



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Metro District

June 23, 2025

Nick Peterson, PE
City Engineer
Saint Paul Public Works

RE: Request for City Approval (Municipal Consent) of the Final Layout for SP 6217-50 (TH 3)

Dear Nick:

MnDOT is proceeding with plans to complete State Project 6217-50, the proposed reconstruction of Robert Street from Haskell Street East to Kellogg Boulevard. In accordance with Minnesota Statute 161.164, I am submitting for City approval the project's Final Layout, identified as Layout No. 1, S.P. 6217-50.

The City's approval (municipal consent) is required for this project because it:

- Alters access by converting Sidney Street to a one-way street at Robert Street and removes the connection of the northbound Robert Street service road to Cesar Chavez Street
- Reduces highway traffic capacity by removing a through lane in each direction north of Wood Street
- Requires acquisition of permanent rights of way, including the total acquisition of 3 parcels, including one residential property. MnDOT also plans partial acquisition of a number of additional parcels to acquire small amounts of permanent right of way from a number of other parcels.

Municipal consent of MnDOT projects is described in Minnesota Statutes 161.162 through 161.167 (attached).

Approval or disapproval of the final layout is by resolution of the City Council. (A sample resolution is attached). However, if the City neither approves nor disapproves the final layout within 90 days of the public hearing, the layout is deemed approved (per MN Statute 161.164).

The deadlines (per MN Statute 161.164) for the City's responsibilities regarding municipal consent of the attached layout are as follows, based on a submittal date of the final layout to the City of 6/23/2025:

- Within 15 days of receiving the final layout, schedule a public hearing (by 7/15/2025).
Potential times that work on MnDOT's end for a public hearing can include the following:
 1. 7/30/2025 (before 4pm or after 7:30pm)
 2. 8/6/2025 (any time)

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3. 8/13/2025 (any time)
 4. 8/20/2025 (3:30 pm or later)
 5. Other dates could be scheduled upon request
- Within 60 days of receiving the final layout, conduct the public hearing (by 8/22/2025).
 - Provide at least 30-days' notice of the public hearing.
 - Within 90 days of the public hearing, approve or disapprove the layout by resolution (by 9/21/2025).

MnDOT will attend the public hearing to present the final layout and answer questions, as required by statute.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to reconstruct the roadway to improve the pavement condition and to provide a smooth ride. Robert Street was originally constructed in the 1930's and has never been rebuilt – underneath the asphalt surface there are bricks and streetcar tracks.

Originally, MnDOT had planned to simply resurface the roadway, however upon discussion with local stakeholders and further investigation, a number of other issues/needs were identified:

- Robert Street has serious safety issues – it is the only “High Injury Street” in the West Side Neighborhood in Saint Paul’s Transportation Safety Action Plan.
- Robert Street is a planned future bikeway in the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan (from Cesar Chavez to Kellogg Boulevard).
- Robert Street is on Metro Transit’s planned G Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route
- There are up to 67 parcels with lead water services along Robert Street
- The sewers and watermains under Robert Street are over 100 years’ old in some instances
- The Robert Street Viaduct (George Street Bridge and adjacent retaining walls) are nearly 100 years old and require frequent repairs (such as in 2022)

To address these wider issues, MnDOT worked with partners to secure two grants to upscope the project from a mill and overlay to a reconstruction project:

- Met Council Regional Solicitation (\$7 million)
- Federal RAISE grant (\$25 million)

With the aid of the grants, MnDOT has now expanded the purpose of the project from simply resurfacing the pavement to reconstructing the roadway to address the multimodal safety and accessibility needs and aging infrastructure along the corridor.

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Project Description

The project includes reconstruction of the 2.1-mile stretch of Robert St (T.H. 3) between Haskell St E to Kellogg Blvd. This project will look to transform Robert St from a vehicle-centric road to a multimodal transportation corridor that enhances safety, connectivity, and quality of life for the Saint Paul West Side neighborhood. The project will benefit all travelers by reconstructing the road, upgrading pedestrian crossings, improving sidewalks and pathways, managing speed, expanding multimodal options, and improving transit access. MnDOT is also coordinating with other agencies to:

- Metro Transit - Construct G Line Bus Rapid Transit stations along the corridor with roadway reconstruction
- Saint Paul Regional Water – Replace watermains along the project, and replace all lead water services along the corridor at no cost to property owners (up to 67 parcels)
- Saint Paul Sewers – replace sanitary sewer along the corridor
- Met Council – rehabilitate or replace sanitary sewer along the corridor

MnDOT is submitting a single layout for Municipal Consent, however we are planning to deliver the work as two separate projects as follows:

SP 6217-50 – FY 2027 letting date

- Reconstruction from Haskell Street to Page Street
- Reconstruction from Cesar Chavez Street to Kellogg Boulevard
- Project delivered primarily without RAISE funding
- Anticipated two years' construction duration

SP 6217-59 – FY 2028 letting date

- Reconstruction from Page Street to Cesar Chavez Street
- Includes replacement of the Robert Street Viaduct
- Project delivered primarily **with** RAISE funding. This is a risk to the project budget – the Minnesota Attorney General is currently involved in a lawsuit over RAISE funding.
- Bridge 90381 (George Street over Robert Street) is historic and may require extraordinary coordination with the State Historic Preservation Office if a structural analysis determines it must be replaced. This is a risk to the project schedule.
- In the event that this project runs into schedule or budget issues it may be further delayed until such time that those issues can be resolved. MnDOT will continue to monitor the condition of the viaduct and conduct repairs on an as-needed basis until the project can be completed.
- Anticipated two years' construction duration

Property impact details

It is important to note that MnDOT is planning on three major property acquisitions, up to total acquisition of a parcel(s), for the project. Two of those parcels are being acquired at the request of the property owner, and the third is currently listed for sale:

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- MnDOT is acquiring and plans to demolish the residence at 506 Robert Street as a result of the service road closure at Cesar Chavez Street. MnDOT proposed a concept that provided a new driveway access to Cesar Chavez Street, but the property owner asked if MnDOT could instead acquire her property outright, and we're respecting that request.
- Red Cross has indicated that they have more employee parking in their lot along Robert Street than needed, and they have issues with unlawful use of their surplus parking. MnDOT is proposing to re-purpose the surplus parking area for stormwater treatment, provided MnDOT and Red Cross can agree to mutually agreeable financial terms and parking lot outcomes.
- The other parcel that MnDOT is proposing to acquire in its entirety is at 108 Cesar Chavez Street, a vacant parcel in the southeast quadrant of the Robert Street-Cesar Chavez Street intersection that as of 5/4/2025 was listed for sale by the owner.

Tree Impacts

There has been discussion of tree impacts associated with construction on a number of Saint Paul area projects, and Robert Street will be no exception. On a project that includes extensive underground excavation (to replace utilities), there will be inevitable damage to trees and their root structures. MnDOT is working with state forestry staff to minimize tree impacts, but where impacts are unavoidable MnDOT is planning to re-plant trees following project construction. An initial tree inventory found that nearly half of the trees on the corridor (63 out of 139 total) are in poor condition, and our forester is recommending their removal with the project. The ultimate amount of tree impacts is yet to be determined but will include the 63 trees in poor condition plus a yet-to-be-determined number of trees in better condition where impacts cannot be avoided.

Bikeway in District Del Sol

There have been a number of community conversations and questions around the proposed bikeway on Robert Street, particularly in District Del Sol. MnDOT has been listening and doing our best to respond to issues, for example we revised the layout to add parking on the east side of Robert Street to address business concerns. MnDOT understands there are competing demands for the limited roadway space in this area, and feels that adding a bikeway is essential to prevent fatal/serious bicycle crashes in the future (there have been 2 life-threatening injury crashes involving bicyclists/scooters over the past 10 years).

MnDOT thus proposes moving forward with a bikeway as shown in the layout, particularly north of Colorado Street where there are fewer competing demands for space. The submitted layout assumes the bikeway will follow Robert Street in accordance with the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan.

In-lane bus stops

The proposed layout has in-lane bus stops in the only lane – this will lead to momentary delays as passengers board/alight buses. With Bus Rapid Transit and pre-boarding fare payment, an average bus stops for only seven seconds; MnDOT has conducted extensive traffic modeling to understand if this works on Robert Street. We found that during the afternoon rush hour, this may lead to an average of 2 seconds of delay for traffic traveling on Robert Street at Cesar Chavez

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Street. Of course, some drivers may observe longer delays, but we do not view that as a major flaw on a roadway where we've heard there are issues with traffic speeding. An average 2 seconds delay is not enough to warrant widening the road and incurring additional property takings for future G Line BRT stops.

Roundabout at State/Sidney

The proposed layout includes a roundabout at the intersection of State/Sidney Street. A roundabout includes a number of benefits:

- Reduces delay for vehicles traveling southbound on State Street from an average of **96 seconds to 7 seconds** in the afternoon rush hour. This is the route of the proposed G Line BRT.
- In a statewide study, single lane roundabouts were found to be the single most effective tool to reduce motor vehicle speeds, more so than other tools like curb extensions and median islands. On a corridor with speeding issues, we believe this to be an essential component for traffic calming.
- Traffic heading south on State Street will no longer have to look behind them to the right to see if there is a gap in southbound traffic on Robert Street – improves sight lines, especially for older drivers.

We understand that a number of people have expressed interest in other solutions, like a traffic signal at this location. Unfortunately this intersection does not meet traffic signal warrants, and MnDOT cannot fund traffic signal construction with State or Federal dollars.

Traffic signal removal at Curtice Street

The traffic signal at the intersection of Curtice Street is at the end of its service life, and MnDOT has studied if the intersection has enough traffic to support the continued operation of a traffic signal.



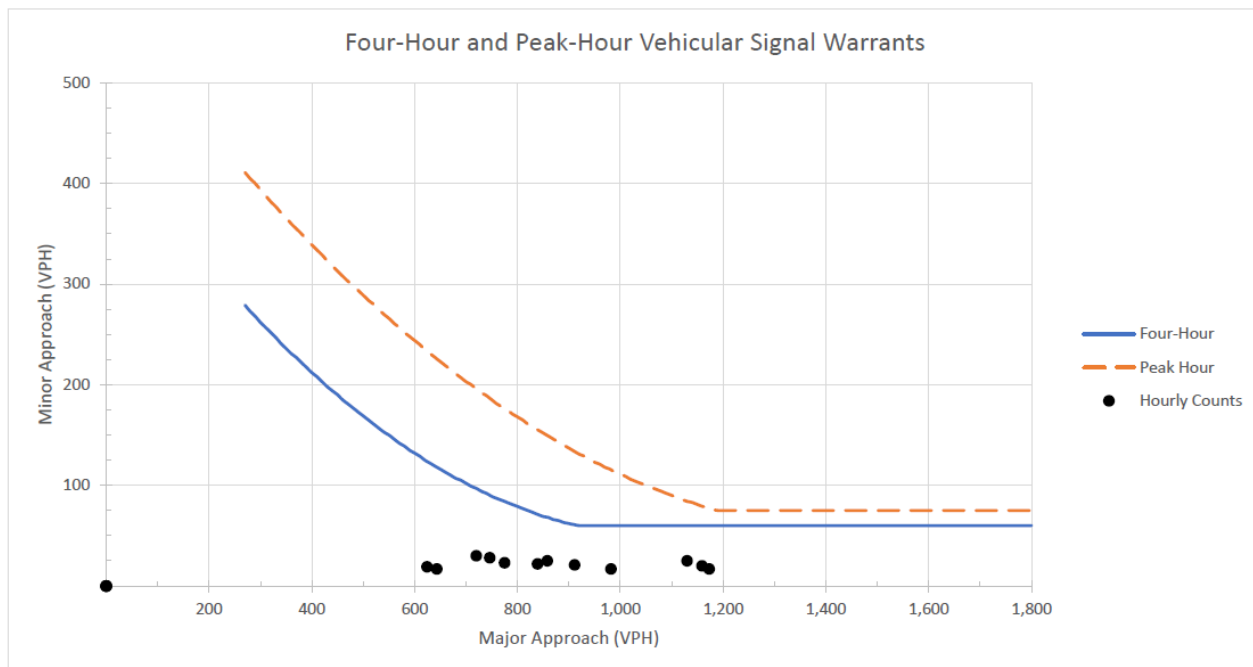


Figure 1 - Signal Warrants at Robert and Curtice Street - hourly counts should be above the four-hour or peak-hour lines to warrant a traffic signal

MnDOT’s traffic study found that that traffic volumes at the intersection are less than half of what they would need to be to warrant a traffic signal at this intersection (Figure 1).

Traffic signal warrants exist to ensure that traffic signals are installed only at intersections that truly need a signal, because on average, traffic signals tend to **increase** crashes relative to stop sign control. Curtice Street is no exception – in Figure 2, note that of nearby similar stop controlled intersections (blue outline), Curtice Street has nearly twice the crash rate (pink highlight).



Table 3 - Intersection Crash Rates (CR) and Fatal and A-Injury Rates (FAR)

Intersection	Traffic Control	MEV	State-wide CR	Observed CR	Critical CR	Statewide FAR	Observed FAR	Critical FAR	Crash Cost (\$/yr)
Fillmore Ave	Signal	74.1	0.61	0.36	0.85	0.96	1.35	3.09	\$229,500
Fairfield Ave	TWSC	64.9	0.14	0.03	0.27	0.35	0.00	2.06	\$3,000
Plato Blvd	Signal	108.0	0.61	0.44	0.81	0.96	0.93	2.63	\$302,500
Wood St	TWSC	51.7	0.14	0.12	0.28	0.35	1.94	2.37	\$111,000
Colorado St	TWSC	51.6	0.14	0.04	0.28	0.35	0.00	2.38	\$3,000
Isabel St	TWSC	53.8	0.14	0.20	0.28	0.35	0.00	2.31	\$51,500
Congress St	TWSC	52.2	0.14	0.21	0.28	0.35	1.92	2.36	\$141,500
Cesar Chavez St	Signal	66.8	0.55	0.61	0.79	1.02	0.00	3.35	\$165,000
*George St	AWSC	24.6	0.28	0.37	0.58	0.23	0.00	3.50	\$36,500
*Stevens St	TWSC	6.5	0.14	0.46	0.59	0.35	0.00	10.99	\$51,500
*King St	TWSC	7.8	0.14	0.39	0.55	0.35	0.00	9.51	\$16,000
Elizabeth St	TWSC	46.4	0.14	0.04	0.29	0.35	0.00	2.54	\$3,000
Baker St	TWSC	47.5	0.14	0.11	0.29	0.35	0.00	2.50	\$30,500
Morton St	TWSC	47.0	0.14	0.09	0.29	0.35	0.00	2.52	\$17,500
Page St	TWSC	47.2	0.14	0.08	0.29	0.35	0.00	2.51	\$41,000
State St	TWSC	48.7	0.14	0.00	0.29	0.35	0.00	2.46	\$0
Sidney St	TWSC	49.8	0.14	0.06	0.29	0.35	0.00	2.43	\$16,000
Curtice St	Signal	47.6	0.55	0.15	0.84	1.02	0.00	3.95	\$10,500
Belvidere St	TWSC	47.1	0.14	0.08	0.29	0.35	0.00	2.52	\$29,500
Winona St	TWSC	47.6	0.14	0.08	0.29	0.35	0.00	2.5	\$29,500
Wyoming St	TWSC	47.4	0.14	0.06	0.29	0.35	0.00	2.51	\$4,500
Annapolis St	Signal	58.3	0.55	0.60	0.81	1.02	0.00	3.57	\$237,500

Note: Red – Observed Rate is greater than Critical Rate; Yellow – Observed Crash Rate is greater than Statewide Average Rate

Figure 2- Crash rates at intersections along Robert Street

MnDOT believes that a traffic signal at this intersection is not improving safety – there’s evidence to suggest it is actually causing more crashes, based on nearby adjacent stop-controlled intersections.

Planned Project Schedule

The anticipated project schedule follows:

- 2026 – Potential for some utility work ahead of roadway construction. This work will not be done by MnDOT, but MnDOT will coordinate and communicate any traffic impacts associated with utility work before roadway construction.
- 2027 – Major roadway construction begins between Haskell and Page Street, and from Cesar Chavez Street to Kellogg Boulevard (work associated with SP 6217-50).
- 2028 – Roadway construction started in 2027 continues and finishes. Roadway construction between Page Street and Cesar Chavez Street (SP 6217-59) begins.
- 2029 – Roadway construction started in 2028 continues and finishes.

During construction, Robert Street will be closed to through traffic and detoured via Butler Street and Highway 52. Robert Street will be built in various “stages”, where only certain sections of Robert Street are closed at given time. MnDOT’s general approach to construction will be to close

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a small segment of road and work quickly to get it reopened to traffic before moving on to the next stretch of road.

However, despite our best efforts to keep roadway closures to a minimum there will inevitably be circumstances where the roadway may be fully closed to traffic at certain times. In this instance, access will be maintained to businesses and residents via side streets, MnDOT will coordinate full closures with affected property owners ahead of construction.

City's Estimated Project Costs

Some project costs are the City's responsibility, as detailed in MnDOT's cost participation policy. (See the policy and the *Cost Participation and Maintenance with Local Units of Government Manual* at MnDOT's this website: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/policy/financial/fm011.html>).

MnDOT has attached cost estimates for both SP 6217-50 and SP 6217-59 (labeled as SP 6217-XX). Below is a summary of estimated agency costs for the projects (see "agency totals" in the attached), with Saint Paul costs in **bold**:

SP 6217-50

- MnDOT - \$5,090,000
- **Saint Paul Public Works - \$660,000**
- **Saint Paul Sewers - \$1,725,000**
- Saint Paul Regional Water Services - \$1,900,000
- Ramsey County - \$500,000
- RAISE (Federal, no match) - \$6,700,000
- Regional Solicitation (Federal, State Match included in MnDOT share) - \$4,760,000
- Regional Solicitation (Federal, City Match included in Public Works share) - \$2,240,000
- Metro Transit - \$425,000

SP 6217-59 (labeled as SP 6217-XX in the attached)

- MnDOT - \$5,100,000
- **Saint Paul Public Works - \$500,000**
- **Saint Paul Sewers - \$350,000**
- Saint Paul Regional Water Services - \$750,000
- RAISE (Federal, no match) - \$18,300,000

As noted previously, RAISE funding is a budget risk. In the event that RAISE funding is not available for the project, the RAISE funds would most likely be replaced with MnDOT Trunk Highway funding, for which MnDOT's cost participation policy would apply. A number of elements currently funded with RAISE funds are **not** eligible for 100% Trunk Highway funding, so in the event that RAISE funds are not available for the project **the city's cost share would increase**.

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City's Maintenance Responsibilities

The city of Saint Paul is currently responsible for most routine maintenance along Robert Street today, and this will continue post-construction via Routine Maintenance Agreement. MnDOT reimburses the city for eligible maintenance activities under the Routine Maintenance agreement on a biannual basis. A summary of city maintenance responsibilities and their relation to the Routine Maintenance Agreement is listed below:

City Routine Maintenance Responsibility	Included in Routine Maintenance Agreement?
Smooth Pavement Maintenance (pothole patching)	Yes
Clear Roads Maintenance (snow plowing)	Yes
Storm Sewer Maintenance (per Routine Maintenance Agreement)	Yes
Bikeway Maintenance	No**
Lighting Maintenance	No
Traffic Signal Maintenance (Annapolis Signal is MnDOT)	No
Pedestrian Flasher Maintenance	No
Amenities (other than Vegetation) Maintenance*	No

MnDOT Routine Maintenance Responsibility
Stormwater treatment
Vegetation management
Bridge 90381 (George Street over Robert Street) inspection and maintenance (except flushing and cleaning per Routine Maintenance Agreement)

Metro Transit Routine Maintenance Responsibility
BRT stops (lighting, garbage, snow removal)

*Amenities include streetscape or other elements that don't serve a transportation purpose. This includes things like bike racks, garbage cans, benches, or similar elements. The scope of amenity construction with the project is yet to be determined.

** Bikeway maintenance is currently included in MnDOT's Routine Maintenance Agreement, however the intent of that item is to cover maintenance of existing bikeways. MnDOT generally does not maintain bikeways and it is the expectation that as future bikeways are added to the system that the city will be responsible for routine maintenance.

It is important to note that with the proposed roadway geometry, Robert Street does not meet the minimum dimensions required for MnDOT snow removal equipment. MnDOT maintenance equipment is larger than city equipment – for example, MnDOT plows require a minimum distance of 18' from curb face to curb face to accommodate our wider front plows, the proposed design

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does not accommodate this. MnDOT wishes to continue utilizing Saint Paul plowing on Robert Street for the foreseeable future and thus has designed the roadway to meet city standards, not MnDOT standards. But in the event that MnDOT and the City fail to agree upon terms in a future Routine Maintenance Agreement, MnDOT may not be able to plow the road using state equipment and other arrangements would need to be made, perhaps with Ramsey County or a private contractor, for routine maintenance of Robert Street.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this submittal.

Sincerely,

Christopher Bower
Project Manager
christopher.bower@state.mn.us

Attachments:

Final Layout for SP 6217-50, dated 5/16/2025
MN Statutes 161.162 – 161.167
Estimated Project Costs
Sample City Resolution

cc: Reuben Collins

