



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

Community Planning Division

411 West First Street – Room 110 - Duluth, Minnesota 55802-1197

218-730-5580 – An Equal Opportunity Employer

December 7, 2018

Twin Ports Interchange Community Connections Evaluation Process Summary

Background

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is proposing a project known as the Twin Ports Interchange (TPI). Public involvement for the interchange project has initiated feedback and discussions about multi-modal transportation issues and connections in the Lincoln Park neighborhood. City of Duluth staff from the Community Planning and Engineering divisions have worked with MnDOT staff and community members to evaluate transportation issues and visions in the context of current community needs, adopted plans, and citywide priorities.

The City of Duluth adopted its comprehensive plan update, *Imagine Duluth 2035*, in June of 2018. The research phase of the comprehensive plan update affirmed MnDOT's identified need for a new interchange at I-35, I-535, and US 53 – the Twin Ports Interchange. These roadways, owned and maintained by MnDOT, are important corridors for freight, inter-state travel, commuting, and access to businesses for residents of Superior and Duluth. The current interchange design presents safety issues, including blind merges and left-hand exits.

The interchange is located in the Lincoln Park neighborhood; when originally constructed, the interchange resulted in removal of housing and many neighborhood buildings. It also isolated the business district from the remainder of the Lincoln Park neighborhood to the west. In preparation for the future interchange replacement, the City's adopted Comprehensive Plan included Transportation Policy P6, Strategy S3: "Seek to ensure that reconstruction of the Twin Ports Interchange at US Hwy 53 and Interstate 35 meets the competing needs of freight transportation, safety, and neighborhood connectivity and improvements, particularly in Lincoln Park."

The selected interchange design addresses the goals of freight transportation and safety. This memo summarizes the basis and rationale for the community connections that are most important to the community, and highlights potential opportunities available as part of the TPI reconstruction as well as other initiatives in the area.

Process

MnDOT and the City of Duluth initially convened two public meetings on Monday, September 24, 2018, for purposes of discussing community connections. The purpose of these meetings was to 1.) Identify what issues were most important to the neighborhood related to the Twin Ports Interchange (TPI) project; and 2.) Identify why those issues were important for the neighborhood and how potential solutions could result in positive neighborhood change. Complete meeting notes are attached.

Primary responses at the meetings included:

- Connections between Lincoln Park and the freeway, downtown, and Canal Park should be "more intuitive," with better signage and identification. Connections should look more attractive and draw visitors to the neighborhood. The downtown connections should include safer pedestrian and bicyclist crossings of Mesaba Avenue.

- Improvements to the Cross City Trail as it passes through the TPI and Lincoln Park area should include signage and wayfinding, easier curve radii getting on and off the pedestrian bridge (currently 90 degree turns), additional curb cuts and access points into Lincoln Park, and fewer intersections/driveways where conflicts with vehicles present safety hazards.
- Off-street and on-street parking locations in Lincoln Park should be easy to find, safe, and attractive, and allow vehicle parking for appropriate lengths of time.
- Transit improvements should include attention to safety, comfort, and convenience, with better connections to downtown, improved lighting, and new shelters.
- There is support for increased placemaking and public art to create a vibrant business district.
- Continued attention should be placed on separating industrial traffic from other traffic to the extent possible for safety reasons.

While not all of these goals can be addressed as part of the Twin Ports Interchange project, it was noted that the interchange and related roadways directly impact connections to and between these neighborhoods, and that the construction period will exacerbate these challenges. A visual interpretation of identified needs is summarized in the two attached maps.

Following the two public meetings, MnDOT held a Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting on October 4, where Community Planning staff helped facilitate further discussion about community connections. At that meeting, MnDOT presented sketches of connection concepts, including:

- A roundabout at Superior Street/Michigan Street/Garfield Avenue
- A bridge over the freeway from the potential roundabout to Railroad Street
- A new pedestrian bridge over the freeway that would be more functional for cyclists
- A wider sidewalk/trail along Mesaba Avenue to the existing crossing at 1st Street

These concept sketches are attached. At the October 4th meeting, the Stakeholder Advisory Committee affirmed the need for evaluating multiple options, including the concepts presented at the meeting, to accomplish the following priorities:

- Provide options for users of all modes of transportation
- Promote further economic development in Lincoln Park, Bayfront, and Canal Park
- Reduce vehicle traffic congestion during peak events, both summer and winter
- Contribute to the travel experience within and to these neighborhoods for visitors and residents alike

On October 9, City staff discussed the community connections goal with Planning Commission, sharing the input received from the public meetings and answering general questions about the project. This Community Connections Evaluation Process Summary will serve as an amendment to the Imagine Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan update. It is intended to provide a higher level of detail to the planning policies and strategies outlined in the comprehensive plan.

Issue Identification

Challenge: Vehicular traffic from I-35 cannot efficiently find its way to the Lincoln Park Business District.

Why: 1. Routes. Historically, auto routes for regional through-traffic were routed through the main thoroughfare in Lincoln Park. When the freeway was constructed, it bypassed the neighborhood. The majority of vehicle traffic now travels on the freeway without direct sightlines to the stores, restaurants, and other local businesses. Lack of a direct freeway connection hampers continued economic development in the neighborhood. 2.

Wayfinding. Visitors who know of potential destinations are often unable to navigate to the location because the road design and signage do not provide navigational cues.

Challenge: People cannot travel between Lincoln Park and Bayfront/Canal Park.

Why: The freeway severs connections between these two neighborhoods, leaving only two circuitous options: a winding route using Garfield Avenue and Railroad Street, which is an industrialized area with associated heavy industrial traffic; or a lengthy, confusing, route through downtown that involves many turns and stoplights. These two options are not optimal, and result in two areas that are geographically adjacent but are separated by the transportation barrier created by I-35.

Challenge: Lincoln Park lacks a gateway or “front entrance.”

Why: The primary freeway exit to the neighborhood directs traffic onto a side avenue, 20th Ave W, although all signage labels it as 21st Ave W. The exit funnels traffic onto a roadway in poor condition and without further wayfinding. The view from this exit shows back entrances of adjacent buildings and provides no information to identify the business district or directions to destinations.

From downtown traveling westward, travelers approach an unlabeled turn towards the business district on Superior Street. If travelers travel straight along Michigan Street, it looks and functions as a freeway frontage road, not a way to access local businesses.

The existing bike route is not supported by quality bike infrastructure. On existing bike infrastructure, connections through and to Lincoln Park are not recognizable and are subject to many at-grade crossings, which can be dangerous to cyclists.

Challenge: Visitors to Lincoln Park do not know where to park or whether it is safe. Parking time limits are restrictive.

Why: Existing freeway bridges allow parking underneath, which is used by neighborhood businesses; however, being under a bridge with little light and few nearby buildings results in a perceived safety hazard, especially for people walking to cars at night. Existing on-street parking, with time limits, is in demand and doesn't encourage visitors to linger.

Challenge: Pedestrians and bicyclists do not have a direct access between downtown and Lincoln Park.

Why: The I-35/Mesaba Ave intersection separates Lincoln Park from downtown. The existing Cross City Trail weaves around and under the freeway using an indirect and inconvenient route. Existing sidewalks have no boulevard, meaning pedestrians along Superior Street are located immediately adjacent to merging freeway traffic that weaves and travels at high speeds. No safe crossing of Mesaba Avenue is located along the main thoroughfare of Superior Street. The route and trail is not viable for recreational users with children, an important metric for trail viability.

Challenge: Existing infrastructure is focused on freight and automobiles and ignores alternative modes of transportation

Why: Conventional transportation planning focuses on vehicle travel, with models of design and funding that assume and accommodate increasing automobile travel. On the other hand, the City's comprehensive plan identifies a need to reduce vehicle trips while increasing transit, pedestrian, and bicycle opportunities. In designing a comprehensive transportation network, all modes should be designed for at the outset.

Challenge: People do not understand where the Cross City Trail goes and what amenities exist along the route.

Why: The freeway and its downtown intersections cause the Cross City Trail to follow a circuitous route from Lincoln Park to its connections with downtown (near the Depot) and Bayfront (Railroad Street). In Lincoln Park's business district, the trail travels between the freeway and Lower Michigan Street, but has no curb cuts or signage to access the district. The Twin Ports Interchange project is anticipated to impact the trail temporarily (during construction) and permanently (new alignment through interchange). The project should maintain and enhance the Cross City Trail both during and after construction and ensure no fragmentation of this regional travel route.

Challenge: The Lincoln Park neighborhood is close to the waterfront and Miller Creek, but lacks public access to either amenity.

Why: Historically, this area developed with industry and railyards along the waterfront. This development pattern remains, with industrial and port land separated from the remainder of the neighborhoods by rail lines and the freeway. Much of this land located near the waterfront is environmentally contaminated because of historic uses. (Miller and Coffee Creeks run underground through much of the area in order to prevent flooding of adjacent commercial businesses.) Cost-effective solutions to address this negative externality have not yet been identified.

Goals

Transportation investments need to accommodate regional and local traffic, using all modes, traveling within and through Duluth neighborhoods in order to support economic development by meeting visitor, resident, and business needs.

The four *Community Connections* identified during this process are:

1. Connect Lincoln Park and Canal Park
2. Connect Lincoln Park and Downtown
3. Connect I-35 and Lincoln Park (both northbound and southbound)
4. Improve Cross City Trail connections to the neighborhood and across the project area

Investments in these connections should be evaluated using the following questions:

- How does this make the connection easy, direct, and more intuitive for travelers?
- Does this improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists?
- Will this improve local traffic flow and congestion related to events and popular destinations (in particular, DECC and Bayfront)?
- Does it support a "front door" or gateway to Lincoln Park?

Identified Opportunities

Opportunity	Intuitive Connection	Ped/Bike Safety	Traffic Flow and Connection	Gateway
Connect Lincoln Park & Canal Park				
Bridge from Superior St/Michigan St to Railroad St, accommodating vehicles, bikes, and pedestrians	Yes	If designed as a complete street	Provides additional capacity when combined with existing Garfield bridge. Congestion at Railroad St parking must be addressed and freeway traffic would need to be routed via 27 th Ave W or 53 to access new bridge. Traffic study may be needed	Yes
New or improved pedestrian and bike bridge (replacing existing ped/bike bridge and in place of bridge mentioned above) with updated materials, great signage and lighting, and easier bridge approaches	Yes with signage and an attractive bridge people want to use.	Yes	Only if more people will walk or bike to Bayfront/Canal Park. Combine parking lots in Lincoln Park with bike share/facilities to bike to Canal Park	If a signature bridge
Enhanced connection using Garfield Ave and Railroad St	Only with significant signage, lighting, and road design to provide visual wayfinding cues	Adequate ROW for multi-use trail but contaminated soils are problematic; not safe on road due to industrial traffic	Does not provide additional capacity.	Opportunity for gateway at Superior Street and Garfield
Enhanced redevelopment of sites along route between Lincoln Park and Canal Park (note that aesthetics including billboards are an important component of redevelopment potential)	Yes, would improve visual cues for road users	Possibly	Additional development may result in increased trips, impacting traffic flow	Yes
Frequent and comfortable shuttle between Lincoln Park and Canal Park, provided at no cost	Depends on route/signage visibility, hours of operation, and ease of understanding route	No	Yes - reduces number of vehicles on roadways and requires no parking spaces	No
Connect Lincoln Park & Downtown				
Wider, more comfortable pedestrian sidewalk along north side of Mesaba/Superior Street	Only with signage and clear direction; not intuitive if people are trying to access Michigan or Superior St.	Slightly safer for pedestrians	Potentially, for pedestrian traffic	No

Opportunity	Intuitive Connection	Ped/Bike Safety	Traffic Flow and Connection	Gateway
Stoplight at existing pedestrian crossing on Mesaba Ave at Superior Street, designed to meet MnDOT requirements and reduce traffic speeds, pedestrian safety	Improves the connection	Yes	No	No
Roundabout at Michigan, Superior, and Garfield	No	Roundabouts provide safer intersection design than current design	Uncertain whether traffic study would show additional capacity at intersection	Due to oversize loads, no artwork or landscaping in roundabout.
Reconstruct Mesaba/Superior St/freeway interchange to maintain Superior Street as a consistent at-grade complete street with frequent transit/shuttle and protected bike lanes	Yes	Yes	Traffic flow between downtown and Lincoln Park improved; some impacts to through traffic would occur	Yes
Relocate the DTA bus layover facility at M&H gas station to allow for potential development or trail opportunities and eliminate large curb cuts along the Cross City Trail	Yes, can create a less chaotic driving experience on this stretch	Yes	Fewer conflicts but additional development may result in increased trips, impacting traffic flow	Future use of this site could contribute to placemaking at this boundary of the neighborhood
Close Superior Street to private vehicles and convert street to use for transit, pedestrians, and bikes, from the craft district to downtown.	Yes, for pedestrians and bicyclists. Less intuitive for vehicles	Yes	Yes, for pedestrians and bicyclists. Not expected to affect Bayfront/DECC congestion	Opportunities to make Superior Street a walking and bicycling destination.
Connect I-35 & Lincoln Park				
Freeway signage clearly identifying Lincoln Park exits from both north and south	Yes	No	Does not apply because traffic flow is not a problem at this connection point	No
<u>20th Ave W/21st Ave W exit:</u> improve signage at exits (identifying Lincoln Park), wayfinding signage to Superior St, gateway elements, promote traffic calming at adjacent freeway supported infrastructure. Improve 20 th Ave W for better road surface, improved sidewalks and lighting. Eliminate one-way systems in vicinity of project to reduce driver confusion.	Yes	No		Yes

Opportunity	Intuitive Connection	Ped/Bike Safety	Traffic Flow and Connection	Gateway
<u>27th Ave W exit:</u> Signage to indicate this is an exit to Lincoln Park, combined with local wayfinding on 27 th Ave W and Superior St. Include visual gateway elements especially on bridges over Superior St and Michigan St. Visual gateway element along freeway could include aesthetic treatment to new 27 th Ave W overpass. Focus on ped connections near 27 th Ave W destinations. Include redevelopment of sites along route to support the “feel” of the Lincoln Park neighborhood.	Yes	Could be if 27 th Ave W/Superior St designed as complete streets		Yes
Identify MnDOT property in the project area that could be turned back for development sites or other public purpose	Possibly, depending on location of sites	Possibly, depending on location of sites		Yes, can contribute to urban form
Incorporate public art and high quality aesthetic components into the TPI project	Yes	Yes, could help to slow traffic		Yes
Improve Cross City Trail Connections				
Add curb cuts from CCT to business district, with directional signage.	Yes	Curb cuts safer than bicyclists going over curb	No	No
Add identification and wayfinding signage along CCT from downtown through Lincoln Park	Yes	No	If it encourages more people to bike to destinations rather than drive	Yes
Add new ped/bike bridge over freeway as mentioned above	Newer bridge could make it clear that CCT crosses in that location	Wider bridge could allow more passing room. Improved curve radii at access would be safer	If it encourages more people to bike to destinations rather than drive	Yes
Reroute trail behind M&H gas station to reduce conflicts with vehicles entering and exiting station	Yes	Yes	No	No
Plan for future connection to Garfield/Rice’s Point/Blatnik Bridge	If designed well	Separate facilities for bicyclists is safer than riding with traffic	Indirectly	Could include a future gateway to Cross City Trail

Conclusion

Transportation can support community revitalization, particularly multimodal transportation systems that can connect neighborhoods to jobs, services, and other key destinations. Identifying Community Connections is an important component of comparing alternatives during the transportation planning process. The TPI and its

associated infrastructure, now that it has exceeded its lifespan, offers an opportunity to consider retrofits and new design options that can increase connectivity and enhance health and safety for the people of Duluth.

For the connection between **Lincoln Park and Canal Park**, the preferred option by the community is a new bridge from Superior Street/Michigan Street to Railroad Street. This option meets the four community goals if congestion on Railroad Street can be addressed and traffic routed to other parking locations during peak events. Another opportunity that has potential is a new/improved pedestrian and bike bridge, which meets the goals if combined with park-and-ride (i.e. transit) or park-and-bike infrastructure.

For the connection between **Lincoln Park and Downtown**, a long-range vision of reconstructing the Mesaba/Superior/freeway interchange is worth further consideration. In the short term, the City will further research the use and design of the DTA layover facility and opportunities for wayfinding and gateway designs at Superior Street and Michigan Street.

For connecting the **freeway to Lincoln Park**, there are many options to better identify and direct traffic to the two Lincoln Park exits, particularly regarding signage and wayfinding – both freeway and local. Careful attention to the design of exits and surrounding streetscape will improve this connection.

Finally, improving **Cross City Trail** connections will require concerted and multi-pronged efforts during all roadway and trail projects in the area.

Twin Ports Interchange – Community Connections Meetings – Summary Notes

Monday, September 24, 2018 – Clyde Iron Ballroom Location

What do we hope to accomplish?

Why are proposed solutions important for the neighborhood?

Noon Meeting

Cars – What to accomplish?

- Access from freeway to Lincoln Park – make it look better. Wayfinding. Make it feel like “front door”.
- Economic development – visibility (example – signage)
- Make Lincoln Park access intuitive – design less confusing, easier to describe
- Urban aesthetics – revitalization within craft district
 - Grand entrance to craft district – 20th Ave
- Mesaba 2-way – but not intuitive/easy connection to Canal Park
- Easy access to parking (previous study: leave parking under bridges)
- 2 hour maximum for meters

Bicycles – What to accomplish?

- Bike share Lincoln Park ⇔ Canal Park
 - *make this intuitive
- M & H area unsafe for bikes
- Connect Cross City trail to Garfield – set up for future Blatnik reconstruction
- High end detours during construction
- Connections to Superior St from neighborhood
- Existing CCT → curb cuts/access
- Aesthetics
- Connect Lincoln Park ⇔ Downtown (Superior St)

Pedestrians – What to accomplish?

- Neighborhood connections to district → safe crossings
- Roundabout challenging for peds.
- Sidewalk repair and maintenance
- Extending Port Town trolley
- Lighting for safety including transit stops
 - Maintenance of lighting
- ID 27th Ave West as Lincoln Park exit

Other/Environmental

- Tree installation on Superior? (Shanna)

- Ash planting
- Visibility and spacing
- Make sure ongoing staff to maintain
- Placemaking and public art should be community-led not city-led

Evening Meeting

Cars – What to accomplish?

- Access to waterfront on Rice's Point
- Use/design of Garfield once heavy vehicles rerouted
- Stronger vehicular connections to Canal Park
- Stronger wayfinding to direct to Lincoln Park businesses – on freeway "Lincoln Park Craft District" – Now?
- Change signage to 20th Ave West

Bicycles – What to accomplish?

- Access to Lakewalk
- Safety when near industry
- Make CCT inviting – move behind bus barns and on old RR grade?
 - Bike paths separate from streets?
 - Fewer crossings

Pedestrians & other modes

- North sidewalk on Superior St.
Lincoln Park ⇔ Downtown
- Ped walk signal? @ Mesaba, tunnel or bridge @ Mesaba
- Ped bridge – serviceable but not ideal
- Reconfigure Garfield bridge to be ped/bike friendly since less industrial traffic

Environmental

- Good Signage
- Promote water access @ Rice's Point
- Better lighting @ overpasses, but careful design, warmer light!
- Public art & landscaping
- Maintenance of landscaping/mowing
- Stamping of concrete
- Safe overnight parking

Lincoln Park Community Connections - West

Visual representation of community input



Sign:
Lincoln Park Craft District
Turn Right

Change Sign:
20th Ave W instead
of 21st Ave W

Under "Superior Street" Sign:
Lincoln Park Craft District
Remove 21st Ave W Sign

Are two lanes needed here?
Possibly start with one lane
and have a right turn lane
closer to 1st Street

Remove 21st Ave W Sign

Gateway Element

**Reconstruct 20th Ave E
with new pavement, friendly
sidewalks, banners/poles,
attractive lighting**

Sign:
Lincoln Park Craft District
Exit 255A

Extend lighting and landscaping west of 53? Possibility of banners on poles?

CCT Signage

Repair sidewalks, replant street trees; refresh lighting along Superior St

Parking:
- Evaluate 2-hour maximums
- Identify public lots
- Improve signage

CCT Signage

**Curb cuts from
CCT to business district**

Stoplight at new
interchange - sign:
Lincoln Park Craft District
Turn Left

Gateway Element

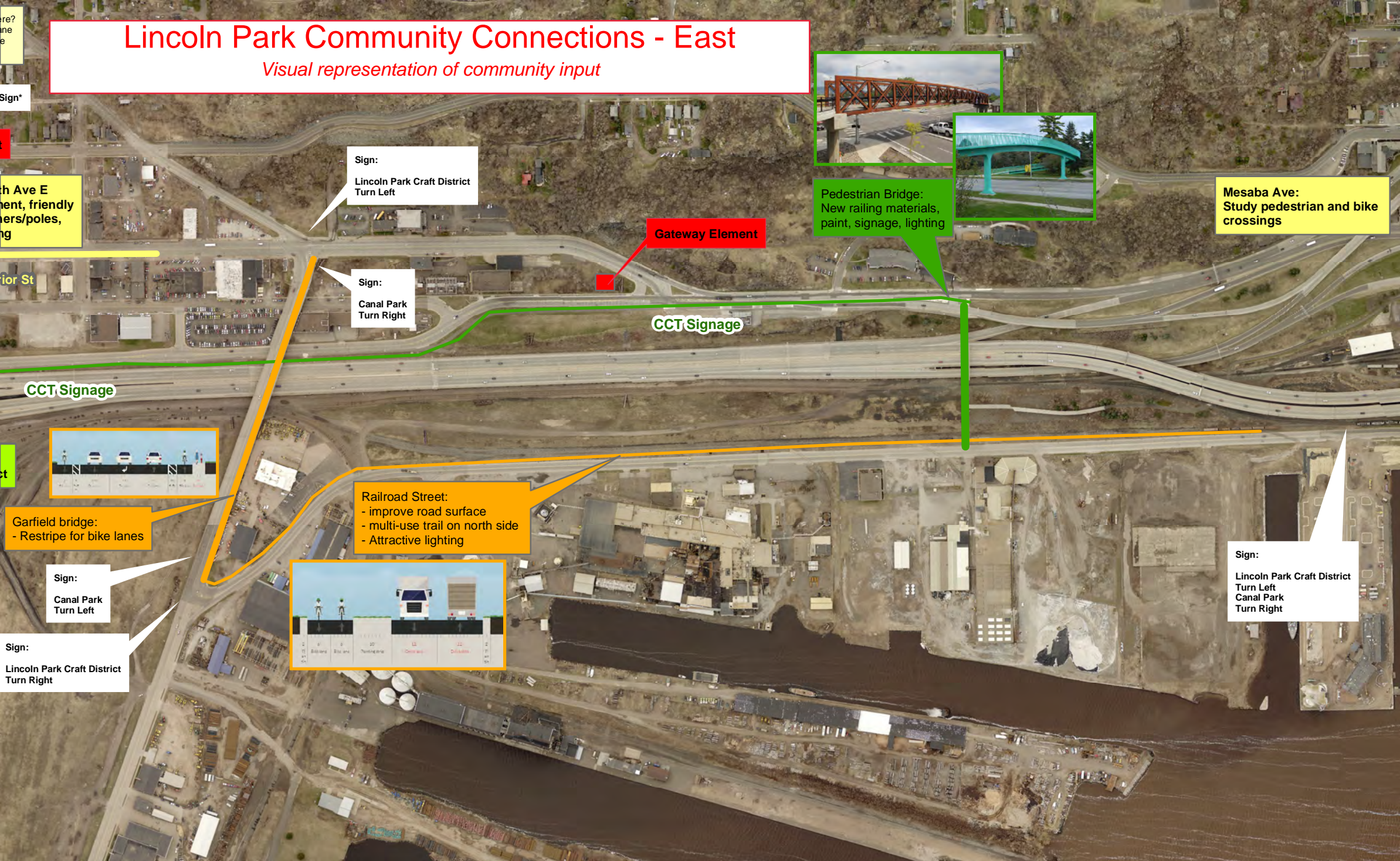
Sign:
Lincoln Park Craft District
Turn Left

Sign:
Lincoln Park Craft District
Exits 254 and 255A



Lincoln Park Community Connections - East

Visual representation of community input



h Ave E
ent, friendly
ers/poles,
ng

ior St

CCT Signage

ct

Garfield bridge:
- Restripe for bike lanes

Sign:
Canal Park
Turn Left

Sign:
Lincoln Park Craft District
Turn Right

Sign:
Lincoln Park Craft District
Turn Left

Sign:
Canal Park
Turn Right

Gateway Element

CCT Signage

Railroad Street:
- improve road surface
- multi-use trail on north side
- Attractive lighting



Pedestrian Bridge:
New railing materials,
paint, signage, lighting

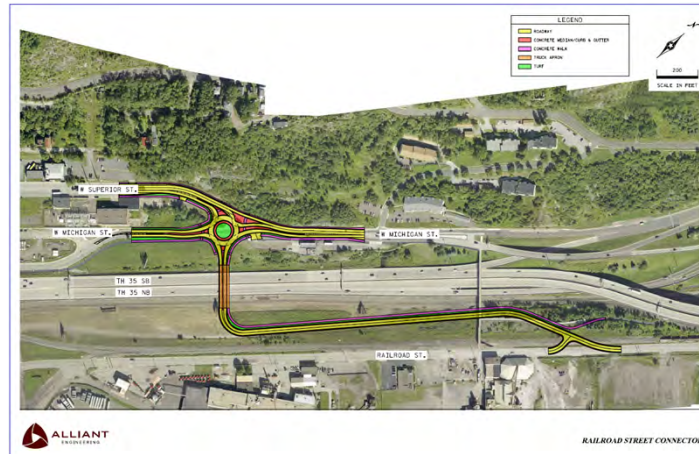
Mesaba Ave:
Study pedestrian and bike
crossings

Sign:
Lincoln Park Craft District
Turn Left
Canal Park
Turn Right

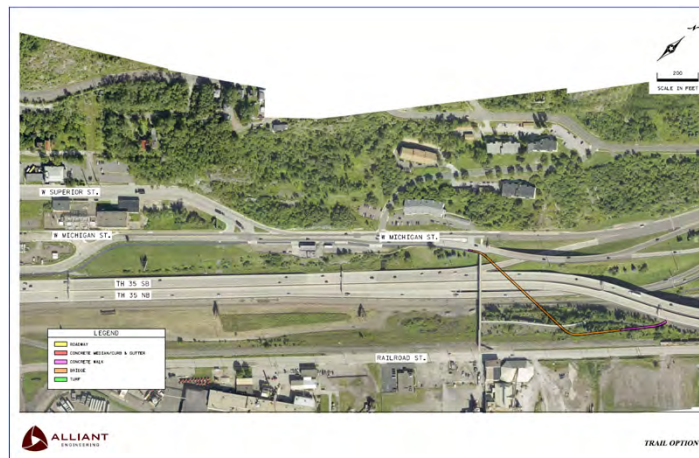
Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

October 4, 2018

Rail Road Street Connector



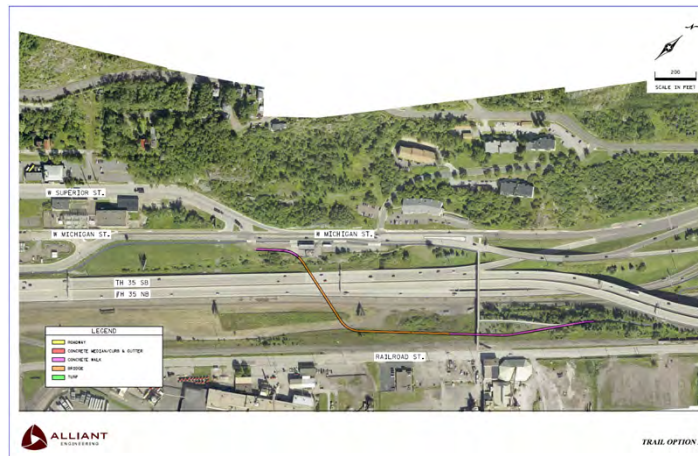
Trail Option



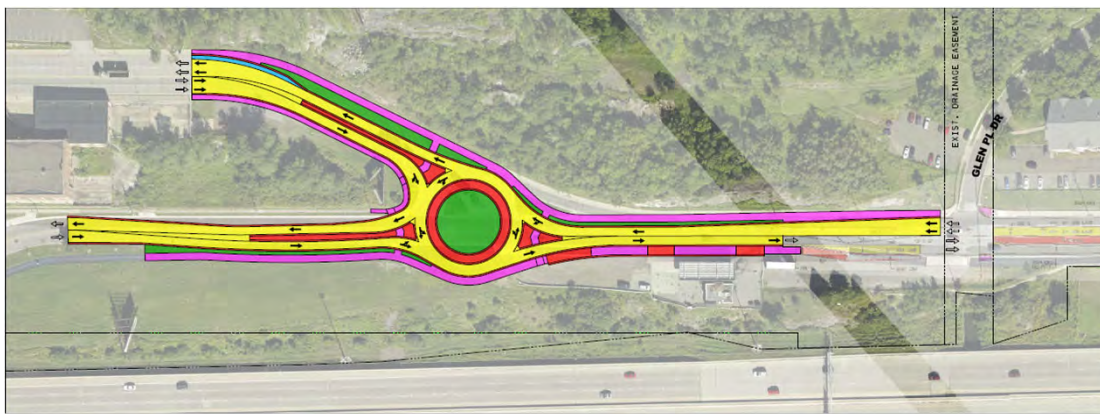
Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

October 4, 2018

Trail Option 2



RAB



Stakeholder Advisory Committee Meeting

October 4, 2018

Shared Use Trail Exhibit



December 6, 2018

City of Duluth – Department of Planning & Construction Services
411 West First Street, Room 110
Duluth, MN 55802

Re: Letter of Support – Twin Ports Interchange (TPI)

Dear Sir or Madam:

The Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce's leadership stands in full support of the City of Duluth Department of Planning & Construction Services' recommendation to MDOT advocating for two enhancements to the proposed Twin Ports Interchange. We believe the proposed enhancements will increase the area's connectivity while concurrently augmenting pedestrian and vehicular safety.

Specifically, we applaud the recommendation to improve the connection between Lincoln Park and Canal Park, made possible by a new bridge from Superior Street / Michigan Street to Railroad Street. Additionally, we support the proposed roundabout intersection at Superior Street and Michigan Street, which, ideally, will connect with the proposed new bridge.

I have attended several MDOT information sessions related to the anticipated Twin Ports Interchange. In addition, the Chamber hosted a gathering of our membership, last year, featuring MDOT leadership, to provide a timely, convenient update on the proposed project.

In summary, the Chamber stands in solidarity with our colleagues at the City of Duluth and our friends at the Lincoln Park Business Group in full support of the suggested enhancements to the Twin Ports Interchange. Please let me know if you would like additional information, or if you have questions.

Respectfully submitted,



David Ross
President

December 6, 2018

Minnesota Department of Transportation
395 John Ireland Drive
St. Paul, MN 55155

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Respectfully submitted,



David Ross
President



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

Guiding the Future of Transportation for the Twin Ports Area

Memo

To: Jenn Moses - City of Duluth Community Planning
From: Ron Chicka, MIC Director
Date: December 5, 2018
RE: MIC Comments on the TPI Community Connections Summary

The Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) staff has reviewed the "Twin Ports Interchange Community Connections Evaluation Process Summary" and provides the following comments:

1. Railroad Street Connector - more extensive vetting and study on the needs and benefits of this roadway concept is warranted before looking to construct. A definition/analysis of the roadway problem being resolved by this potential connector would be necessary for forward movement of this concept from a "pure highway/roadway" based standpoint. Modeling may or may not be useful toward this endeavor.
2. Incorporate the main points from the recent Duluth Lincoln Park Commercial District Revitalization Summit, which largely focused on "show, don't tell" idea including the following:
 - a. Focus on creating a great pedestrian environment, where people will want to linger and spend time.
 - b. Do not place a direct exit from I-35 into the Craft District; this would be economically harmful to the Craft District.
 - c. Focus on improving the Superior Street corridor from 27th Ave West to Downtown Duluth. Make it a cohesive corridor with unified look and feel that lets a person know they are in the Craft District without signage telling them.
 - d. Add wayfinding signage and/or gateways at key points, where there is a clear entry point into the neighborhood.
 - e. Add a protected bike lane along Superior Street, directly through the Craft District. While the distance from the Craft District to Canal Park and Downtown are not as ideal for walking (greater than one mile), they are within two-miles which make them optimal for cycling between the districts.

221 West

First Street

Duluth, MN

55802

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www.dsmic.org

*Duluth-Superior
urban area
communities
cooperating in
planning and
development
through a joint
venture of the
Arrowhead Regional
Development
Commission and the
Northwest Regional
Planning Commission

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Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

Guiding the Future of Transportation for the Twin Ports Area

- f. Improve transit service and stops with the Craft District, make these waiting areas great spaces and view them as gateways into the Craft District. Possible to have the DTA trolley include the Craft District within the loop of Canal Park and Downtown service areas.
- g. Improve the bicycle, pedestrian, transit and motor vehicle connection along Superior Street between Craft District and Downtown Duluth. Consider these various improvements to and along the existing Garfield Avenue roadway connection.

221 West

First Street

Duluth, MN

55802

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Fax 218-529-7592

www.dsmic.org

*Duluth-Superior
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Northwest Regional
Planning Commission

ARDC is an equal
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December 6, 2018

Dear Duluth City Planning and MNDOT,

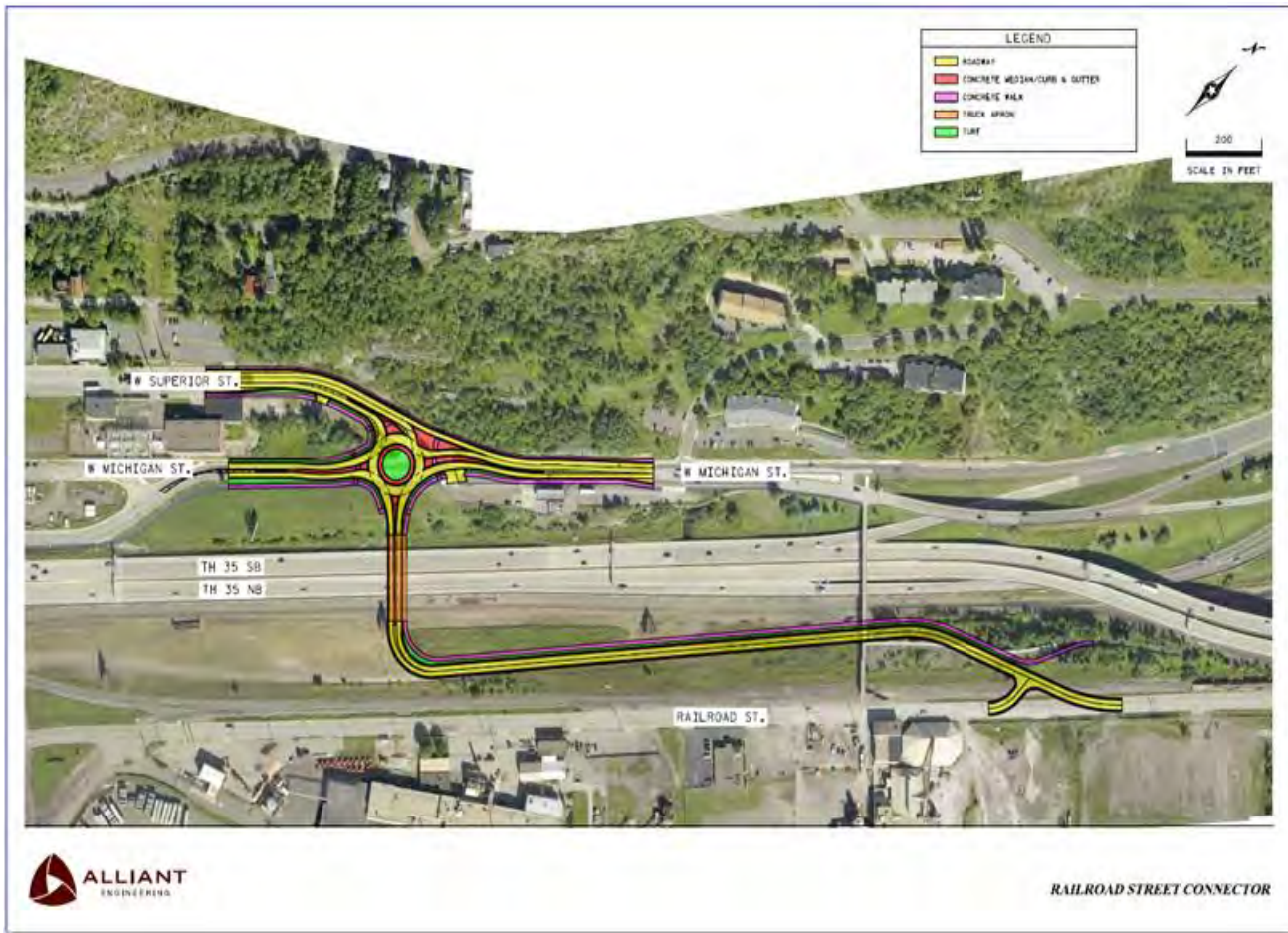
The Lincoln Park Business Group (LPBG) has had the privilege of representing our neighborhood business community for over 80 years. With a mixture of networking & social events, public art and beautification projects, neighborhood residential area support, and member advocacy projects under our belts, we've also more recently been involved with the Twin Ports Interchange Advisory Board. While our group has met for over a year to help steer the direction of a project that has had a massive effect on our neighborhood, we look at this reconstruction project as an important opportunity to shape the future of this historic core city neighborhood for the future as well. And while the interchange has had negative effects on Lincoln Park, it's also brought an array of important transportation access benefits for the economic health of many of our businesses that rely on the central location in Duluth and the greater Twin Ports region.

During this process, it became abundantly clear to MNDOT and the constituent members of the board that this project could only truly succeed with the partnership of the City of Duluth in making the project scope of Federal Transportation funds interface with the community around the project. The city also has recognized its role in interfacing between MNDOT and with Lincoln Park and the surrounding impacted neighborhoods and has taken a leadership role within the planning process. A recent city memo, "Twin Ports Interchange Community Connections Evaluation Process Summary", attached, highlights the complexities and some of the feasible opportunities surrounding the project.

While a number of challenges have been discussed, one topic in particular has been identified at the forefront of the project's impact on the city both during and after construction. Lincoln Park currently lacks adequate connections for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicular traffic to Downtown and Canal Park, as well as gateway welcome elements celebrating the history and revitalization of this important neighborhood. In its summary document, the city recognizes the past and present importance of Lincoln Park in the cultural and economic vitality of Duluth and finds a proposed preferred MNDOT option that could meet the needs of the creating better community connections as well as an important traffic mitigation option during the construction of the new Twin Ports Interchange.

The city's thorough analysis identifies the challenges that the interchange has placed on the neighborhood and identifies a MNDOT proposed option of a roundabout intersection at Superior St. and Michigan St. connecting with a new bridge designed in a complete streets model to Railroad St. as the preferred method of solving some of these challenges. Such a connection could lead to better bike and pedestrian connectivity than the sub-standard bike and pedestrian bridge currently available to the many daily users. The new connection could allow for a critical traffic alternative to events in Bayfront Park and the DECC, and the new connection could allow for better connection for the thousands of tourists struggling to travel between the hotels and businesses of Canal Park and the newly revitalized craft district of Lincoln Park, which itself lacks a clear interstate exit.

2002 W Superior St, Suite 8, Duluth MN 55806
218.727.6573
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While many in the community stand in solidarity with this proposed MNDOT option, it's in danger of not being built at all. Federal transportation funds can't be used for this portion of the project, and MNDOT has not yet committed the funds to make the option a part of the Interchange project. LPBG has studied the alternatives throughout the process and finds with the city of Duluth's conclusion that this is the preferred option. Furthermore, the LPBG Board of Directors strongly calls upon our leaders and MNDOT to make this option a reality. This is the opportunity to mitigate some of the damage caused by plans of the past on this important neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Charlie Deville, President
Lincoln Park Business Group

LPBG Board Members- Steph LaFleur, Dan Belden, Cameron Bloom Kruger, Doug Bremer, Anne Dugan, Tom Hanson, Garner Moffat, Laura Mullen, Cherise Payton, Steven Raj

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Duluth City Planning and MnDOT,

I write this letter on behalf of the Canal Park Business Association (CPBA) in support of a strengthened transportation connection between the Lincoln Park Craft District and Canal Park.

The Canal Park area is one of Minnesota's most popular tourist and recreation-oriented districts. The CPBA serves as the advocacy organization for our area and our membership of nearly seventy businesses. Our member businesses include restaurants, hotels, art galleries, bed and breakfasts, specialty shops, banks, retail merchants, tourist attractions, news media outlets, marketing organizations, non-profits, a baseball team, and many others.

The Lincoln Park Craft District has become another booming area for small, locally owned, businesses. We have many locals, and visitors, who want to spend time in both areas of our city.

Currently, the connection between these two districts is difficult at best, even for locals. We lack adequate connections for all modes of transportation, including: vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian, not to mention those with accessibility issues. This is our opportunity to correct the situation.

During the due diligence process, the City of Duluth and MnDOT identified possible solutions that would create more "intuitive" connections between the two thriving business districts. Specifically, we stand in support of two of the recommendations:

1. A new bridge from Michigan Street to Railroad Street, across I-35, as an ideal model for improving neighborhood connectivity. This would also serve to improve traffic flow due to high-volume events that occur throughout the year.
2. A roundabout intersection at Superior Street and Michigan Street would further aide in eliminating safety concerns.

I encourage follow-up on these solutions as the new connections would allow for our residents and visitors alike to have a better experience visiting our wonderful city.

Sincerely,

Matt Baumgartner, President

Canal Park Business Association

info@canalparkduluth.com

394 Lake Ave. South, Suite 314
Duluth, MN 55802



December 6, 2018

Duane Hill
Transportation District Engineer
MNDOT
1123 Mesaba Ave
Duluth, MN 55811

Dear Mr. Hill,

It's an exciting time in our community. Superior Street is seeing a major renovation with its 3-year reconstruction plan. We are attracting increased traffic to the Bayfront area with such high-demand activities as Bentleyville Tour of Lights and DECC events. Lincoln Park is seeing tremendous growth and investment. And the Twin Ports Interchange will gain a much needed retrofit.

It is important for us to seize upon the opportunity before us. If we can better connect our growing and thriving business districts, that is a win for our entire community and those who wish to call upon us as a destination. While the interchange has placed some challenges on our connectivity, the City of Duluth and MNDOT have identified options that could significantly improve access.

The Greater Downtown Council is dedicated to promoting and supporting development in Downtown Duluth. We stand in support of a new bridge from Michigan Street to Railroad Street across I-35 as an ideal model for improving neighborhood connectivity. This would also serve to improve traffic flow due to our high-volume events. Additionally, a roundabout intersection at Superior Street and Michigan Street would further aide in eliminating safety concerns.

Lincoln Park is growing. Downtown Duluth is growing. The Bayfront and Canal Park are growing. These are great things for our community and together, we can work to best accommodate that growth, connect our neighborhoods and provide a positive experience for all modes of transportation.

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kristi Stokes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kristi Stokes
President