Minnesota Bypass Experiences

History
ALWAYS REMEMBER

• YOUR SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM IS VERY LIKELY A PROBLEM TO THOSE FOR WHOM YOUR PROBLEM WAS THEIR SOLUTION.
...AND...

• SITUATIONS DEFINED AS REAL ARE REAL IN THEIR CONSEQUENCES
Community Bypasses

- Personal Introduction
- Three block re-route of city street
- Field trip of area
- Meeting with local affected parties
Mankato
Next Steps

• Do some research into the consumer users of the area.
WHAT CHARACTERIZED THIS SITUATION?

- Irrational Fears (?)
- Polarized positions
- Anger– Mistrust
- Vs.
- Defensiveness
- A kind of self-delusion (They are against it because they don’t understand the project.)
• It seemed to be perceived as a Zero Sum Game –

• Not a lot room for compromise

• Someone was going to prevail
WHAT YOU DON’T WANT TO HAPPEN

• At that point, the situation was about out of control

• Opponents has seized the podium
Next Stop: Cloquet

• TH 33 from I-35 to TH 53 – through or around Cloquet
Cloquet
Through or Around?
TH 33 in Cloquet
Next Steps

• This subject had been quite extensively researched -- in Minnesota and elsewhere
More Recent Works

- Effects of Highway Bypasses on Rural Communities and Small Urban Areas
  - TRB, 1996

  The Economic Impacts of Highway Bypasses on Communities
  Wis/DOT 1998
• Highway Bypasses on Small Communities (Weisbrod 2001)

The Economic Impact of Rural Bypasses: Iowa and Minnesota Case Studies (1993, 1999 Otto and Anderson)
Major Methods

• All or nearly all focus on economics
• Nearly all use the community as the “unit of analysis."
  – Typical dependent variables: retail sales, gasoline sales, bank debits
  – Several used follow-up interviews with merchants and community leaders
Shortcomings

• Little emphasis on community impacts, e.g.
  Reduction in accidents – injury and property damage
  Pedestrian safety
  Ease of Moving about town
  Emergency Services
  Reduced Noise
  Cultural resource preservation
Statistical Model?

• No
• Still cannot predict a particular outcome to a particular business or even a type of business based on altered traffic flow resulting from a bypass.
Wisconsin

- Findings
- In most communities, bypasses have little adverse impact on overall economic activity;
- Over long term, traffic on “old” route is close to or higher than pre-bypass;
- Very little retail flight;
- Communities view bypasses as beneficial overall
Wisconsin

• …Bypasses have not caused changes to economic trends of communities or drastically reduced retail opportunities, and major unplanned development has not gravitated to bypass routes. Bypasses have created some adverse impacts due to traffic loss in smaller communities, and for a limited number of traffic-dependent businesses.
Iowa
(and Minnesota)

• …overall levels of retail sales … are not significantly affected, (even broken out by sector);
• Businesses serving local trade area and those dependent on repeat business are likely to benefit;
• Majority report in favor of bypass – shopping environmental and ease of access.
Litchfield

• Highways 12 and 22 go through town
• Kind of a “Main Street.”
• Traffic Study
  – 64 percent of all traffic had destination in Litchfield;
  – 2/3 of trips with Litchfield as destination had Meeker County origins;
  – 14 % of vehicles were through traffic
  – The “through” traffic stopping in Litchfield was about 4% of total traffic
  – Almost none of that stopped to “shop”
Litchfield, continued

• Business Survey
  – 80 percent of highway oriented said through traffic was more than 10 percent of business

  – 40 percent of CBD said more than 10% were through traffic
Litchfield, continued

- **Customer Survey**
- Less than 4 percent of through traffic vehicles stopped to make purchase
- Perhaps 2 percent of sales
- Estimate that the east bypass would reduce sales by highway oriented business by less than 2 percent and to CBD by less than 1 percent
The wide range of highway bypass studies carried out around the country provide a generally consistent story. They indicate that highway bypasses are seldom either devastating or the savior of a community business district. The locational shift in traffic can cause some existing businesses to turn over or relocate, but net economic impacts on the broader community are usually relatively small.
Summary

• Communities and business districts that have a strong identity as a destination for visitors or for local shoppers are the ones that are most likely to be strengthened due to the reduction in traffic delays through their centers.

• There is a broad perception that adequate signage to the bypassed business center…is an important need for ensuring its success.