \$1 annually from MN Dot.**

**My thought is if possible the committee will make a recommendation to staff/council as soon as approval is obtained from SHPO. If everything comes together I believe the Historical society would like to begin raising funds this winter partnering with the City to begin the relocation project spring of 2007. SLP Historical Society is very concerned about continued vandalism and deterioration at both park locations.**

**One final note, the National Park Service in Washington DC has done a national search on the Beehive structures and as far as they can document only two remain in the United States. One here in SLP and the other in Robbinsdale behind a sound wall at Graeser Park.**

**Please let me know if you have any questions.**

**Rick Birno**

## Attachment 3

### Rock Garden Photo or Depiction



Graeser Park (also known as Robbinsdale Rockgarden Roadside Parking Area), Highway 100 and Broadway Avenue, Robbinsdale.  
Photograph Collection ca. 1940  
Location no. MH5.9 RB p4  
Negative no. 20940