

Executive summary

Title: MnDOT I-394 and Louisiana Avenue Improvements project - next steps – Ward 4

Recommended action: No action at this time. This report provides responses to the questions presented by the community and council at the Sept. 9, 2024 city council meeting. To provide MnDOT time to respond to questions from the community, this item will now be brought back to the city council on Oct. 7, 2024 for decision instead of Sept. 16 as presented during the Sept. 9 meeting.

Policy consideration: Does the city council support MnDOT's proposed work on I-394 and Louisiana Avenue?

Summary: In 2025, MnDOT has improvements proposed for I-394 and Louisiana Avenue, including:

- I-394 eastbound land extension. To build this project, they require the permanent dedication of a portion of the city right of way on Wayzata Boulevard to MnDOT.
- Construct extension of general-purpose lane on eastbound I-394 from Louisiana Avenue exit ramp to Louisiana Avenue entrance ramp.
- Construct a new auxiliary lane from the eastbound Louisiana Avenue on-ramp to the Xenia Avenue/Park Place Boulevard exit.
- Replace I-394 and Louisiana Avenue north and south ramp signal systems.
- Remove channelized right turns at the I-394 and Louisiana Avenue north and south ramp intersections.
- Sidewalk improvements.
- Relocate the city watermain on Wayzata Boulevard between 500 feet west of Dakota Avenue and Dakota Avenue.

The city's approval is required for this project because it increases highway traffic capacity on I-394 and requires acquisition of permanent rights in two areas along Wayzata Boulevard, a city-owned street.

During the Sept. 9, 2024, council meeting, the public and council had several questions. The questions fall into two categories: questions for city staff and questions for MnDOT. The questions and responses are included in the discussion section and attached.

Financial or budget considerations: This project is included in the city's draft 2025 capital improvement plan (CIP). This is a MnDOT project with an overall cost estimated to be \$3.65 million. The city's cost share is \$250,000, which will be paid for using municipal state aid funds.

Strategic priority consideration: Not applicable.

Supporting documents: Discussion, MnDOT responses
[Public hearing council report Sept. 9, 2024](#)

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Approved by: Cindy Walsh, deputy city manager

Discussion

Background: In 2025, MnDOT has improvements proposed for I-394 and Louisiana Avenue. The city's approval is required for this project because it increases highway traffic capacity on I-394 and requires acquisition of permanent rights in two areas along Wayzata Boulevard, a city-owned street.

In addition to the expansion of the highway capacity, this project also includes the reconstruction of the signal at the eastbound I-394 and Louisiana Avenue ramps. Operation, maintenance and replacement of this signal is covered by an agreement with MnDOT. As laid out in the agreement, the city is obligated to participate in signal replacement costs based on the number of legs of the signal under our jurisdiction. Due to this, the city is obligated to pay for half of the cost to replace this signal system.

Information on the route identification, public engagement and selection of a recommended route can be found in the [Sept. 9, 2024 council report](#).

Community feedback: The public was able to comment during the Sept. 9, 2024, council meeting. The questions from the public and from council members fall into two categories: questions for city staff and questions for MnDOT. The following is a summary of questions and responses from city staff. MnDOT's questions and responses are attached.

1. How is biking being accommodated with this project?

There are no bikeway improvements proposed with this project. It is a MnDOT-led project with the intent to add a lane on the mainline of I-394 where there is currently a lane drop/add between the US 169/General Mills Boulevard and Louisiana Avenue ramps. Doing this required MnDOT to realign the eastbound Louisiana Avenue ramps, prompting the reconstruction of the traffic signals. There are no proposed structural modifications to the bridge as a part of this project.

The Louisiana bridge over I-394 was built in 1988 and is in good shape. Due to this, the bridge isn't in any plans to be replaced. The bridge carries about 20,000 vehicles a day, and the recommended bikeway design would be a separated facility. There is not adequate room on the bridge to create a separated facility. For safety reasons, city staff does not recommend adding a stripe to the road to designate a space for bicycles as an interim measure.

In addition, there is no bikeway north of Louisiana Avenue in Golden Valley. While a bikeway is in Golden Valley's master plan, they do not have it in their CIP.

2. How many lanes will the new Louisiana Avenue have after it is reconstructed?

In 2025, Louisiana Avenue, between Wayzata Boulevard and Fire Station #2, will be reconstructed. The new street will have one lane of traffic in each direction. There will also be a new continuous sidewalk constructed along the east side of the road. This is in addition to the existing sidewalk on the west side of the road. City staff is working closely with MnDOT to coordinate the work on the city's project with their project.

Present considerations: During the public hearing there were many questions from the public regarding what modifications MnDOT would be making to the highway as well as the ramps. During the meeting, MnDOT went through the project layout to describe the improvements. However, there was not adequate time or exhibits to do this in a comprehensive way.

To provide this information more comprehensively, MnDOT has agreed to hold a public open house to further discuss the details of the project with the public. Date, time and location details will be forthcoming. City staff will assist MnDOT in getting the word out for this meeting.

To provide time to hold this meeting, this item will not return to the council for decision until Oct. 7, 2024.

In addition, MnDOT's presentation from the Sept. 9 meeting is now included on the webpage that the city created for this project.

Next steps: The proposed schedule for MnDOT's project:

Public open house	September 2024 (date to be determined)
Council project approval	Oct. 7, 2024
Construction	August 2025
Construction complete	November 2025

Attachment – MnDOT responses

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2. Design plan document states that the project is being motivated by congestion data from 2016 (8 years ago). Is this data still accurate today (in 2024)?

Correct, the project need was identified based upon the 2016 MnDOT Metro Freeway Congestion Report. However, the 2023 MnDOT Metro Freeway Congestion Report shows similar congestion on I-394 in the vicinity of Louisiana Avenue. Traffic volumes today on I-394 are within 10% of those in 2016.

Additionally, interstate vehicle detector data indicates that the morning traffic slow-downs on I-394 in this area seen in 2016 remain today. On average there is one to two hours of congestion in the AM peak hours.

3. Why is the speed limit (60mph) lower than the design speed (70mph) on 394? Shouldn't roads be designed to communicate what speed is safe to drivers without a speed limit sign?

The scope of this project will not impact existing speed limits or design speeds on I-394.

4. What community engagement has taken place for this project?

There will be an open house this fall to further discuss details of the project with the public. Date, time and location details will be forthcoming.

5. Will MnDOT include leading pedestrian interval for upgraded signal systems and crossings?

Yes, this can be implemented with the installation of the new traffic signals.

6. Will MnDOT add a "no right turn on red" to discourage drivers driving into the pedestrian crossing. Include restrictions during peak times?

The "No Right Turn on Red" signs are typically only installed in locations where there is limited visibility for vehicles turning right. In locations where these signs are not warranted due to site lines, they are often violated by drivers. The "No Right Turn on Red" would not necessarily address people encroaching on the crosswalk.

7. Is the Louisiana Ave bridge going to be wider?

There are no proposed structural modifications to the bridge included in the scope of this project.

8. What is the timeline for construction? Is Wayzata Boulevard going to be closed? What will be the detour routes?

Construction will occur from August to November 2025. The off-ramp and on-ramp of eastbound I-394 and Louisiana Avenue will be closed for the duration of the project. Entering/ exiting traffic will be rerouted to General Mills Boulevard to the west and Xenia Avenue/ Park Place Boulevard to the east.

Design is ongoing for the watermain relocation on Wayzata Boulevard and the traffic control and staging will follow. The contractor will be required to maintain access to businesses throughout construction. More information will be communicated to businesses as the project develops.