

SO WHAT IS ANOTHER \$60 MILLION GOING TO BUY US?

After a long winter, it's now road construction season in Minnesota, and MnDOT wants to do it again, even if it's just "temporary." MnDOT is proposing another solution to what they say are safety problems associated with I-35W. This time the Crosstown intersection is the target. The roadway will be widened to accommodate an HOV lane from I494 to 46th street, while also preventing the weaving of traffic at the Crosstown intersection. This newest proposal will be an addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Statement (F-EIS) on 35W, even though the original project has not obtained approval by the federal authorities and was actually reclassified because the \$1.2 billion needed was not available.

As you may recall, MnDOT has already added an HOV lane from Burnsville to I494 corrected 121th near Grass Lake, added new access lanes in the 35W/I-94 Commons and widened the bridge over Minnehaha Creek. It seems as though the highway is being reconstructed regardless of the environmental approval process and without the mass transit component. There will be two "open houses" (see calendar) to review MnDOT's newest intentions as well as a 30 day comment period on this proposal--there will be no public hearings.

Once again MnDOT is segmenting the construction of the roadway. 'Fixing' the 'safety problems' while it creates a new set of problems. For example, the new HOV lane will be dropped at 46th Street. Won't this cause weaving traffic to increase north of 46th? So the safety concerns shift to a different location which will have to be addressed in the typical MnDOT fashion — by adding more lanes north of 46th, at a date to be announced.

After MnDOT's news release and the newspaper articles, the question still remains — will more highway construction resolve the transportation problems facing the Twin Cities?

FROM GOOD INTENTIONS TO BEST PRACTICES

With the close of the 1996 Legislature, the transportation needs of the Metropolitan Region and the State have still not been addressed. The proposed legislation to increase the gas tax an additional five cents, indexed to inflation, and shifting

transit funding from our property taxes to a regional sales tax failed again because of a "no new taxes" mood in the legislature and lack of support from the Governor. Even if these proposals had achieved a consensus they would still fail to address the real transportation needs of the Metropolitan Region or those of the State. These legislative efforts were based on political compromise and the good intentions of the legislature; however, they avoided addressing the central obstacle to transportation funding--Minnesota's designated gas tax.

Attempts to modify the current transportation funding problems through nickel and dime efforts (or in this case, a half cent sales tax), simply avoid the structural obstacles of Minnesota's constitution which channels gas tax funds to roadways. This constitutional designation was originally instituted in the 1920s when Minnesota farmers were being gouged by high rail freight costs and insisted on state roadway funding to get their product to market. Over the years, this constitutional designation has simply been reinforced through legislative statutes, administrative practices and special interest lobbying. At the same time, any mass transit provided by municipalities had to rely on a city's or region's ability/willingness to tax itself through property taxes and/or special appeals to the legislature. This antiquated constitutional barrier has persisted through 1996 and has again contributed to inadequate funding either roadways or mass transit.

It is time that Minnesotans, the Legislature and the Governor address the restrictions of the State's Constitutionally designated gas tax. The federal government has given all states flexibility to address the local needs of both roadways and transit, but Minnesota cannot use its federal funds because of our 1920s restrictive funding practices. Isn't it time that we adapted our practices and our constitution to meet not just our current transportation needs but those of the 21st century?



MNDOT 35W INFORMATION OPEN HOUSES

Monday, May 6 from 4 to 8 p.m.,
Richfield Lutheran Church, 8 W. 60th
St., Minneapolis.

Thursday, May 9 from 4 to 8 p.m.,
Richfield City Hall, 6700 Portland
Ave., Richfield.

Call 582-1320 or 582-1366 for more
information.

SPECIAL FUND DRIVE AND MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Have you sent in your yearly contribution to the Neighborhood Transportation Network? It is time to renew and re-up! It seems that MnDOT and the Met Council have chosen to allocate yet another \$60 million to do more "temporary" work on I-35W in the name of public safety, but who will keep the public safe from the road building interests? We are asking you to make your voluntary, tax-deductible contribution to NTN so we can maintain a public voice loud enough to be heard above the road construction noise. A board member will be contacting you in the next few weeks to talk about your concerns and to ask for your contribution. Thanks for your contribution and your continued support.

A ROLE FOR TRANSIT

Once again the Star Tribune has promoted the Citizens League's position that mass transit can have only a very restricted role in the future development of the Twin Cities. (See Metro Section, "Strike reveals a lack of reliance on buses," 10/16/95). According to the League, the automobile has been the single force shaping both Minneapolis and Phoenix, Arizona. To take such a singular approach is to ignore both history and the role of other technological innovations. If one wanted to argue for a single technology, a person could argue that central heating has had just as important a role as the automobile in the development for the Twin Cities just as air conditioning has had for the recent development of Phoenix. This singular logic is simply self-serving, besides it ignores historical realities.

Historically, the Twin Cities has been shaped and redirected by many waves of technology and transportation: from yesterday's reliance on river traffic and water power; through an era of railroads, street cars and electricity; to today's dependence on highways, mass transit, air traffic and telecommunications. The hallmark of the Twin Cities has been its historic ability to use current technologies and transportation systems to assist in the social and economic development of the region. To now link the Twin Cities to a single mode of transportation because of the area's current density patterns, as Mr. Lyle Wray of the Citizens League suggests, would be the same as forcing the Twin Cities to rely solely on the grain market because of its historic importance to the region's economy. The one city that has linked itself to the automobile both economically and as its single form of transportation is Detroit. Would the Citizens League have the Twin Cities follow this example?

If the Twin Cities transit strike has shown anything, it is that the area's highways and

auto transportation system is adequate for today, but for the region's future an integrated transportation system will be needed to meet the growth demands projected. The economic and social vitality of the region simply cannot sustain the costs associated with continued urban sprawl that automobile dependency promotes. Transit will also need to be integrated with other transportation modes such as the air transport, river traffic, rail service and even the automobile. Cities and regions (Portland, Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., or closer to home, Chicago, Milwaukee and Madison) realize the importance transportation services and are making the necessary investments in this infrastructure.



TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL NOTES:

A collection of news clips compiled by Michael O'Neal

As The 1996 Legislative Session was coming to a close, an amendment was attached to raise the Minnesota speed limit to 65 m.p.h.. The Federal Government had reassigned the authority to set speed limits to the States. However, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has also issued a warning to the States that, higher speed limits decrease fuel efficiency, releasing more pollution. Localities may no longer comply with the clean air standards.

Identifying waste in government, the "Green Scissors" project has identified several transportation projects that are not only **budget busters** but also environmentally harmful. MnDOT and Met Council's proposed \$400 million Highway 36 bridge expansion into Wisconsin was identified as a typical project that could be cut to balance the budget and maintain the environment.

Is there "Traffic Calming" in your future? The City of Minneapolis is making available to neighborhood groups and residents several options to reclaim their local streets through various "traffic calming"

techniques. You can contact NTN (872-4079) or Michael Monahan of Minneapolis Public Works (673-2414) for more information and traffic calming options for your neighborhood. The message with all these options is "SLOW DOWN, people live here!"

This Spring or early Summer Minneapolis will paint bike lanes on Park and Portland Avenues south from downtown to Minnehaha Creek. Each street will have a bike lane (northbound on Park, southbound on Portland). To make room for the bike lanes, the existing three lanes of through traffic will be narrowed while parking will be maintained. This is a necessary first-step to modify the traffic and scale of these two one-way streets. The Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan Task Force, "Moving People, Goods, and Information" has discussed converting many of the paired one-way streets into two way streets.

While Minnesotans were busy planning transit cuts, fixing "pot holes" and debating airport expansions, Amtrack has developed plans for high speed trains in the Washington-New York-Boston corridor. The "American Flyer" project will combine new trains with track improvements to cut travel time from Capitol Hill in D.C. to downtown NYC to just 2½ hours. The manufacturers of these new trains and equipment are assisting Amtrack in financing much of the costs since they "evidently share the railroad's belief that the trains will generate more than sufficient revenues to pay for themselves." - NY Times 3/16/96

"More Railway News:" Citizen groups and governmental agencies in Florida want to reintroduce the "Orange Blossom Special" rail service. They expect to reduce highway construction costs and traffic congestion. While in the Pacific Northwest (Portland-Seattle-Vancouver), the high speed Cascadia Regional System is being considered to link the growing economies of this region, promote tourism, and preserve the environment.

"Transit isn't the fastest way to work. It's just the fastest way to **save \$3,000 a year**, every year!" So says, Patrick H. Hare, in his book, Home Economics of Reduced Car Ownership. Park your second car in the bank, permanently! This parallels findings of the Center for Neighborhood Technology in Chicago. They found that

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

To comment on this or previous newsletters, or to submit articles for future publication, contact us at the office (872-4079). To join our newsletter committee call Laurie Frevert at 823-4504.

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people who have access to reliable public transit qualify for a higher home mortgage since they don't have the expense of a second car.

The alliance for a Paving Moratorium, a project of the Fossil Fuels Policy Action Institute of California has identified MnDOT's toll road proposals as both economically wasteful and environmentally harmful. The exclusive truck tollway from Duluth to Winnipeg is especially problematic since it would cut through environmentally sensitive areas in northern Minnesota and undermine a very effective and efficient Canadian rail system. In addition, the Canadian and Provincial governments oppose the tollway.

Transit for Livable Communities (TLC) has asked the MN Legislature and the metropolitan government to ensure that the Twin Cities Region "grows smart." TLC wants a transit goal of 20% by the year 2020 — that is, one-fifth of our daily trips should be on foot, bike or public transit by the year 2020. Although this may seem like a small goal, it would be the first time an actual goal was set and targeted for transit (except plans for autos).

Ramsey County and MnDOT are proposing an expansion of the Ford Parkway Bridge that connects the Highland Area in St. Paul through Minnehaha Park to the new Hiawatha Corridor. Residents in the area are concerned about the effect of roadway construction/expansion on the livability of their neighborhood, as well as, the environmental impacts on the park and watershed area.

COULD YOU FIND US ON THE WWW?

We may be placing this newsletter on the Internet. We're not abandoning the printed version. We just want to reach the people, dedicated to transit, any way we can.

To give your time or expertise, call Doug Frevert at 823-4504.

TRANSIT REDESIGN

Barb Thoman

The Metropolitan Council's plan for Transit Redesign is near completion. Staff at the Metropolitan Council are reviewing public comments and hope to have a report ready for the full Council's approval in the next few months.

Transit Redesign is the Council's attempt to come to grips with ever declining financial resources. The introduction to the draft plan states that the purpose of Transit Redesign is to "identify key areas of regional transit management and policies that need to change if transit is to remain a viable transportation option." The draft report is dated Jan. 22, 1996.

The plan proposes a variety of strategies to stabilize bus ridership and lower costs. Some of the strategies the plan proposes:

- an increased role for the private sector in the provision of transit services including bidding out peak hour express bus service and small vehicle service.
- the use of smaller transit vehicles and more local service on some routes.
- more local decision making.
- a continuation of frequent 7 day fixed route service in most locations in the core cities.
- standards for determining what type of service each bus route should have. Standards will be based on population and employment density, financial need, and levels of trip generation.
- a shift away from the property tax as the primary source of funding for transit.

NTN and Transit for Livable Communities (TLC) provided extensive comments on the "Transit Redesign" continued on pg. 4

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GERRY SELL

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NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSPORTATION NETWORK

Suite 100, 1901 Elliot Ave. So.
Minneapolis, MN 55404
(612) 872-4079

INTERESTED IN
VOLUNTEERING?
NTN NEEDS YOU!
CALL MICHAEL O'NEAL
AT 872-4079

Cut along this line and mail to NTN, Suite 100, 1901 Elliot Ave. So., Minneapolis, MN 55404

Dear NTN: I want to help NTN influence what happens to 35W and other transportation corridors.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

I'd like to be involved, I'd like to contribute

My time ☐ just give me a call ☐ and even some money ☐

Like 10 Dollars for the Newsletter ☐ or a small fortune ☐ \$_____

Please make your tax
deductible check out to:
The Neighborhood
Transportation Network

ISTEA NEEDS TO SURVIVE

by Scott Dibble

In March the Surface Transportation Policy Project in Washington D.C. hosted a large gathering of environmentalists and transit activists, including NTN. They gathered to kick off the campaign to reauthorize the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). The funding for this legislation is due to run out Sept. 30, 1997.

ISTEA gives states the ability to flexibly apply their traditional highway dollars and conduct better planning processes. Better planning to generate better solutions to transportation challenges. The highlight of the conference was a citizens hearing at which many members of Congress heard testimony about how ISTEA, with the focus it gives to making progress toward goals such as clean air, energy conservation and equality of access, needs to continue to inform transportation planning and implementation.

In fact, if it were not for ISTEA, many community groups like NTN simply would not be heard. NTN was organized in 1988 by citizens, neighborhood organizations, religious congregations and social service agencies concerned about MnDOT's announcement of their plan to expand 35W through the heart of South Minneapolis. NTN became the umbrella organization linking community groups opposed to this roadway plan. A plan that would have doubled the highway lane capacity while it ignored transit alternatives. Through NTN's locally based effort, coupled with the new ISTEA legislation, the original MnDOT proposal was dramatically altered to accommodate more transportation options.

Transit Redesign *from page 3*

Transit Redesign Plan. Both organizations called for a major commitment to transit with affordable fares and transportation policies that prioritize biking, walking, and mass transit over the automobile. NTN and TLC also asked the Council to link Transit Redesign with the selection of an urban growth strategy that encourages growth along transit corridors and within the current built-up areas.



NTN's original efforts to incorporate more transit alternatives into the 35W proposal highlights a fundamental aspect of ISTEA legislation. The public, through community meetings, opinion polls and public testimony overwhelmingly supports more transit choices for the Twin Cities region. Continuation of ISTEA would permit and encourage these transportation alternatives and public participation.

A major public concern with the 35W proposal, especially when linked to a proposed expansion of our beltway to the south, I494, was the \$2.2 billion construction cost. To many, this was a disproportionate amount of public resources to expend on twenty-five miles of roadway. This amount is almost half of the roadway budget for the entire state. ISTEA required MnDOT and the Met Council to develop a fiscally realistic budget for roadway construction. As a result, the 35W and I494 projects have been temporarily reclassified as "projects not yet fully studied."

NTN strongly supports the reauthorization of ISTEA.

Should Property Taxes Subsidize Automobile Usage?

www.bts.gov/smart/cat/kinney.html

"In Milwaukee, the users of automobiles receive a total subsidy of approximately \$119 million per year, equivalent to three-quarters of the total city property tax levy. If the city's total costs relative to cars, more than \$400 per vehicle, were directly charged to car owners, property taxes on a \$50,000 house would be reduced by approximately \$500. In addition, a shift to a user-fee strategy for auto related costs would result in less pollution, less congestion, less sprawl, and a more efficient local transportation system. . . ."

Annual Twin Cities Transit Ridership

1975	80.1 million
1985	73.7 million
1995	61.1* or 66.7 million

* includes the effect of a one month bus strike.
A simple adjustment for the bus strike: $61.1 \div 11 \times 12 = 66.7$ Source: MCTO

Free Parking

www.uwex.edu/danenet/bcp/car3.html

"... Over the U.S., free parking subsidies provided by employers amount to \$85 billion a year. It has been shown that removal of parking subsidies has been a major factor in increasing transit ridership. Therefore, steps need to be taken to insure this happens, by requiring employer use of alternative transit and bicycle subsidy options for employees, and by other means of increasing the cost of parking while providing other non-auto options for mobility. . . ."



Suite 100
1901 Elliot Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404

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