

District One
1123 Mesaba Avenue
Duluth, MN 55811

October 29, 2019

Cindy Voigt, City Engineer
City Hall, Room 211
411 West First Street
Duluth, MN 55802

RE: Request for City Approval (Municipal Consent) of the Final Layout for S.P.'s 6982-322(I-35), 6915-136 (Hwy 53) and 6980-60 (I-535)

Dear Ms. Voigt:

MnDOT is proceeding with plans to complete State Project 6982-322, Twin Ports Interchange (TPI) reconstruction. In accordance with Minnesota Statute 161.164, I am submitting for City approval the project's Final Layout identified as Layouts No. 2, S.P. 6982-322, No. 1A, S.P. 6915-136, and No. 1A, S.P. 6980-60.

The City's approval (municipal consent) is required for this project because it requires acquisition of permanent rights of way. The permanent right of way to be acquired includes:

- Autobahn Auto - 117 S. 22nd Avenue W (total acquisition and relocation)
- Triple J Holdings of Duluth, LLC (empty parking lot on 22nd Avenue W.)
- City of Duluth
- Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD)
- Duluth Transit Authority (access only)
- Duluth Economic Development Authority (DEDA)
- Thomas O. Pirkola
- J & B Properties
- Tyms, LLC – 2122 West Superior St. (Black Goose Chimney) (10' easement)
- BNSF Railway
- Union Pacific Railroad (wall easement)
- Seaway Port Authority (wall and footing easement)
- Jo-Ed Partners, storage building on Michigan Street between 21st and 22nd Avenues W (total acquisition and relocation)
- J & S (Titanium Partners) LLC
- Linda Zimm (total acquisition of bare land at the west end of the Hwy 53 bridges)

A map of these parcels is attached.

Municipal consent of MnDOT projects is described in Minnesota Statutes 161.162 through 161.167 (attached).

Approval or disapproval of the final layout is by resolution of the City Council. (A sample resolution is attached). However, if the City neither approves nor disapproves the final layout within 90 days of the public hearing, the layout is deemed approved (per MN Statute 161.164).

The deadlines (per MN Statute 161.164) for the City's responsibilities regarding municipal consent of the attached layout are as follows, based on a submittal date of the final layout to the City of October 29, 2019:

- Within 15 days of receiving the final layout, schedule a public hearing (by November 15, 2019)
- Within 60 days of receiving the final layout, conduct the public hearing (by December 31, 2019)
- Provide at least a 30-day notice of the public hearing.
- Within 90 days of the public hearing, approve or disapprove the layout by resolution (by March 15, 2020)

MnDOT will attend the public hearing to present the final layout and answer questions, as required by statute.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the project is to improve the structural and geometric deficiencies of the I-35/I-535/Hwy 53 interchange, Hwy 53 approach to the I-35/I-535/Hwy 53 interchange, and I-535/Garfield Avenue interchange to improve the safety and flow of traffic and freight between the Port of Duluth-Superior and local, regional, and international destinations.

The project has three primary needs:

- The infrastructure included in the TPI Reconstruction Project has structural deficiencies, including seven non-redundant and fourteen weight restricted bridges that need to be addressed to accommodate Oversize Overweight (OSOW) loads and meet a legislative directive to replace non-redundant bridges.
- The I-35/I-535/Hwy 53 interchange has geometric deficiencies, including two left exits, five blind merges, and short weave distances that need to be addressed to improve safety and mobility.
- Weight restrictions prevent access to the I-35/I-535/Hwy 53 and I-535/Garfield Avenue interchanges for the majority of freight loads to and from the Port forcing the loads onto the local street system.

Project Description

This project is located at the junction of I-35, I-535 and Hwy 53 in the Lincoln Park neighborhood of Duluth and at the junction of I-535 and Garfield Avenue. This also includes Hwy 53 portion from approximately Third Street to Michigan Street. Other components that are not directly connected to the interchange include a profile correction, waterline replacement, new pavement and ADA improvements on Piedmont Avenue from First to Third Streets, replacement of the 27th Avenue West Bridge and reconstruction of Lower Michigan Street from Garfield Avenue to 21st Avenue West. The improvements to Piedmont Avenue for OSOW loads will eliminate four on-street parking spaces above First Street. Temporary improvements include re-alignment of the Michigan and Superior Street intersection and temporary traffic control systems at the intersections of Garfield Avenue and Railroad Street and 24th Avenue West and Piedmont Avenue.

In addition to the reconstructed roads and bridges, the following items will be constructed as part of the project: storm water ponds, a new sanitary lift station and Coffee and Miller Creeks will be realigned and combined into new structures. The walls and bridges will have aesthetic finishes as selected by the project's Visual Quality Committee.

Planned Project Schedule

This project will be let in two packages with letting dates of April 8, 2020, and December 16, 2020. Construction is expected to begin in May 2020 and continue year around until November 2022. Final cleanup will occur in the 2023 construction season. Traffic will be restricted as follows between May 2020 and summer 2023.

Summer and early-fall 2020

- I-35 will be reduced to a single lane in each direction between the Ore Docks and Garfield Avenue.
- The 27th Avenue West Bridge will be replaced, ramps will remain open, but the bridge will not be open to cross traffic.
- The ramps from southbound Hwy 53 to southbound I-35, northbound I-535 to southbound I-35 and northbound I-35 to northbound Hwy 53 will be closed. Detours will be provided for each closed ramp.
- Lower Michigan Street will be closed from Garfield Avenue to 22nd Avenue West.
- 22nd Avenue West will be closed for the replacement of the Coffee Creek culvert.

Late-fall 2020 – late fall 2021

- Southbound I-35 traffic will be diverted to Lower Michigan Street in two lanes between Garfield Avenue and 22nd Avenue West and two lanes of northbound I-35 will be diverted to the existing southbound lanes of I-35.
- In addition to the ramps listed above, the ramps from I-35 to I-535 in both directions and the ramp from southbound I-35 to northbound Hwy 53 will close. I-535 traffic will be diverted to the Hwy 2 (Bong) Bridge. Detours will be provided for each movement.

Late-fall 2021

- Both northbound and southbound I-35 traffic will be shifted to the new northbound I-35 lanes and two lanes in each direction will be maintained.
- The ramps to I-535 will re-open.
- Hwy 53 and ramps will close with detours provided. Hwy 53 traffic will be diverted to Hwy 194 (Central Entrance and Mesaba Ave).

Fall 2022

- All roadways and ramps will open on the final roadways.

Early-summer 2023

- There will be lane closures for finishing work on I-35.

City's Estimated Project Costs

It is anticipated that there will be no cost to the City for this project unless the City chooses to provide any upgrades to local streets or add amenities. MnDOT will also pay for the detour of the Cross City Trail by agreement. Examples of City costs would include electrical outlets under the Hwy 53 bridges for future community activities or permanent raised bus islands along the detour for the Cross City Trail.

MnDOT's current total project cost estimate for the project is \$343 million.

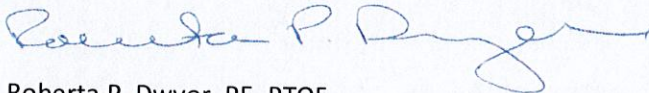
City's Maintenance Responsibilities

MnDOT will be responsible for the complete maintenance of I-35, I-535 and Hwy 53 including the ramps and bridges. MnDOT will also be responsible for the maintenance of the 27th Avenue West Bridge, but the City will be responsible for snow removal and minor maintenance of the sidewalks on the bridge. Minor maintenance includes snow removal, sweeping, crack repair, and other minor items. City will also be responsible for all maintenance on the local streets, sidewalks and the Cross City Trail.

MnDOT will be responsible for the maintenance of the storm water ponds on I-35 near the DTA and along Lower Michigan Street near 20th Avenue West. MnDOT will also be responsible for the storm water treatment system under Hwy 53 at Michigan Street. The City will be responsible for maintaining the pond near Garfield Avenue southeast of Nelson Avenue. The City will be responsible for the maintenance of the storm water treatment systems on the avenues intersecting Lower Michigan Street. The City will also continue to have maintenance responsibility for the Miller and Coffee Creek structures to the I-35 right of way.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this submittal.

Sincerely,



Roberta P. Dwyer, PE, PTOE
Project Manager
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Duluth, MN 55811
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218-348-7457

Attachments:

Final Layout for SP 6982-322, 6915-136, and 6980-60 dated November 14, 2018, and November 16, 2018
MN Statutes 161.162 – 161.167
Sample City Resolution

cc: Duane Hill, District Engineer
Pat Huston, Major Projects Engineer
John McDonald, State Aid Engineer

Equal Opportunity Employer