



# CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Richfield, Minnesota

## City Council Work Session

January 14, 2020

**CALL TO ORDER**

The work session was called to order by Mayor Maria Regan Gonzalez at 5:45 p.m. in the Bartholomew Room.

*Council Members Present:* Maria Regan Gonzalez, Mayor; Edwina Garcia; Simon Trautmann; and Ben Whalen.

*Council Members Absent:* Mary Supple

*Staff Present:* Katie Rodriguez, City Manager; Kristin Asher, Public Works Director; Jack Broz, Transportation Engineer; Neil Ruhland, Communication and Engagement Manager; and Kelly Wynn, Senior Office Assistant.

*Others Present:* April Crockett, MnDOT Metro District, West Area Manager

<b>Item #1</b>	<b>PRESENTATION OF I-494 PLANNING AND VISION HISTORY</b>
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City Manager Rodriguez gave an overview of the meeting and what will be discussed.

Director Asher explained that it will be a discussion of the vision.

Transportation Engineer Broz described vision versus project and the overall timeline containing 494 between 169 and the MSP Airport. He then gave a history beginning in 1987 of the I-494 corridor.

Director Asher added information regarding the 2014 vision of the interchange at 35W and I-494.

Transportation Engineer Broz presented the 2014 vision layout along Penn Avenue and how it will be affected by the changes. He also spoke of utilizing the "Box Plan" to redirect traffic. Director Asher explained Penn and Lyndale are in the vision because of where their ramps touch down on I-494. Transportation Engineer Broz then laid out the 2014 vision along Lyndale and 82<sup>nd</sup> Street.

Director Asher described that the main goal is to eliminate weaving and merging to reduce vehicle accidents that is caused when ramps are placed too close together.

Transportation Engineer Broz spoke on the current vision information evaluation process including Phase 2 which involves I-494 mainline alternative and need for access reconfiguration.

Council Member Trautmann questioned how the Box Plan fits into the project and how traffic flow will be impacted. April Crockett stated they have information regarding the traffic and would be more than happy to share at another time.

Transportation Engineer Broz reviewed the 35W and I-494 interchange area alternatives. He then spoke of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) agreed with the full vision of that area. Transportation Engineer Broz read through the remaining timeline for Phase 2 and provided a progress update.

Council Member Whalen requested clarification that there is a need regarding the Portland Ave changes and how it will impact businesses. Director Asher confirmed that would be a project detail.

Council Member Whalen asked about pedestrian access during and after construction over I-494. Transportation Engineer Broz stated the number one goal is to have freeway working but not ignoring the pedestrian access. It is an important aspect of the project. A vision and funding need to be put into place before more concrete plans are formed.

Council Member Trautmann questioned how Best Buy Corporate employees will be affected when not being able to easily access 35W south. Mayor Regan Gonzalez also asked how Best Buy Corporate has been involved.

Transportation Engineer Broz explained that Best Buy Corporate has been involved in conversations. The main goal is make the freeway work more efficiently.

Council Member Whalen requested clarification that in order to make the freeway work more efficiently is to attempt to remove vehicles, employees from Best Buy Corporate, from the freeway. Transportation Engineer Broz confirmed that those vehicles would then travel along the Box.

Transportation Engineer Broz described how the reliever roadways are used instead of I-494. The improvements on I-494, including a MnPass lane, will take traffic off of 77<sup>th</sup> Street and American Boulevard.

Council Member Whalen would like to know how much traffic on the reliever routes is through-traffic that will be moved onto the freeway. Transportation Engineer Broz confirmed research has been done on how the freeway will be impacted. Council Member Whalen then wanted to know if there is a ballpark of how much traffic that will be. Transportation Engineer Broz stated they do not have that information yet but it will be included in the next steps.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez questioned what decision points will be coming to the Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) in the upcoming February meeting. April Crockett explained there are three areas, reconfiguration, main line, interchange, incorporated into the vision.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez wanted to know how the TAC and the PAC connect with each other so conversations or decisions aren't being missed by either group. Director Asher explained PAC meetings are surrounded on what was discussed at TAC meetings and what decisions need to be made. April Crockett also touched on each city affected by the I-494 project has a TAC and PAC and will be necessary for Council to be kept up to date for when the funding comes through and the project is able to begin.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez then asked if they will be requesting a vote from Council on the vision. Director Asher stated that was not the intention and the PAC will be making decisions regarding the vision.

City Manager Rodriguez requested the Council Members share all their feedback with staff so it can be presented and discussed, as well as, decide if another work session is required.

Transportation Engineer Broz stated a Council action is not required for the MnDOT process on the vision.

Director Asher asked Council for questions.

Council Member Whalen circled back to the area around Best Buy Headquarters that is still being studied. April Crockett explained MnDOT should have a lot of information and she will be in touch with the project team.

Council Member Trautmann thanked staff for supplying the maps with context and written thoughts. They are exceedingly important in helping Council understand the vision and be comfortable with the decisions being made.

Council Member Whalen confirmed he is ok with not having a more official vote and is confident in the representatives involved in TAC and PAC.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez read comments supplied by Council Member Supple since she was unable to attend the meeting:

1. Concerned with the I-494 and 35W interchange and how many Best Buy Corporate employees will be affected by the change.
2. Impact of extra travel time on and through the Box to be thoroughly studied.
3. Would like to know how the air quality in Richfield will be affected with more vehicles sitting on city streets.

Council Member Supple will support the vision with the following provisions:

1. The Cedar Underpass is funded.
2. Underline residual issues on Crosstown are dealt with since it will be the primary detour.
3. Local impacts are fully addressed and remediated.

City Manager Rodriguez summed up the meeting with a reminder the next PAC meeting is in February.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The work session was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:40 p.m.

Date Approved: January 28, 2020

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Maria Regan Gonzalez  
Mayor

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Kelly Wynn  
Senior Office Assistant

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Katie Rodriguez  
City Manager