

Summary of Engineering Recommendations

Robert Street Reconstruction: Kellogg Boulevard to I-94

City Project No. 25-P-1475

SAP No. 164-010-081

Report Prepared: 2024-02-15

Public Hearing: 2024-06-12

Program

This project entails the full reconstruction of Robert Street from Kellogg Boulevard to I-94. The corridor is currently a MnDOT trunk highway (TH 3) and is being turned back in 2024 to the City of St. Paul, to be owned and operated by the city. As part of the agreement, the state will pay for a significant amount of the project capital cost. Federal funds, Saint Paul Regional Water Service funds, Metro Transit funds, and City of St. Paul funds will cover the rest of the project cost.

Pre-Construction Conditions

Currently the roadway is generally two lanes in each direction with turn lanes at major intersections. On most blocks, parking exists on both sides of the roadway. The roadway is in poor condition and many of the sidewalk segments are not pedestrian friendly.

Robert Street is one of the oldest streets in the city (established in the 1840's) and city records show that it was last fully reconstructed between 1913 and 1917. The corridor was widened during that period by 20 feet going from 55 feet in width to 75 feet in width; accomplished by modifying or tearing down over 20 buildings on the west side of the corridor. The State of Minnesota took over the ownership, operations, and maintenance of the corridor by statute in the early 1920's. Improvements since that time such as sidewalk replacements and pavement rehabilitation have occurred in bits and pieces, but there has been little change in the overall roadway width since that time. In the northern half of the corridor the existing water infrastructure is some of the oldest in the state, dating back to the 1880's. District Energy, Xcel Energy, and several communications companies have a significant amount of infrastructure along and crossing the corridor.

Improvements

In addition to replacing aging infrastructure, the project goals are to:

- Create a vibrant and welcoming place for everyone.

- Improve mobility for all modes of travel.
- Support efficient and reliable transit service through downtown.
- Create an accessible and safe environment for people who walk and roll.
- Enhance street-level commerce.
- Facilitate a community engagement process that addresses the needs of all stakeholders.

Reconstruction is needed to repair and replace sidewalks, pavement, and utilities. Improvements include all new sidewalks, pavement, boulevards, trees, curb, and gutters. Traffic improvements include new lane markings, traffic signals, lighting, and signage. Both public and private utilities will be improved. Public utility improvements include sewer main work, water main replacement and repair, and stormwater management treatments. Several areaways have been identified and the city is working with property owners to preserve them. Buried streetcar tracks and any rubble in conflict with the project design will be removed.

Alternates

Three alternatives were considered throughout the design process. Option #A included 2 moving traffic lanes along with two bus/turn (BAT) lanes. Option #A was favored by Ramsey County and the Purple Line Project. Option #B included two moving lanes with left turn lanes at select locations. Option #B provided the most pedestrian space but did not provide a dedicated space for transit. Option #C included 2 vehicle lanes plus a bus lane in one direction. This option was favored by Metro Transit. Option #C was seen as a compromise option to meet both transit and pedestrian goals. A considerable amount of community engagement was done along the corridor, with hundreds of comments received. A monthly Technical Advisory Committee with members from Ramsey County, MnDOT, Metro Transit, SPRWS, and the City of St. Paul was created to assist with the design process, to debate options, and to provide technical expertise. A bi-monthly property owner/managers meeting was set up to address their needs. A quarterly Steering Committee made up of elected officials and agency heads was also established to discuss and debate the project design elements from a policy and political perspective. After much debate, Option #B was selected by the city.

Positive Benefits

The primary benefit of Option #B is wider sidewalks. This option reduces the crossing distances for pedestrians and will likely slow vehicles down, providing safety benefits. Wider sidewalks also provide more space for streetscape elements, trees, and sidewalk cafes. Transit will be accommodated with Bus Rapid Transit enhanced bus stops. Buses will stop in the traffic lane. A vehicle capacity analysis showed that this alternative was viable. Turn lanes will be installed at key intersections and the corridor will be designed to

meet Municipal State Aid (MSA) standards, which will ensure that trucks and commercial vehicles will have adequate space to operate. As previously stated, the reconstruction project will allow for utility upgrades and new roadway/sidewalk improvements. This will greatly reduce the short-term maintenance within the corridor. Much of the street parking will be maintained and there will be a net increase in the number of trees.

Adverse Effects

Federally funded projects such as Robert Street must explore adverse impacts as part of the project memorandum environmental process. Based on the corridor analysis, no adverse impacts have been identified.

Effects on Trees

A handful of existing trees will need to be removed to allow for the project. However, the project will install dozens of new trees making for a significant increase in the total number of trees throughout the corridor. Structural soils installed as part of the project will likely increase the success of the new trees.

Time Schedule

Private utility work has begun in 2024. Project design is expected to be completed in Summer 2024 with bidding in Fall 2024. Sewer work will begin in 2024. The majority of construction will occur in 2025. Trees and streetscape elements will be added in 2026.

Cost

Construction of the project is estimated at \$32,396,545. Design and construction engineering are estimated at \$3,863,000 for a grand total of \$36,259,545.

A public hearing will be held for the project.

Financing

Federal Funding	\$	6,490,000
MnDOT Turnback Funding* (Includes Construction Engineering)	\$	20,613,000
MnDOT Design Funds	\$	2,300,000
Metro Transit	\$	800,000
SPRWS	\$	970,000
St. Paul Sewer Assessments	\$	<u>2,396,545</u>
Total	\$	36,259,545

Source of Additional Information

For additional information, contact the project manager, Don Pflaum at 651-266-9147, or visit <https://www.stpaul.gov/projects/public-works/pw2025robertstreconstruction>

Summary and Recommendation

The Department of Public Works feels that this is a worthwhile project, and the Engineering Recommendation is to approve the assessment.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald Pflaum". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Donald Pflaum, P.E.

Public Works Street Design and Construction

