

**WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS AND RESPONSES
Radisson Road (CSAH 52) and Bunker Lake Boulevard (CSAH 116)
Reconstruction Project**

Approximately 1,900 postcards were sent to residents and property owners within a half mile of the reconstruction project informing them of an open house to be held on June 24, 2008. Information on the postcard included the date, time, and location of the open house. The postcard also provided a Web address for people to visit in order to find out more information about the proposed project. Residents and property owners who attended the open house were able to fill out comment cards at the meeting or take the card home and mail comments back at a later date. Sixteen comment cards were received at the open house or were mailed to the county following the meeting. Four comments were received via the project Web site or e-mail. The following summarizes, by category, the substantive comments and questions that were received. Categories include:

- Noise
- Speed
- Traffic
- Trails
- Right of Way/Berms/Trees
- Safety
- Miscellaneous

NOISE

COMMENT:

How can you predict the future noise level when you have said that you don't know what the future speed limit will be on Radisson Road?

RESPONSE:

The context in which you were told that it is unknown what the future speed limit will be was probably a conversation about the speed study process. When the project is opened to traffic, the speed limits will be similar to the existing conditions. Once the project is completed, the cities will be able to request that a speed study be completed by Mn/DOT. There is no guarantee that a speed study will result in a lower speed limit. In some cases, the speed limit is increased.

COMMENT:

I think noise walls would be very ugly.

RESPONSE:

Comment noted.

COMMENT:

Several comments expressed the need for noise barriers. Comments included (1) a question about compensation for damages to the property for the loss of the existing noise barrier (trees and berm); (2) a request for trees to be planted to block the noise if noise barriers are not installed; (3) an offer to donate the land required for the noise barriers to lower the costs and make the barriers cost effective; and (4) a request for at least a privacy fence.

RESPONSE: *Updated June 4, 2009*

The noise analysis has been completed. See Section 24 of the EA/EAW. (A link to the EA/EAW can be found on the Home page or the Environmental Studies and Documentation page).

(1) Property owners must be compensated in accordance with the requirements of Public Law 91-646, The Uniform Relocation and Real Properties Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970, as amended. This Act is commonly known as the “Uniform Act.”

Property needed for the project must be appraised, and a formal written offer to purchase based on this appraisal must be given to the property owner. Anoka County chooses to use independent fee appraisers rather than staff members in most cases, except where the anticipated damages are expected to be a very small amount. The offer to the property owner cannot be less than the value established in the appraisal. The law also provides that an owner may obtain his/her own appraisal report if desired and the county will pay for it up to a statutory limit.

When preparing the appraisal report, the appraiser must offer the property owner an opportunity to accompany him/her when the appraiser is on site. This is intended to give the property owner a chance to point out items of value or concerns. Appraisal reports include a value for the land to be taken, and they also evaluate any additional “damages” the remainder of the property may suffer as the result of the acquisition. These may include, but are not limited to, trees/shrubs and landscaping, changes in access, privacy, zoning changes, etc.

The property owner’s receipt of the offer initiates a period of negotiations when a county right of way staff member will meet with the owner to discuss the project plans and, hopefully, arrive at an agreeable settlement.

(2) Homeowners can use the money received for the land and damages to plant trees on their property or make other improvements to their homes or property, if they wish.

(3) Donation of land to lower the cost of a barrier is not feasible for a number of reasons:

- It does not match the typical process of property acquisition under the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act followed by the county.
- The land needed for the barrier, obtained by the county at no cost if donated, still has a cost to the property owner or the mortgage lender.
- While acceptable to the property owner, donation of the land may not be acceptable to the mortgage lender.
- The process would be even more complex if not all of the affected property owners were in agreement on donating the land.

(4) If noise barriers are not installed, the county will not be installing privacy fences with the project. Homeowners can install a privacy fence on their property, in accordance with city ordinances, if they wish.

COMMENT:

At the June 24th meeting we were told by county employees that the sound barriers built by the town homes on Highway 65 aren't required on Radisson Road because this project is exempt from state noise control statutes. These town homes are impacted less by the Highway 65 project than homeowners on Radisson Road, and using statutes as an excuse for not constructing sound barriers is not in the best interest of Anoka County residents.

To clarify, the exemption from state noise standards, per Minnesota Statutes, Section 116.07, Subd. 2a, does not mean that noise barriers are not required or considered. The exemption means that federal noise standards, rather than state noise standards, are used in the analysis. See the Environmental Studies and Documentation page on this Web site for more information.

COMMENT:

We need a sound barrier if they get one across the road. If there is a sound barrier installed across the road and there is no sound barrier on our side, we are very concerned that all of the noise would bounce off that barrier and come our way.

RESPONSE:

The following information is taken from Federal Highway Administration Publication No. FHWA-EP-01-004:

“Residents adjacent to a highway sometimes feel that their noise levels have increased substantially, because of the construction of a noise barrier on the opposite side of the highway. However, field studies have shown that this is not true. If all the noise striking

a noise barrier were reflected back to the other side of a highway, the increase would be theoretically limited to 3 decibels (dBA). In practice, not all of the acoustical energy is reflected back to the other side. Some of the energy goes over the barrier, some is reflected to points other than the homes on the opposite side, some is scattered by ground coverings (for example, grass and shrubs), and some is blocked by the vehicles on the highway. Additionally, some of the reflected energy is lost due to the longer path that it must travel. Measurements made to quantify this reflective increase have never shown an increase of greater than 1-2 dBA - an increase that is not perceptible to the average human ear.”

COMMENT:

Living farther from the road, a potential concern we would have is sound barriers displacing the sound farther away. We hope this would be considered.

RESPONSE:

Noise levels outside of a barrier will always be lower, at the same location, than if there were no barrier.

COMMENT:

I noticed farther north on Radisson there are noise barriers. Why not all the way down Radisson since it will be a freeway (officially)?

RESPONSE:

The county has not installed noise barriers along any of its county highways, so we are not sure what location the comment is referring to.

The proposed project will not turn Radisson Road into a freeway. A freeway does not have any driveways, access is provided at interchange locations and there are no traffic signals.

COMMENT:

Has the noise forecast for Radisson Road near the Quail Creek Parkway intersection factored in the increased noise from traffic stopping at the newly proposed traffic signal?

RESPONSE:

The noise was modeled without a traffic signal at the intersection. However, in the noise consultant’s experience, there is no appreciable difference in noise levels with or without a traffic signal. With a traffic signal, the higher noise levels due to acceleration are offset by the overall lower speeds.

SPEED

COMMENT:

One comment expressed that traffic moves way too fast so that one can barely cross or enter onto Radisson Road. Another comment requested that the speed limit be lowered and enforced. One other comment expressed that a 45 mph study of the entire road would be good; that the speed limit increase around the sweeping curves seems odd.

RESPONSE:

Mn/DOT sets speed limits based on a thorough engineering and traffic investigation. The most important part of the traffic investigation is the speed study. When choosing a speed, drivers take many roadway environment factors into consideration. Therefore, the speed that the majority of people consider prudent is an important value. Data is collected by performing radar checks at selected locations on the roadway under ideal driving conditions. A technical analysis is done on the results to determine the 85th percentile. This is the value indicating the speed under which most (85 percent) drivers are traveling. Experience has shown that a posted speed limit near this value is the maximum safe and reasonable speed. Studies have shown that traveling much faster or slower than this value can increase your chance of being in a crash.

Once the project is completed, the cities will be able to request that a speed study be completed by Mn/DOT.

TRAFFIC

COMMENT:

One comment asked if the traffic studies considered the amount of traffic that will stay on Highway 65 after it is improved instead of cutting through neighborhoods.

RESPONSE:

The improvements being made to Highway 65 were taken into account when the future traffic volumes were calculated.

COMMENT:

I am against this project. The excess traffic began when the Highway 10 bridge over Highway 65 was constructed. It is insane to attract even more traffic off of Highway 65 through a residential area. Fix Highway 65 so it will be used as intended.

RESPONSE:

Today, Highway 65 has congestion and safety issues all along the corridor within Anoka County. Steps are being taken to remedy the problems in some areas, but there are many problems along the corridor that still need to be fixed. No funding for additional improvements has been identified by Mn/DOT. The county acknowledges that, because of the issues on Highway 65, some motorists who do not live along Bunker Lake Boulevard and Radisson Road have used and will continue to use those roadways. Additionally, Radisson Road has a good connection to the freeway that also makes it a draw for motorists.

COMMENT:

I believe the current projected volume growth is flawed. The improvements to Highway 65 and the additional traffic signals on Radisson Road will encourage traffic to stay on the highway until either 109th, 105th, or Highway 610. There is no existing plan for how 129th will be improved to allow increased traffic volumes from the other side of Highway 65. These studies were completed before the approval of the Northstar Commuter Rail. This will significantly change traffic from the north/south 35W corridor to the east/west 125th Avenue as traffic changes to the Northstar Railway collection points in Coon Rapids and Anoka. Projected volume growths may be too high because home construction may be entering a five- to ten-year extended downturn related to current economic conditions and rising gasoline prices may encourage movement closer to employment sites, public transportation, and reduced urban sprawl.

I recommend the following:

- Suspend the Radisson Road improvements for two years to allow the transferring of funding to the more urgent 125th Avenue improvements to support the new Northstar Commuter Rail. This will allow time to reassess traffic volumes on Radisson Road after the impacts of the Highway 65 improvements and Northstar Commuter Rail have been implemented and to reassess traffic volume growth.**
- Redesign Radisson Road based on new traffic volume projections. Consider reducing the improvements to a two-lane boulevard with a center median for left-hand turn lanes and the addition of right-hand turn lanes. This will meet all of the county's objectives about increased road safety and will still enable a significant volume increase as traffic will not be slowed by vehicles taking left- and right-hand turns.**

RESPONSE:

The improvements being made to Highway 65 were taken into account when the future traffic volumes were estimated.

Daily traffic projections on Highway 65 for the year 2030 range from 52,100 near Bunker Lake Boulevard to 62,900 south of 125th Avenue. Although the new interchange and overpasses will improve traffic flow on Highway 65, other signalized intersections will remain bottlenecks and experience congestion with that amount of traffic. A route using Highway 65 for north-south travel between the intersections of Highway 65/Bunker Lake Boulevard and Radisson Road/109th Avenue will have one less traffic signal compared to a route between those same intersections using Radisson Road for north-south travel. With less congestion, Radisson Road will continue to be an attractive alternative to this section of Highway 65, even with one additional signalized intersection.

The 2030 traffic projections include the 129th Avenue overpass of Highway 65 and its connection to the west. The projected daily volume on 129th Avenue is within the capacity of a two-lane roadway. In addition, the traffic signal and roadway designs allow for future construction of an exclusive left-turn lane on 129th Avenue at the Radisson Road intersection for more capacity, if needed.

Trips to the Northstar stations will include travel on north-south and east-west roads. These vehicle trips, as well as Northstar riders, were taken into account for the year 2030 traffic projections.

An improvement project for 125th Avenue is already in the county's Five-Year Highway Improvement Plan and is currently planned for construction in 2010. A delay in the Radisson Road project would not result in an advance of the 125th Avenue project. Instead, such a delay would cause increased congestion on Highway 65 by limiting the capacity of a viable option for motorists.

For roadway projects with a projected traffic volume at or above 15,000 vehicles per day, the county is required by Mn/DOT State Aid rules to construct a four-lane roadway. The projected daily volume on Radisson Road north of 125th Street is 23,800. In addition, the peak hour analysis of the Radisson Road/Bunker Lake Boulevard and Radisson Road/125th Avenue intersections determined that two through lanes in each direction are needed for acceptable intersection levels of service.

TRAILS

COMMENT:

Two comments requested that the trail be extended south of 125th Avenue.

RESPONSE:

The City of Blaine has decided not to connect the proposed trail with Old Radisson Road, south of 125th Avenue (County Road 14) as part of this project. The city will be reviewing trail connections with the 2030 Comprehensive Plan update.

COMMENT:

Why do we need a trail north of Bunker Lake Boulevard?

RESPONSE:

The City of Ham Lake has requested that the trail, as shown on the layout, be constructed with the project.

COMMENT:

I like the proposed trails. Please do as much of this as possible.

RESPONSE:

Comment noted.

RIGHT OF WAY/BERMS/TREES

COMMENT:

Why are you taking more land from the west side of Radisson than the east side? (The comment was made in regard to Radisson Road north of Bunker Lake Boulevard.)

RESPONSE:

Generally, the new roadway surface is centered on the existing roadway. In this area, the proposed right of way width on the west side is two feet more than on the east side.

COMMENT:

I feel that the value and salability of our house will greatly drop once this project has been completed. You are taking a large portion of our front yard and putting our house right up against the road. You are also making it so that we will no longer be able to take a left turn out of our driveway and we will have to enter our house from Radisson Road.

RESPONSE:

Property owners must be compensated in accordance with the requirements of Public Law 91-646, The Uniform Relocation and Real Properties Acquisitions Policies Act of 1970, as amended. This Act is commonly known as the "Uniform Act." Property needed for the project must be appraised, and a formal written offer to purchase based on this appraisal must be given to the property owner. Anoka County chooses to use independent fee appraisers rather than staff members in most cases, except where the anticipated damages are expected to be a very small amount. The offer to the property owner cannot be less than the value established in the appraisal. The law also provides that an owner may obtain his/her own appraisal report if desired and the county will pay for it up to a statutory limit.

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The property owner's receipt of the offer initiates a period of negotiations when a county right of way staff member will meet with the owner to discuss the project plans and, hopefully, arrive at an agreeable settlement.

Access management is needed to improve safety and mobility. Roadways with more accesses (e.g., driveways and public street entrances) have been proven to have more crashes and safety problems. The proposed medians will reduce the number of accesses to the corridor, thereby reducing the number of vehicle conflicts and reducing the likelihood of a crash.

In response to the comment about access to properties, U-turns will be allowed at most median openings.

COMMENT:

Is there any way to save the pine trees that are currently on top of our berm and replant them in the new berm area? Another comment asked about the restoration of driveways, grass, and trees.

RESPONSE:

There will be an opportunity for homeowners who currently have trees within the proposed right of way to transplant those trees to other locations on their property. As part of the right of way acquisition process, homeowners will be compensated for the land that is taken to improve the roadway. Homeowners can use this money to transplant the existing trees on their property or to plant new vegetation to provide a buffer between their house and the roadway and/or trail.

Portions of a driveway that are removed will be restored using the same material as the existing driveway, and turf will be restored with new seeding or sod.

SAFETY

COMMENT:

Making a U-turn still doesn't seem like the safest way to me. I believe if U-turns were safe, they wouldn't be illegal. Statistically, most accidents happen close to home. Now, I have to add a mile to my commute every day and pass my house twice every time I go out my driveway.

RESPONSE:

U-turns will be legal maneuvers at most median openings along the project.

Even with the required U-turns, studies have shown that by eliminating the left turns from driveways, fewer crashes are experienced.

COMMENT:

Why have concrete islands in the middle of a four-lane highway? They are an extra expense. Snow melt from the medians can refreeze, causing a dangerous condition.

RESPONSE:

The proposed roadway, with raised center medians, is the typical county design for a roadway of this type. Medians are desirable because they will reduce the number of accesses along the corridor, thereby reducing the number of vehicle conflicts and reducing the likelihood of a crash.

While some water from melting snow could flow onto the roadway, most of the water should flow into the concrete gutter and then into the storm sewer system.

COMMENT:

Two comments expressed concern for safety for their children because of vehicles running off the road.

RESPONSE:

The proposed project includes adding a travel lane in each direction and constructing a paved shoulder with curb and gutter. These improvements will reduce the likelihood of vehicles running off the roadway, compared to existing conditions.

MISCELLANEOUS

COMMENT:

I can't wait for this project to begin. Thank you for this site and keeping us informed as to what to expect.

COMMENT:

Can a street sign and a right turn lane be provided for the access for the four properties that have driveways off the alley (east side of Radisson Road, 500 feet south of 127th Lane NE)?

RESPONSE:

The City of Blaine has already installed a sign showing the addresses of the homes.

Even though the access serves four residences, it is a driveway, not a city street. The county typically does not provide right-turn lanes for residential driveways. However, motorists turning right can move, at least partially, out of the through lane onto the 8-foot shoulder.

COMMENT:

Will the postmasters allow mailboxes on both sides of the roadway?

RESPONSE:

Mailboxes will be located on both sides of the roadways.

NOTE: Some specific property owner comments are not shown but will be discussed with the appropriate property owner.