



**CITY OF SAINT PAUL**

*Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor*

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**TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

Monday, October 7, 2013, 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

*All meetings are held in the City Hall Annex 13<sup>th</sup> floor*

*Conference room at 25 West 4<sup>th</sup> Street in Saint Paul*

1. West Midway Industrial Strategy Transportation Elements Review and Overall Strategy – Allen Lovejoy, Public Works, 30 minutes
2. Corridors of Commerce Discussion – Allen Lovejoy, Public Works, 15 minutes

*Upcoming Transportation Committee Meetings*

- October 21 – Tentative West Midway Sidewalk Infill Walking Tour
- November 4 – Parking discussion

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*Meetings are open to the public. The Chair may allow five minutes for informal public comment (from non-committee members) at the beginning of each agenda as needed. Additional time may be allocated for comments or further discussion at the discretion of the Chair. Meetings will be cancelled if there is not a quorum expected, or if there are no agenda items. For additional information on the Transportation Committee of the Planning Commission, please visit our website at [bit.ly/StPaulTC](http://bit.ly/StPaulTC) or contact Hilary Holmes at [hilary.holmes@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:hilary.holmes@ci.stpaul.mn.us) or 651-266-6612.*

## Transportation Committee Staff Report

Committee date: 10/7/13

<b>Project Name</b>	<b><i>West Midway Industrial Strategy</i></b>
Geographic Scope	<i>West Midway Industrial Area; I-94 to Energy Park Drive, Hwy 280 to Prior</i>
Ward(s)	<i>4</i>
District Council(s)	<i>11, 12, 13</i>
Project Description	<i>In 2010 the Planning Commission initiated the West Midway Industrial Study (with a hiatus for Northwest Quadrant Transportation Study 2011-12)</i>
Project Contact	<i>Allen Lovejoy</i>
Contact email/phone	<i>651-266-6226</i>
Lead Agency/Department	<i>Public Works</i>
Purpose of Project/Plan	<p><i>Strategies for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>retention of businesses and assistance to help them grow;</i></li> <li>• <i>attracting new industrial investments;</i></li> <li>• <i>ensuring compatibility between residential and industrial areas;</i></li> <li>• <i>improvements to city permitting and regulations;</i></li> <li>• <i>intensified industrial business outreach;</i></li> <li>• <i>improvements to streets for optimum truck access from the freeway system and pedestrian access to the Green Line; and</i></li> <li>• <i>efficient land assembly to incorporate urban design in new industrial development.</i></li> </ul>
Planning References	<i>Comp Plan Land Use Chapter: LU 2.16, Figure LU-G</i>
Project stage	<i>Discussion at Planning Commission Committees</i>
General Timeline	<i>Through Planning Commission Fall 2013, City Council Q1 2014?</i>
District Council position (if applicable)	<i>Presented to D11, D12, D13 in June 2013, met with support</i>
Level of Committee Involvement	<i>Advise &amp; Consent</i>
Previous Committee action	<i>None (Previously at Committee 8/26/13)</i>
Level of Public Involvement	<i>Inform, advise &amp; consent, involve, development of project/program, etc</i>
Public Hearing	<i>TBD</i>
Public Hearing Location	
Primary Funding Source(s)	<i>N/A</i>
Cost	

Staff recommendation	<i>Consent</i>
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Action item requested of the Committee	<i>Recommend to Planning Commission</i>
Committee recommendation	
Committee vote	

### Level of Committee Involvement

<b>INFORM:</b> <i>Informational briefings</i>	<i>Projects that are in implementation phase; projects from other jurisdictions; policy documents from other agencies/jurisdictions</i>
<b>ADVISE AND CONSENT:</b> <i>Informational briefings with policy discussion, general directives to staff for follow-through</i>	<i>Project and program reviews primarily initiated by staff; or involvement with program development by others</i>
<b>INVOLVE:</b> <i>Discussions to develop directions for projects &amp; programs</i>	<i>Policy involvement from inception through design, inc. policy development; environmental documentation,</i>
<b>DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT/PROGRAM:</b> <i>Discussion to form process; screening of ideas; development of recommendations; and managing outreach to the community</i>	<i>Committee has primary responsibility for concept development, and/or overseeing participation process, and/or making specific recommendations to Planning Commission, Mayor and/or City Council</i>

## West Midway Transportation Elements

### **Business Engagement Strategy**

**B-12 Invest in the Street and Roadway Network:** There are selected improvements to the street and roadway network that can substantially improve truck access to the regional highway system (I-94 and TH 280). For some time the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has been concerned about the capacities of the Snelling, Vandalia and Highway 280 interchanges with I-94. These concerns have been heightened with the collapse of the I-35W river crossing bridge and the decision to add lanes on I-94 west of Highway 280 to deal with congestion. In addition, regional transportation plans recommend high-occupancy lanes along I-94 between the two downtowns.

- i. Ensure that discussions with MnDOT and the City of Minneapolis on the I-94 MnPASS project be broadened. Such discussions must include: Hwy 280 redesign north to the Larpenteur interchange (particularly access at Franklin Avenue); redesign of the Vandalia Bridge to accommodate growth in freight traffic; and north end of Ayd Mill Road to relieve congestion at the I-94/Snelling interchange.
- ii. Continue to study managed lane analysis on I-94.
- iii. Improve direct access for trucking from city streets to I-94 and TH 280. The following recommendations are an outgrowth of the Northwest Quadrant Transportation Study, completed in 2012 by the City Public Works Department in cooperation with the community bounded by I-94, Snelling Avenue, TH 280 and Larpenteur Avenue
  - a. Improve/rebuild Ellis between Transfer Road and Vandalia Street. (Short-term) This connection will improve freight trucking connection between Pierce Butler Road and the I-94 Interchange and direct most truck traffic away from University Avenue between Transfer Road and Vandalia.
  - b. Designate Territorial Road a truck route, between Vandalia and Highway 280. (Short-term)
  - c. Resurface Territorial from Carleton Street to Highway 280. (Short-term) Reconstruct with bike lanes and pave with materials that minimize noise to the adjacent properties.
  - d. Redesign and Resurface Vandalia from Capp Road to south of I-94 to act as the primary north/south spine for industrial traffic, including sidewalks.
  - e. Design and install trailblazing signage in the industrial area to both I-94 and Highway 280. (Short-term) Such signage will minimize wandering trucks and focus traffic on the most appropriate streets. Such signage will be coordinated with MnDOT.
  - f. Reconstruct Territorial Road between Carleton and Vandalia. (Mid-term) Reconstruction will deal with loading dock issues.
  - g. Reconstruct the Vandalia Bridge over I-94. (Mid-term) Reconstruction will enhance capacity for semi-trailer trucks, especially for left-turn movements.
  - h. Periodically reassess the usefulness of a new North/South connection across the BNSF rail right-of-way to Energy Park Drive and Como Avenue. (Long-term)
- iv. Seek better options for truck traffic in the Westgate Industrial Area. Traffic and truck movements have become a significant problem for businesses in the Westgate Industrial Area. There is great concern that these problems will intensify due to planned and potential developments immediately to the north of Fifth Street and to the west in Minneapolis. This is particularly timely, because there is development interest in the immediate area that may be discouraged if relief is not found. However, potential solutions are likely to be very expensive or greatly impact existing development. Nevertheless, the City is committed to greater coordination between Minneapolis and St. Paul in search of viable options.

- a. Continue to coordinate the monitoring of traffic operation issues with the City of Minneapolis with regard to the Westgate Industrial Park area and more regional east/ west industrial traffic demand.
- b. Outline potential relievers of such traffic and evaluate their effectiveness and cost.

**B-13 Improve the Physical Environment in ways that helps Businesses.**

i. Enhance streetscaping throughout the area with sidewalk installation, curb and gutter, landscaping and lighting. Such improvements will calm traffic, create a more positive atmosphere for workers, enhance property values, and improve marketability of property for resale.

ii. Develop/enhance landscaping and front building facades. Such improvements will attract more customers/visitors, establish a more professional context for each business and enhance property values.

iii. Consolidate parking, preferably away from street facades. Consolidation of parking may allow for more efficient truck maneuvering and improve curb appearance. In addition, consideration of multi-business sharing of parking may well save costs, allow for building expansion and substantially increase alternatives for truck maneuvering.

iv. Employ a Transportation Demand Management tool kit. Parking efficiency may also be realized by creating incentives for employees to use carpools, transit, walking and bicycling. TDM audits can determine the potential reduction in parking demands and lead to more satisfied employees. And with the advent of LRT, there may be more employees interested and willing to avoid driving alone to work.

**B-14 Improve the Physical Environment in ways that helps Workers.**

i. Improve sidewalks throughout the area to promote walking. Sidewalks will promote walking and improve the health of the workforce. In addition, sidewalks help workers access transit and services along commercial corridors.

ii. Create bicycle facilities on selected streets. This will create options for workers to bicycle to work. Bicycle commuting is increasing rapidly in Minneapolis and St. Paul, although it currently represents a small percentage of total trips in the region (2.2%). In addition, bicycling promotes a healthier workforce.

**B-15 Improve the Physical Environment in ways that helps Neighborhoods.**

i. Reduce conflicts with trucks by developing a system of sidewalks. The industrial areas currently have few sidewalks, yet certain streets are the only connection for neighborhood people to access services and transit on commercial streets. Sidewalks on at least one side of most streets will substantially reduce conflicts and allow for needed pedestrian access.

ii. Promote inter-neighborhood and regional bicycle connections. Bicycle facilities, striping or signage on selected streets will help ensure connections and safety for bicyclists and vehicles.

iii. Define and improve the problematic edges between neighborhoods and industrial uses. Such improvements may include fencing, paved alleys (where none exist today), landscaping, and conversion of residential-to-industrial or industrial-to-residential uses.

**B-16 Improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities.**

i. Ensure adequate walkways from the Green Line Stations into the heart of the industrial area and to the nearby residential areas. Select street segments where installation of new sidewalks will not

substantially disrupt access to adjacent property, particularly loading areas for trucks. The sidewalk segments to be constructed in the short-term (as depicted in the Sidewalk Infill Program map, page 30) are included in an existing, funded program.

ii. Create bicycle links through the heart of the industrial area to connect neighborhoods one to each other and to the regional links. Bicycle links to be constructed in the short-and mid-term are depicted in the Bicycle Facilities map on page 32.

iii. Begin to fill in the grid of sidewalks within the heart of the industrial area, beginning with the Sidewalk Infill Program – 2013.

iv. Ensure sufficient street lighting for pedestrian and bicyclist safety as part of any streetscape and street reconstruction projects.

## **Sub District Recommendations**

### **Northern Core Manufacturing/Distribution Sub-District**

The Northern Core Sub-District is dominated by the BNSF Intermodal facility, includes industry along Energy Park Drive, and a mix of industrial users north of Charles Avenue. The Intermodal facility is an industry in its own right, focusing on import-export business, and located on 44 acres between the BNSF tracks and Pierce Butler Road. It generates a tremendous volume of truck traffic – 150 operations per day. Its principal cargo includes mail and consumer goods, and to a lesser degree, agricultural products, car parts, produce, construction materials, and electronics – so it is vital to the local and regional economy. There is a steadily increasing demand for such services in the region, and the State of Minnesota Rail Plan identifies this facility as an important asset for local, regional and state economies.

Trucking from the Intermodal facility has generated much study in the course of the last few years. The Northwest Quadrant Transportation Study (completed in 2012) evaluated the potential of a new north/south roadway connection that would give more direct access to the principal highway system for trucking. While a north-south connection is recommended, it is a long-term recommendation and in the near term the recommendation is to make it easier for trucks to get to I-94 via Vandalia Street and Highway 280 North via Territorial Road.

The mix of industrial includes active manufacturing, trucking, warehousing, and offices, as well as a few very large vacant manufacturing sites and numerous un- or under-used sites. The area is significantly underused with substantial potential for industrial infill, some major development of vacant sites and redevelopment of brownfield sites. There is also the potential for a few Greenpoint-type building conversions.

Also, the industrial area along Energy Park Drive between Snelling Avenue and Highway 280 has potential for industrial infill, with the most prominent site being Midway Stadium. The Saints baseball team will relocate to downtown St. Paul in 2015 and the Port Authority will begin site preparation and marketing for a major new industrial development on that site.

Access in this area is fairly simple, with access to the principal highway system via Energy Park west to Highway 280. Although the interchange ramp designs could be improved for heavy truck traffic, for the near-term this will be the principal access point.

One significant land use organizing principle is an emphasis on Vandalia Street as a major north/south transportation spine. Given that there will not be new major roadways built in the foreseeable future, Vandalia will need to carry the majority of that north/south industrial traffic to the I-94 interchange. Transfer Road/Cleveland will be developed as the primary north/south pedestrian and bicycle route through the Sub-District. Finally, Transfer Road/Cleveland's redevelopment offers the opportunity as a green corridor with boulevards providing stormwater recharge and landscaping opportunities.

### **Roadways and Trucking**

The primary objective in this sub-district is to try to get truck traffic in and out in the most direct and least obtrusive manner possible. For truck traffic from the Intermodal facility heading to I-94 or Hwy 280 North, the current preferred route is Pierce Butler to Transfer Road, south to Ellis, west to Vandalia Street, south to I-94 or west on Territorial Road to Hwy 280 North. To facilitate these movements, both for the Intermodal facility and industries south of the BNSF tracks, the following actions are required:

- SD 1-1** Reconstruct Ellis between Transfer and Vandalia to best accommodate the primary travel from Transfer to Vandalia. (This connection will direct many trucks off of Transfer south of Ellis and off of University between Vandalia and Transfer.)
- SD 1-2** Rehabilitate Territorial Road between Vandalia and Hwy 280 and designate it as a truck route. Phase I will include reconstruction on the stretch from Carleton to Hwy 280.
- SD 1-3** Rehabilitate Vandalia to eventually be the primary north/ south spine, accommodating additional industrial traffic, and pedestrians, including boulevard areas with stormwater recharge and landscaping areas.
- SD 1-4** Design and implement pathfinder signage (with MnDOT) to direct traffic to Hwy 280 north via Territorial and to I-94 east and west via Vandalia. Sign the entire area from Pierce Butler and Capp Road.
- SD 1-5** Coordinate with MnDOT to reconstruct the Cretin/Vandalia interchange at I-94 to better accommodate semi-trailer connections.

### **Transit Access**

As a fully-built city, Saint Paul has limited options in terms of expanding capacity for autos and trucks. Accessibility for commuters and shoppers must be expanded if redevelopment is to occur. Business expansion relies on good access for workers as well as for freight and supplies. Yet growth in capacity and accessibility for workers in the city will come predominantly from transit, walking and bicycling. The Green Line LRT has enormous capacity to carry workers and shoppers – the equivalent of 2 freeway lanes; in each direction! Although it may not be apparent now, the Green Line in the future will carry many commuters to work in the West Midway Industrial area. And although transit will mostly augment automobile use for commuting, it will accommodate an ever-larger proportion of workers. (The Sidewalk Infill Program map on Page 30 depicts sidewalk improvements for the entire Study Area.)

- SD 1-11** Best utilize the capacity of the Green Line LRT by accommodating riders so they can easily walk from LRT stations to employment destinations via sidewalks and pedestrian walkways.
- SD 1-12** Implement the West Midway Sidewalk Infill program.

### **Bicycle Facilities**

Another important aspect of accessibility is the use of bicycle facilities. In particular, the West Midway Industrial area is situated between the South St. Anthony and Newell Park neighborhoods (east-west) and includes the South St. Anthony neighborhood from Energy Park Drive to I-94. As part of the urbanized development, connections among residential neighborhoods and through the industrial

areas require safe bicycle facilities along a few routes. (The Bicycle Facilities map on page 32 depicts bicycle facility improvements for the entire Study Area.)

Specifically, for the Northern Core Manufacturing/Distribution Sub-District:

**SD 1-19** Establish an East/West bicycle connection along Territorial/ Charles as depicted in the Bicycle Facilities Map (page 32) (This will connect the Newell Park and South St. Anthony neighborhoods.) The Territorial Road segment will be implemented as it is rebuilt, with on-street bicycle lanes. Charles Avenue west of Transfer will have on-street bicycle lanes. Charles connection east of Transfer will require land acquisition and take some time to implement.

**SD 1-20** Establish North/South bicycle connections on Cleveland/Transfer from south of I-94 to Pierce Butler with bicycle lanes.

**SD 1-21** Improve North/South bicycle connections on Raymond from University Avenue to the BNSF Bridge.

### **Southern Core Manufacturing/Distribution Sub-District**

The area roughly bounded by Charles Avenue to the north, I-94 to the south, Prior Avenue on the east and the City limits on the west, includes portions of three LRT station areas, the Rock-Tenn complex and other industrial uses on either side of University Avenue. As in the Northern Core, this Sub-District generates a fair amount of truck traffic, but is complicated by activity along University Avenue including substantial retail, services, offices and the Green Line LRT (to be opened in 2014). The City-adopted Station Area Plans for the Westgate, Raymond and Fairview Stations make specific land uses for most of this Sub-District.

The three station area plans are part of the City's Comprehensive Plan and as such, dictate land uses and zoning for designated station areas. The main intent for land uses within the station areas is the development of Transit Oriented Development within approximately ½ mile of the LRT stations. The City anticipates the Central Corridor area to be the highest intensity of development in the city, outside of the downtown. As such, it is likely the development will be mostly higher-density residential and office with some retail development.

To memorialize these changes, the City has already proceeded to amend the Zoning Code; which resulted in changing some zoning designations in those areas. However, the Zoning Code changes were undertaken with the understanding that no additional industrial areas will be converted to non-industrial zoning, except in extraordinary circumstances. (See Strategy SB-8.)

### **Roadways and Trucking**

The primary objective is to limit the use of heavy truck movements along University Avenue, reduce difficult turning movements for large trucks and improve access to Vandalia/I-94.

**SD 2-1** Through trailblazing, channel north/south truck traffic from the Vandalia, Hampden and Franklin intersections on University Avenue to the Cretin/Vandalia/I-94 interchange via Vandalia Street.

**SD 2-2** Through trailblazing and selective roadway improvements, channel truck traffic on Territorial Road to northbound Hwy 280.

### **Bicycle Facilities and Sidewalks**

(See Bicycle Facilities map, page 32)

**SD 2-9** Implement the West Midway Sidewalk Infill program.

**SD 2-10** Establish an East/West bicycle connection along Franklin Avenue between the City Line and Pelham, and on Pelham south from Franklin across I-94 with bike lanes.

### **Emerging Research/Bio-Tech/Manufacturing Sub-District**

This Sub-District is located west of Highway 280 from the Westgate Industrial Park in the south to Como Avenue in the north, and immediately east of the Minneapolis Mid-City Employment District. Its proximity to the two University of Minnesota campuses (via the Inter-Campus Busway) and potential for medical and technological developments to the west in Minneapolis suggest this Sub-District could also house bio-medical and research as well as manufacturing businesses. Existing uses appear compatible with this new focus: University Enterprise Labs (contemplating a Phase 2 of development); DaVita Universal Dialysis; Allina Health Medical Equipment; and University of Minnesota buildings in the north.

Regional accessibility has been studied extensively, both by the Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. In the Northwest Quadrant Transportation Study, the City of Saint Paul studied the effectiveness of extending Pierce Butler west from Transfer Road and connecting with a new Minneapolis 'Granary Road'. Even if the connection were made, it would not provide any appreciable relief to streets in the City, but it would give better regional business access to Highway 280. The Transportation Study concluded that Pierce Butler should not be extended to the west. Meanwhile, Granary Road was being evaluated in Minneapolis to connect Highway 280 to the East Bank Campus of the University through the Southeast Minneapolis Industrial Site (SEMI). However, they too concluded that such a road would not provide appreciable relief, and are not pursuing a new roadway at this time.

Even though those studies did not conclude there were regional benefits to Pierce Butler and Granary Roads, local access is still a problem. Truck traffic within and from the Westgate Industrial Area is a growing concern. Such trucking movements might be better served with a connection to Highway 280 via the Energy Park/Kasota interchange, but would require major new infrastructure to accomplish. In addition, the Highway 280 ramps may be substantially improved at Kasota and Como in the long run. As this area redevelops, along with the SEMI area in Minneapolis, there may be momentum to re-evaluate street options in the area.

Regional access is also a concern, particularly with the on-ramp to eastbound I-94 and the interchange at Hwy 280 and I-94. Ongoing coordination with MnDOT is required to ensure that any reconstruction of Hwy 280 includes improvements to the interchanges at Energy Park Drive, at Como Boulevard and at Larpenteur Avenue.

### **Roadways and Trucking**

Traffic and truck movements have become a significant problem for businesses in the Westgate Industrial Area.

**SD 3-1** Continue to coordinate the monitoring of traffic operation issues with the City of Minneapolis with regard to the Westgate Industrial Park area and more regional east/west industrial traffic demand.

**SD 3-2** Outline potential relievers

### **Transit Access**

There are no transit access recommendations defined for this Sub-District.

### **Bicycle Lanes and Sidewalks**

Since a strong pattern of development has not emerged, there are no specific recommendations for bicycling and walking.

**SD 3-6** Ensure that design provisions for sidewalks, landscaping and lighting are integrated into any new industrial development.