

Date: April 5, 2017

City of Lake City Mayor and Council
205 West Center Street
Lake City, MN 55041

RE: TH 61 Reconstruction Project in Lake City
SP 7906-97

Dear Mayor Nichols and City Council,

I am writing to articulate our long-term strategy as it applies to the 2020 Trunk Highway 61 Reconstruction Project (TH 61). Specifically, I will be addressing zones two and three of the study corridor identified in the US Highway 61 (Lake City) Scoping Study. This 2015 study was prepared in cooperation with the City of Lake City, Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Goodhue County, and Wabasha County.

We are in receipt of a Letter of Intent from the City of Lake City to reconstruct TH 61 from Central Point Road to West Elm Street, with MnDOT cost participation of up to \$8,700,000. This project is slated for construction in 2020 and includes cost inflation and construction contingencies of 19% and 25%, respectively. The MnDOT cost participation does not include potential State/Federal grants and subsidies that may apply to storm water initiatives and other wellness applications.

We are confident that the proposed 3-lane configuration will operate acceptably from both a traffic operations and safety perspective. However, we will evaluate three specific traffic related aspects after project completion in order to most fully optimize operations of the reconstructed facility.

Speed study:

As you are aware, the existing speed limit is generally 40 mph in zone two and 30 mph in zone three. After completion of the project, and after a reasonable time period to allow traffic to adjust to the new roadway cross-section, MnDOT personnel will conduct an official speed study to evaluate if speed limit changes are warranted and appropriate based on the new conditions. An analysis of the actual operating speeds will be completed and considerations will be made based on the changed roadway conditions (i.e. number of lanes, lane widths, access control, shoulder width, etc.). The results of the study, and based upon engineering judgement and accepted speed zoning practices, will be used to determine the recommended regulatory speed limit for the two sections of the project. MnDOT cannot guarantee any change in posted speed limits.

Traffic signal timing

The traffic signals at both the TH 61/TH 63 and TH 61/Marion Street intersections will be replaced with the project. Dedicated left turn lanes and a protected left turn phase, with use of a flashing yellow left turn arrow for turning traffic arriving after the main-line green, on TH 61 are currently proposed at each intersection. This signal change, along with lane changes, will affect the operations of both signalized intersections. We will conduct field reviews and analysis of the signal operations to assess the actual traffic delay and efficiency of the signals. We will work to adjust signal timing, as appropriate, to minimize delay for all drivers.

Safety study

We will complete a before-and-after crash study to analyze the effect of the lane change on safety. We will analyze the number, rate, locations, and type of crashes both before and after construction. The post construction study will be conducted three years after completion of the project. If there are specific and definable safety issues identified that can be addressed through relatively simple and low cost means (i.e., markings, signing, parking, etc.), we will work with city to implement those improvements.

I also want to follow up on the discussion at a recent workshop concerning left turn safety on SB TH 61 at the Hok-Si-La Park entrance. As you are aware, MnDOT does have a project in 2019 for a mill and overlay of that section of TH 61. While a dedicated left turn lane would require significant reconstruction and would be out of the scope of this type of project, we would be willing to discuss construction of a SB bypass lane at the intersection. MnDOT funding is not available for this improvement; however, if the city is willing to pay for the bypass lane we can look further into determining if it is feasible to include it in our mill and overlay project.

Thank you for partnering with us on this reconstruction project of TH 61. If you have any questions or would like to discuss these issues further feel free to contact me at 507-286-7502 or Chad Hanson at 507-286-7637.

Sincerely,



Greg Paulson
Assistant District Engineer - Program Delivery
MnDOT District 6

cc: Chad Hanson, Senior Project Manager
Michael Schweyen, District Traffic Engineer
Tony Wagner, Project Management Engineer
Scott Jensen, Lake City Public Works Director