

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: August 28, 2017

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of September 13, 2017

Subject: Controlled Access Approval: County Road I to Northbound 35W, Ramsey County

District(s), Member(s): District 10, Marie McCarthy

Policy/Legal Reference: Mn. Statute 473.166

Staff Prepared/Presented: Nick Thompson, Director, MTS, 651-602-1754

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Division/Department: Metropolitan Transportation Services (Review #21779-1)

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council approve a request by Ramsey County and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to permanently close the entrance ramp from County Road I onto northbound I-35W with the 2017 construction of a roundabout along County Road I in the cities of Shoreview and Arden Hills, 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 the closure of the entrance ramp from County Road I onto northbound I-35W, the consolidation of two traditional intersections along County Road I into one roundabout type intersection and the construction of a frontage road connecting County Road I and County Road H to the east of I-35W (see Figures 1, 2, and 3).

This ramp closure is part of a broader effort to improve safety and mobility along I-35W. MnDOT has a project programmed in 2019 to add MnPASS lanes and construct long term pavement improvements along I-35W from TH 36 in Roseville to Lexington Avenue in Blaine. This ramp closure is motivated by MnDOT's MnPASS project, but was advanced into Ramsey County's project described here to improve the safety of the roundabout design and minimize the traffic and environmental impacts of the project.

The TCAAP Final AUAR and Final Mitigation Plan was approved by Arden Hills on July 28, 2014.

Rationale and Consistency with Regional Policy

This project is part of Ramsey County's 2017-2021 Transportation Improvement Program and is consistent with regional policy. This safety project advances the Safety and Security Transportation Policy Plan Goal and the Livability Outcome in Thrive MSP 2040.

In 2019 MnDOT has programmed a project that will add MnPASS lanes and construct long term pavement improvements along I-35W from TH 36 in Roseville to Lexington Avenue in Blaine. The addition of MnPASS along I-35W here requires the closure of the entrance from County Road I to northbound I-35W due to the short spacing between this entrance and the exit to westbound US Highway 10. If the ramp were to remain, entering traffic would need to merge onto I-35W and make two lane changes in less than 1,000 feet to continue on I-35W. Closure will require local traffic to reroute at most approximately two miles, the distance to travel south to County Road H, enter northbound I-35W there and return to where County Road I would have entered northbound I-35W. Many drivers will find shorter routes depending on their individual origin and destination. This impending closure of the ramp from County Road I to northbound I-35W creates the opportunity for Ramsey County to improve the design of its roundabout in terms of geometry for safety and to minimized impacts to natural resources.

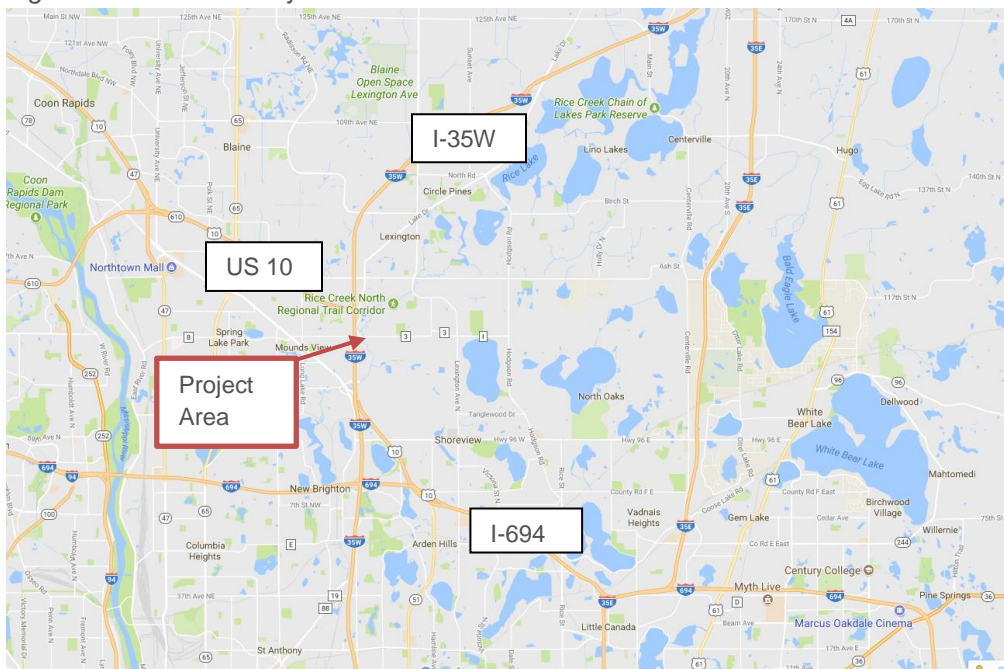
Funding

\$4.3 million from MnDOT Local Road Improvement Program and local funds.

Known Support / Opposition

During an open house in April 2017 many people acknowledged that entering I-35W northbound here was not safe due to the short acceleration and weaving distances. There are also some concerns about this ramp closure causing local traffic to travel further to enter I-35W.

Figure 1: Context of Project Area



Source: Google Maps

Figure 2: Detailed Project Area



Source: Google Maps

Figure 3: Project Improvements

