

**CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL WORK SESSION
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, January 29, 2019, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor John LeTourneau
Councilmember Nadine Heinrich
Councilmember Mark Kuzma
Councilmember Debra Musgrove
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Melody Shryock

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby
City Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl
Economic Development Manager Sean Sullivan
Elwyn Tinklenberg of The Tinklenberg Group
Angie Bersaw of Bolton & Menk
Ross Tillman of Bolton & Menk

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor LeTourneau called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Continue Discussion on Ramsey Gateway Project (Highway 10 Plan)

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report.

Angie Bersaw, Bolton & Menk, provided a summary of the 2014 study that was completed and the variety of options that were left on the table for discussion. She explained that the goal of this study is to identify one vision which will allow planning for the future and positioning for future funding. She noted that a history of the study was reviewed in December and the goal at this time is to gain additional input to allow the process to continue to move forward. She stated that the general options that were available for the different intersections were reviewed at the last meeting. She stated that the technical working group has been continuing to work through the options, weighing the pros and cons of each, to determine which options are recommended for dismissal before moving to the public meeting phase.

Ms. Bersaw presented a potential concept for the Ramsey Boulevard intersection of Highway 10.

Ross Tillman, Bolton & Menk, provided additional details on the potential concept for Ramsey Boulevard intersection. He referenced the regional park near that intersection and noted that each concept for that intersection shows the potential impacts to that area. He explained that this is meant to be a high-level design and does not consider the number of lanes or types of traffic control, but rather a general footprint.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that in this concept the road would shift to the west and asked for additional input.

Mr. Tillman stated that the road was shifted to the west in order to make the crossing of the railroad and highway perpendicular, as well as pulling road infrastructure away from the properties in order to lessen the impacts to those properties. He identified one parcel that would still be impacted.

Councilmember Kuzma asked and received confirmation of the parcels that would need to be acquired under this concept.

Mr. Tillman provided additional details on how the concept would function.

Ms. Bersaw stated that the long-term goal of Anoka County is to grade separate all railroad crossings but would be open to leaving one, either Ramsey Boulevard or Sunfish Lake Boulevard, as an at grade separation. She stated that because of the conditions, Ramsey Boulevard would be preferred to be a grade separated crossing and therefore all the concepts show that separation.

Mr. Tillman confirmed that all the options for the Ramsey Boulevard intersection show the acquisition of all the businesses west of Highway 10, from Ramsey Boulevard to Armstrong Boulevard. He provided the second concept, which has more impact to the regional park area to the south and would be similar to the existing Armstrong interchange.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that at a staff level, for both the City and County, there is not large support for that option that has more impact to the park.

Mayor LeTourneau asked if the configurations play better dependent upon whether the crossing is under the railroad or over the railroad.

Ms. Bersaw replied that these options all include above grade crossings, noting that another set of below grade crossings will also be reviewed.

Mr. Tillman reviewed some of the folded concept options and provided additional details on the path that traffic would follow.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that even though an option might be lower cost, it may be cumbersome to some of the local business owners.

Ms. Bersaw stated that they also have the same configurations for the intersection with Ramsey Boulevard going under both the railroad crossing and Highway 10.

Mayor LeTourneau asked the cost difference between an overpass and an underpass.

Mr. Tillman stated that going under tends to be more expensive as there is a need for a temporary railroad bypass. He stated that it can also be more challenging to obtain a permit from the railroad and there may also be pumping costs dependent upon the water table levels.

Ms. Bersaw identified additional buildings that would be impacted in order to construct a shoefly, or temporary track.

Councilmember Shryock asked and received confirmation that there would be additional costs and impact to Highway 10, if Ramsey Boulevard were going to go under Highway 10.

Ms. Bersaw stated that in discussions with BNSF Railroad, their first question is why the road cannot go over the railroad and that must be shown first before the railroad would even consider the road going under the railroad. She provided additional details on the planning process and how it will evolve as it moves forward, noting that this is still the very beginning fuzzy level of the process.

Mr. Bersaw moved to the chart identifying the pros and cons for each of the options provided thus far for Ramsey Boulevard. She explained that the evaluation process considered what is important to the City, to the County, and to MnDOT. She stated that at the technical group meeting there was a question of whether there would be preliminary agency support for the different options in order to gain input on moving forward. She reviewed the different elements included in the chart and the opinions that were received. She noted that the technical team is recommending that the options that include a railroad underpass be eliminated as well as eliminating the standard diamond and folded options that more significantly impact the park.

Councilmember Heinrich asked for additional information on cost differences.

Mr. Tillman stated that because this is a high-level design, they have not put a number to the concepts but provided additional information on the estimate range that was provided.

Ms. Bersaw stated that as the process continues to be refined, a range of cost estimates will be developed.

Councilmember Riley asked if the single point option that is not supported is not supported because of the high cost that would be associated.

Ms. Bersaw confirmed that because there are three other options available, the single point is not recommended at this point.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she would be interested in removing option seven from the list because of the high number of movements and the increase in travel time for users. She

stated that at this point she would prefer option two but could also support looking further into option four.

Ms. Bersaw acknowledged that there was a lot of discussion on option seven at the technical committee level as well, as to whether that should remain on for public meetings. She stated that perhaps option seven would not be preferred for both Ramsey Boulevard and Sunfish Lake but perhaps option seven would be okay at one of those locations.

Councilmember Shryock stated that from a pedestrian standpoint, option seven would not be a preferred option. She believed that would be the most logical option to be removed. She stated that she agrees with the recommendation of the technical committee on options two, four and seven to consider.

Mayor LeTourneau confirmed the consensus of the Council to continue to move forward with options two and four for Ramsey Boulevard, noting that option seven is not a favorable option because of the potential impacts.

Ms. Bersaw noted that during the public meeting the options reviewed throughout the process will be included in the presentation in order to explain how this process evolved in order to gain input.

Councilmember Musgrove asked and received confirmation that the cost for the acquisition of the businesses along the west from Ramsey Boulevard to Armstrong Boulevard has been considered and will continue to be included in any cost estimates.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the businesses that will be impacted have been anticipating this for many years and therefore this is not new information for those businesses.

Ms. Bersaw moved to Sunfish Lake Boulevard, noting that the list of potential options has been expanded since the last meeting in December. She noted that options with an at grade rail crossing and above grade separation have been included.

Mr. Tillman provided details on the improvements that will occur in Anoka at Fair Oak and Thurston, noting that the first stoplight will then occur at Sunfish Lake Boulevard in Ramsey.

Ms. Bersaw provided some of the options that were considered for the Sunfish Lake Boulevard intersection.

Mr. Tillman provided additional details on the different options for the Sunfish Lake Boulevard intersection.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if Plants and Things would stay or would need to be acquired.

Mr. Tillman replied that under this scenario there would be significant impacts. He stated that a large piece of the property would remain but was unsure if that would be sufficient for the business. He also reviewed a lesser cost, less impactful option for the intersection noting that the

option would not allow all movements to be made at the intersection. He stated that because this option does not include the ability for pedestrian crossing, another element would need to be constructed that would allow for pedestrian crossing, such as a bridge, that would have additional cost. He confirmed that the option would allow the main straight traffic on Highway 10 to continue without stopping while there would be a signal for certain movements.

Ms. Bersaw explained that a standard diamond intersection at Sunfish Lake would impact almost every property near the intersection.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that there are also cost implications. He stated that if there are lesser impacts to adjacent properties, and lesser costs, perhaps then limiting certain movements would be acceptable.

Ms. Bersaw reviewed a few more options but noted that some options would significantly impact properties. She reviewed a more constrained footprint that would minimize impacts to local businesses and would include an at grade rail crossing with Sunfish crossing under Highway 10. She stated that going under the railroad at Sunfish Lake would not be feasible because of the impacts that would be needed to create the temporary track.

Mr. Tillman continued to review options, including an option very similar to the design that will be constructed at Thurston Avenue in Anoka.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that drivers are becoming more comfortable with roundabouts as time goes on.

Ms. Bersaw reviewed the chart that identifies the pros and cons for each of the options for the Sunfish Lake Boulevard intersection. She stated that the technical team left more options on the table for discussion with the recommendation to remove the standard diamond, high diamonds, and the high T.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he likes option seven as it is a unique design which allows free flowing traffic on the highway.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she also likes option seven but was curious if there would be an option for an at grade railroad crossing for that option.

Mr. Tillman stated that because of the tight spacing it would be difficult to come back down to grade for the rail crossing.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that his overall expectation would be to keep traffic moving on the highway. He stated that the north/south corridor connection is also important, as each of those roadways provides the connection to the communities north of Ramsey. He stated that he likes option seven because it keeps the highway traffic moving but also provides ease for the north/south traffic.

Councilmember Riley agreed that he also prefers option seven but could be interested in options five or six as well. He agreed there could be continuity in building the same type of intersection at Sunfish that is being built at Thurston.

Councilmember Shryock stated that her only concern with the roundabout would be pedestrian traffic. She stated that some concepts show the frontage road running through the middle of Plants and Things, while option seven pushes that frontage road towards the railroad to preserve the largest amount of space for that business.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that in conversations with the property owner, they are not interested in partial acquisition and would only agree to full acquisition, therefore whatever land is preserved would be for redevelopment purposes.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan stated that the difference between the Sunfish Lake intersection and Ramsey Boulevard intersection is that the businesses off Sunfish Lake are destination businesses, while the businesses at Ramsey Boulevard are convenience based.

Ms. Bersaw stated that her preference would be to keep some of the lost cost options included in the process to consider the reality of funding.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that missing from this discussion is the McKinley Street connection. He noted that there is a small gap missing that could connect the two industrial parks.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan stated that there are business owners that have businesses in both locations and would like to move products between the locations with more ease. He stated that during construction time in Anoka, there would be significant advantage to those Anoka businesses to allow the McKinley Street connection.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that in terms of medical safety the ability to go over the railroad crossings is important to get emergency vehicles from one side of the community to the other. He believed that option seven would allow for a better flow of traffic volume, not only today but in the future.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that in terms of the State list that was developed, Sunfish Lake Boulevard was listed as a higher priority for an above grade crossing over Ramsey Boulevard.

Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed the consensus of the Council to support option seven A as the first choice thus far with direction to rule out options three, four, and the high T.

Ms. Bersaw confirmed the consensus of the Council agreeing with the recommendations of the technical committee with the additional of an option 7A.

Ms. Bersaw moved to the west end noting that there are still unknowns for the future of the west end area, which will not be answered during this study time because of changes in both Anoka and Elk River.

Mr. Tillman introduced and reviewed the potential concepts for the west end area.

Ms. Bersaw stated that perhaps the west end concepts are a phased approach because they are on a lowest cost range and would be dependent upon what happens with the improvements in Elk River and Anoka.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she does like the idea that similar movements would be timed together with the stoplights, rather than having separate timing for each stoplight.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that he is overwhelmed that this would be an additional piece of work that the City would need to attach to; the previous thought was from Sunfish to Armstrong. He was appreciative in the desire to be more proactive between Armstrong and Elk River, but would find it hard to commit to a plan for that area. He acknowledged that intersections like Alpine and Jarvis are not safe and therefore mitigation efforts would be appreciative.

Councilmember Kuzma agreed that Alpine and Jarvis are dangerous intersections but was unsure that traffic is that heavy at this time. He stated that perhaps this is planned without signals, and additional improvements can be added in the future as needed.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would like to rethink if a different plan may work for the weigh station and roadside rest, as those elements may no longer be needed and could drive different answers.

Community Development Director Gladhill acknowledged that there would be additional work needed in this area with alternative options.

Councilmember Musgrove agreed that it is important to keep this portion included in the study because of the large housing development that was added near the Alpine intersection.

Planning Commissioner Bruce Anderson stated that he believed that the purpose is to remove all the stoplights on Highway 10. He provided an example used in Baxter.

Ms. Bersaw reviewed the proposed timeline which includes public input meetings.

Councilmember Heinrich cautioned against planning public meetings for the week of spring break for the school district.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

Noted.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

Mr. Tinklenberg stated that at the legislature there is a lot of interest in Highway 10 and provided information on some of the bills that have been introduced. He stated that three different bills have been introduced which would provide a third lane in Coon Rapids from Hanson Boulevard to Round Lake Boulevard, while another bill would bring that third lane all the way to 7th Avenue in Anoka. He noted that there has also been discussion on a potential river crossing, noting support from the city of Dayton. He stated that Highway 10 was the big winner in the regional solicitation funding but noted that given some money has already been invested in Ramsey Boulevard for the grade separation rail crossing; it would be difficult for Ramsey to gain additional funds. He stated that there have been a number of transportation discussions in Washington in terms of having infrastructure funding. He stated that the timing may be right to have a delegate from the City go out and reintroduce themselves and the funding opportunities for the intersections and rail crossings at Sunfish and Ramsey Boulevards. He explained that there may be an opportunity for Federal funding for those elements given the amount of State funding that has been allocated towards the other parts of Highway 10. He stated that Representative Abeler has continued to be a great representative to the community and acknowledged that Representative Heinrich has hit the ground running on a bipartisan basis, which has been great to see.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that it is refreshing to see a new representative become integrated so quickly.

Councilmember Shryock provided background information on the Highway 10 Coalition and the role that Ramsey has played in that process which is leading to fruitful results.

Mr. Tinklenberg acknowledged that the City of Ramsey can count some of the improvements that have occurred outside of Ramsey because of the attention that Ramsey has brought to the topic of Highway 10.

Councilmember Riley stated that the understanding was always that Thurston and Fair Oak would occur after Armstrong, with the additional understanding that Ramsey Boulevard and Sunfish Lake would be next. He wanted to ensure that Ramsey does not lose that momentum.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.