

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: February 22, 2016

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of March 9, 2016

Subject: Approve TH 169 ramp closure at West 16th Street in St. Louis Park, Review #21519-1

District(s), Member(s): District 6, Gail Dorfman and District 3, Jennifer Munt

Policy/Legal Reference: Mn. Statute 473.166

Staff Prepared/Presented: Arlene McCarthy, Director, MTS, 651-602-1754

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Division/Department: Metropolitan Transportation Services

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve a request by MnDOT to close the West 16th Street ramp access to/from southbound Highway 169 in the City of St. Louis Park, subject to further review and approval by the Metropolitan Council if there are any significant changes in the design of the proposed project.

Background

Minnesota state law (MS. 473.166) requires that the Council approve any controlled access highway in the metropolitan area before construction or right-of-way acquisition begins. This is to ensure that proposed highway projects are consistent with regional policies and plans.

This project includes closing the right-in, right-out access of southbound Highway 169 at West 16th Street, construction of curb and gutter, and storm sewer connections (see Figures 1-4). If approved, construction is proposed to begin in fall of 2016 (once the projects on I-494 and TH 100 are completed) and will be completed in fall of 2017. The final draft of the Categorical Exclusion environmental document is expected to be completed in March 2016.

The project is part of a larger effort on Highway 169 between Highway 62 and Highway 55 that will include:

- Improving the safety of entrance and exit ramps at Cedar Lake Road (the next exit south of the proposed ramp closure) by lengthening the ramps.
- Replacing the Highway 169 Bridge between Bren Road and 7th Street.
- Repairing pavement between Highway 62 and Highway 55.
- Repairing noise walls, replacing concrete barrier, and improving pedestrian accessibility at intersections throughout the corridor.

Rationale

The project is identified in the Current Revenue Scenario in the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) and is consistent with regional policy.

Safety is the primary benefit of removing the ramps. The substandard design of the 16th Street ramps includes the short ramp lengths directly connecting Highway 169 (55 mph) to West 16th Street (30 mph) and a residential neighborhood. In addition, limited driver sight distance/reaction times cause crash issues for both vehicles and pedestrians. There were 17 crashes in the project area from 2010 to 2014. Crashes caused by the ramp design will be eliminated as of result of the project. Finally, there are several viable and close alternative access options for current users of the West 16th Street ramps.

Funding

The estimated project cost is \$840,000. The project is listed in the TPP's Current Revenue Scenario for the 2015-2018 timeframe. It is also shown in the approved 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program and will be funded with state sources. The total project cost for all activity on Highway 169 between Highway 62 and Highway 55 is \$72 million to \$87 million.

Known Support / Opposition

Municipal consent was obtained from the City of St. Louis Park on December 7, 2015, to close this access. Of the comments received as part of the environmental documentation process, there were 22 comments supportive of the closure, 20 against the project, and seven neutral comments/questions. In addition, 85 signatures in support of the closure were received from the Kilmer Pond neighborhood, which is adjacent to the project.

Figure 1: Context of Project Area



Figure 2: Detailed Project Area

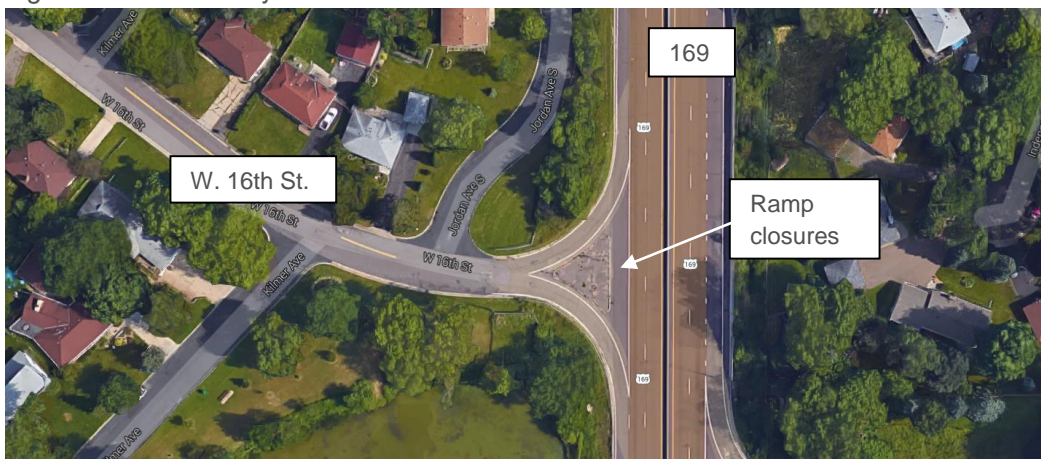


Figure 3: Looking South with Google Street View



Figure 4: Looking East with Google Street View

