Rethinking I-94: Building a Public Engagement Plan Not Based on Assumptions

CTS Research Conference
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Why Rethinking I-94?

Construction of I-94 in the 60s destroyed homes and businesses and disconnected neighborhoods

MnDOT acknowledged the past and made a commitment to do better

Reconnecting neighborhoods, revitalizing communities, and a meaningful voice
Proposed Engagement Approach

- People-centered
- Adaptable approach
- Impact where people live, work and gather

How Do We Get There?

Rethinking I-94 Study Area
## About the Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Farmers markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Neighborhoods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Stadiums/arenas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Theaters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Parks/green spaces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Places of worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Libraries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## About the Highway

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2+ million</td>
<td>Transit users per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Miles of infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80+</td>
<td>Lane miles of pavement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Average hours of congestion per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>Freight trips per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tunnels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>Bridges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150,000+</td>
<td>Vehicles per day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goals - Purpose

Engagement Goals
• Early – Often – More

Toolkit Purpose
• Outlines an adaptable and actionable process
• Create project-specific public engagement plans
• Supports projects of all sizes and types
• Features a variety of engagement tools
• Can be used for other projects and studies

Build A Foundation

Purpose
• Perception, satisfaction and confidence
• Opportunity to participate
• How they receive their information

Methodology Overview
• Online & phone interviews
• Multiple racial groups and ages
• Oversample of Non-Caucasian residents similar to the demographic make-up of corridor

70% - Important that Residents have An Opportunity to Provide Input
Establishing Context

• Historical context
• Cultural context
• Economic context
• Social context

Cultural Mapping and Historical Overviews

Purpose:
Advises the team in designing an engagement strategy for this historically, socially and geographically complex corridor
• Indigenous (American Indian)
• European-American
• African-American
• Asian-American
• Latino-American
• Recent African Immigrant
Recent African Communities

Key Takeaways ...

- 12.8 percent of the total population of the I-94 Corridor (Somali & Ethiopian two largest populations)
- Somalis first immigrated to Twin Cities in 1980s (educational & professional reasons)
- Arrived in larger numbers in early 1990s due to civil war in Somalia
- Growing number returning to Somalia (stability back home)

Zone Profiles

Overview

- Arranged in six separate zones
- Demographics, Survey Results, Organizations, Media Outlets, Elected Officials
- How they Use I-94
- How and Where to Engage with People

Comprehensive and Small Area Plans

Historical Reports

Local Knowledge and Expertise
Community Comments Database

Overview

- Learn how we can better engage with communities and begin to form resilient relationships
- Obtain a better sense of community needs
- Store and organize all comments – actual comment, location specific, phase of the project, “owner”
- Helps inform project teams of the underlying vision, values, and issues
- Helps guide future transportation project development and investment

Workshops - Community Events – Listening Sessions – One-on-One: 1500 Comments

Segmentation Survey

Purpose

- Gain an understanding of the attitudes, desires and values of residents impacted

Listening for “Values” Segmentation of Corridor

- Identify specific actions how emotions and values influence actions and activities
- Understand media usage and their preference for how they wish to engage with MnDOT
Levels of Engagement by Market Segment

**Active Contributors**
- Mostly White
- Higher Income
- Contributes to charities
- Everyone has an opportunity to be involved in local community decisions

**Concerned about:**
- More traffic lanes
- Better maintenance
- Better traffic flow
- Wider roads or lanes

**Informed Observers**
- Mostly Men
- Boomers/Students
- Everyone should stay informed of community, local and state news
- Everyone should provide input to local reps when asked

**Concerned about:**
- More traffic lanes and traffic flow
- Better maintenance
- Safe ramps and better access
- Noise

**Unreached Observers**
- Mostly Women
- Multiracial
- Prevalent in Ramsey County
- State Agencies should seek public opinion
- Not everyone has the opportunity to provide input

**Concerned about:**
- Traffic flow
- Better maintenance
- Access
- Noise

**Hands-on Participants**
- White/Black
- Income Not A Barrier
- Prevalent in Hennepin County
- Volunteer – Help Community
- Everyone has an opportunity to be involved in local community decisions

**Concerned about:**
- Safety
- Pedestrian-friendly features
- Green space
- Access
What Did We Learn

Guiding Commitments for project teams
MnDOT developed these commitments based on what people expect from MnDOT. They will guide how we work with communities in the future.

Livability Framework for communities
MnDOT developed this framework based on what people expect from the project work. It will guide how we work design and evaluate projects in the future.
Adaptive approach

- Rethinking I-94 is a pilot effort
- Incorporate lessons learned into department processes
- Goal is to expand to future MnDOT projects/corridors
- Utilizing these tools and what we learned as we move into Phase II – which is the environmental documentation phase.

More Info: Google Rethinking I-94

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