

Engagement Summary

Introduction

MnDOT hosted the second round of engagement from August 13 through September 13, 2021 as an opportunity for the Brainerd Lakes community to learn more about the project and see and provide feedback on potential solutions for each segment. We asked for your participation via an online engagement and comment map, detailed information packets, Chamber of Commerce meetings (both in-person and virtual), social media, and email and phone calls with project team members. The input received during the engagement process is summarized in this document.

How we asked for your participation

We asked for community participation in a variety of ways:

- 1 An **online engagement platform** was available as an opportunity for viewers to explore the map at their own pace and convenience and provide comments.



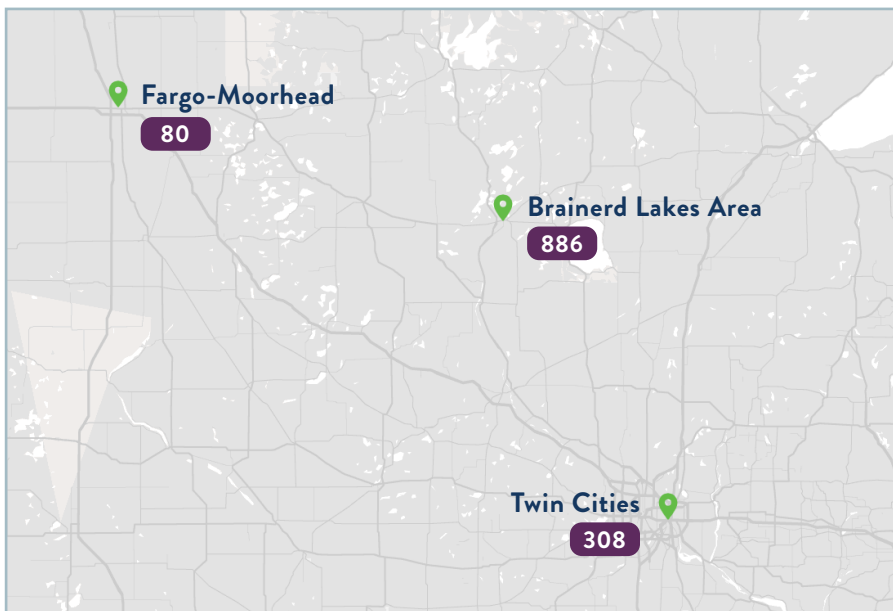
Views:

1,817

How they accessed site:



Top Locations:



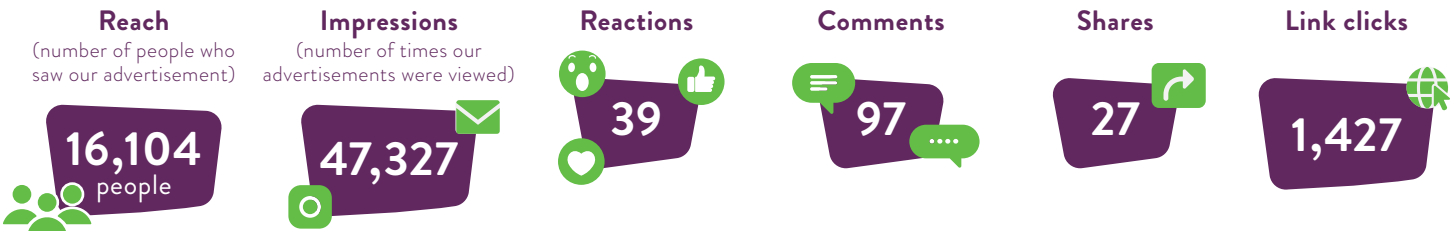
- 2 **Detailed information packets** were available for pick up at the Brainerd City Hall. They were also available via the mail, if requested. Packets included similar information as the online engagement for those who do not have online access. A total of 50 packets were picked up by community members at City Hall and a total of eight packets were mailed via MnDOT. There was one comment form returned to the project team.

- 3 The project team attended and presented at **two Chamber of Commerce meetings** to discuss area businesses concerns, questions, and comments. The meeting was hosted in-person and was also available via Zoom for those who could not attend in-person. A total of 20 business representatives attended the first meeting and 23 attended the second meeting.

- 4 **Email and phone calls** to project team. Nine total emails were received.

How we got the word out

Targeted social media advertisements



Promotional sticker decals were provided at key locations



- » Front steps of Brainerd City Hall
- » Sidewalk out front of the Historic Crow Wing County Courthouse
- » Southeast corner sidewalk at S 7th Street and Laurel Street
- » Northeast corner of NW 4th Street and Washington Street
- » Westbound sidewalk of the Washington Street bridge across from Dairy Queen
- » Northwest corner of N 4th Street and Washington Street
- » Southeast corner of S 6th Street and Washington Street
- » Southeast corner of S 8th Street and Washington Street
- » Southeast corner of SE 13th Street and Washington Street
- » Northwest corner of Mill Avenue and Washington Street

Additional Promotional Efforts



- » Stakeholder emails
- » Chamber emails
- » GovDelivery email



Door to Door business canvassing along Washington St.

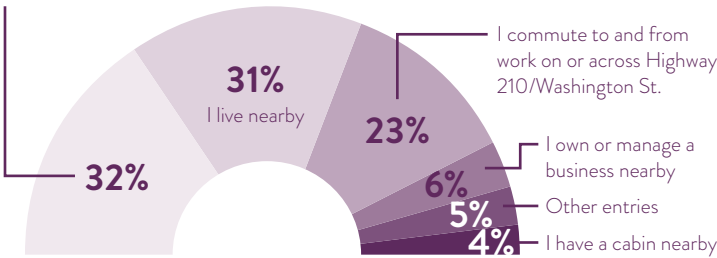


Utility bill insert

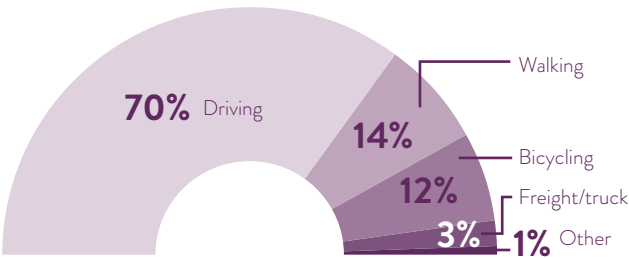
Who participated

Why do you use this corridor?

I use Highway 210/Washington St. and nearby streets for non-work-related travel

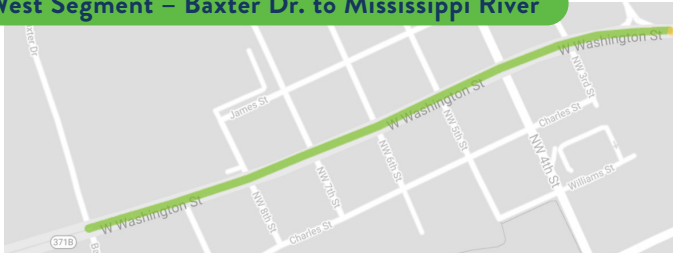


How do you use this corridor?



What we heard

West Segment – Baxter Dr. to Mississippi River



NUMBER OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

21

MOST COMMON THEMES

- Turn lanes
- Business access
- Safety
- Sidewalks

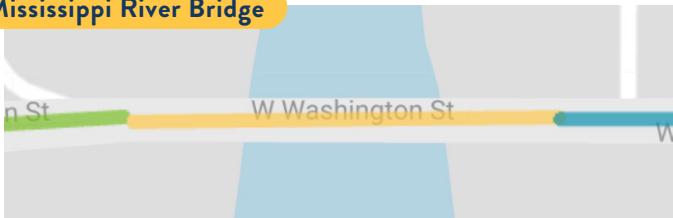
KEY TAKEAWAYS/CONSIDERATIONS FROM COMMENTS

Overall, respondents are strongly in favor of widening sidewalks that they believe will enhance pedestrian safety and improve non-vehicle accessibility/mobility. However, respondents were also concerned that eliminating left turn lanes from Highway 210 would adversely impact local businesses.

OPEN-ENDED COMMENT EXAMPLES

- “I like the 8' sidewalks, as long as bikes will be allowed. Now that we have a few more roundabouts in our city, I'm a huge fan. I would like to see them at the bigger intersections to keep traffic moving, and especially during non-peak times when there are times motorists get stopped for a red light with no traffic to be seen.”
- “Eliminating left turns from 210 onto side streets would significantly effect access to businesses. The stoplight causes backups and congestion, not the left turn lanes at 3rd and 5th Streets.”

Mississippi River Bridge



NUMBER OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

22

MOST COMMON THEMES

- Sidewalks
- Segment design
- Medians
- Turn lanes/access

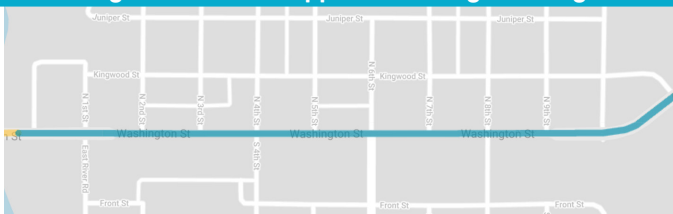
KEY TAKEAWAYS/CONSIDERATIONS FROM COMMENTS

Overall, respondents reacted positively to the proposed plan, specifically many pointed to the improvements that a wider sidewalk would make for pedestrians; however, respondents also commented that lack of sidewalk upkeep/maintenance in winter creates safety hazards.

OPEN-ENDED COMMENT EXAMPLES

- “Love the wider sidewalks. Could there still be a barrier between the vehicles and the bicyclists/pedestrians? When I ride there, I'm worried that a motorist won't be paying attention and end up on the sidewalk.”
- “I think this is a well thought of design upgrade to the bridge. As a bicyclist and pedestrian, I'm looking forward to these changes.”
- “Lack of timely follow up sidewalk clearing after storms makes this area absolutely treacherous. Understand that this is an important issue for those people who do not drive and rely on crossing the Washington St bridge to conduct their business or get to work just like those people in the cars. The frozen evidence is very clear in the boot prints and bicycle tracks like fossils. MNDOT needs to make this a priority responsibility under current and future conditions.”

Central Segment – Mississippi River Bridge to Kingwood St.



NUMBER OF COMMENTS RECEIVED

34

MOST COMMON THEMES

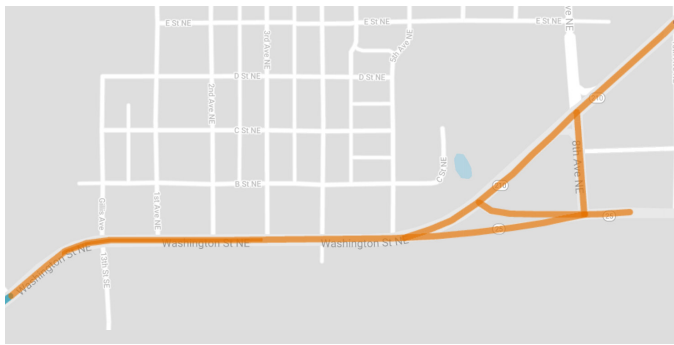
- Sidewalks and pedestrian/bicyclist safety
- Parking
- Turn lanes

KEY TAKEAWAYS/CONSIDERATIONS FROM COMMENTS

While several respondents felt that the proposed solutions would enhance pedestrian safety, there were also several concerns that these measures could also seriously impact access to local businesses and the hospital. The responses were fairly equally divided between those in favor of increased pedestrian safety and/or non-vehicle mobility, and those who would like to protect existing or increase roadway infrastructure and vehicle access to businesses.

OPEN-ENDED COMMENT EXAMPLES

- “I like the off street parking, and use of side streets and business parking lots. This will increase the likelihood that everyone would be safer as they go about their business.”
- “Excellent! As a walker and bicyclist, I appreciate the consideration going into this project. The additional sidewalk space will definitely draw me and others into the area because we won't have to worry about getting hit by a vehicle. Or, when riding my bike, I don't have to worry about someone opening their car door and possibly riding into them.”
- “Issues with limiting emergency vehicles to the hospital. 2nd Street: any emergency vehicle come from the east is going to have to go to 4th street if access at 2nd is closed.”



KEY TAKEAWAYS/ CONSIDERATIONS FROM COMMENTS

Of all the different segments, the East Mall Area/Railyard was the one with the most varied opinions

NUMBER OF COMMENTS RECEIVED



CONCEPT 1

KEY THEMES

- Roundabouts
- Traffic congestion
- Local traffic access/diversions
- Medians/limiting access

OPEN-ENDED COMMENT EXAMPLES

- "People here struggle with using the small roundabouts. I constantly sit behind people stopped when they could go. They don't understand the rules, especially the older generations. Concept 1 is the way to go."
- "Concept one. Too busy for roundabouts in concept 2 and 3 and would dramatically slow traffic. Several people pulling trailers in area and don't know how to use roundabout with."

- "The amount of traffic backed up at the 210/25 intersection during rush hour times and during the summer make it seem like a poor place for a roundabout. We travel through the intersection daily for work at these times. It is currently seems very quick, safe and efficient to cross 210, with short wait times. Please, no roundabouts."

CONCEPT 2

KEY THEMES

- Roundabouts
- Traffic congestion
- Turn lanes
- Parking
- Sidewalk/trails
- Medians/limiting access

OPEN-ENDED COMMENT EXAMPLES

- "Concept 3 will require the heavy weekend traffic from Hwy 25 to negotiate through 2 roundabouts when most of the north-south traffic travels north to Crosslake and back on Sundays. I prefer the better flow in Concept 2."
- "Concept 2 seems like a good option. The roundabout would keep traffic flowing while still maintaining access to businesses on 8th Ave in between 210 and 25."
- "I love proposal 2 for the roundabout at the 210 by the mall. They make traffic flow way easier."

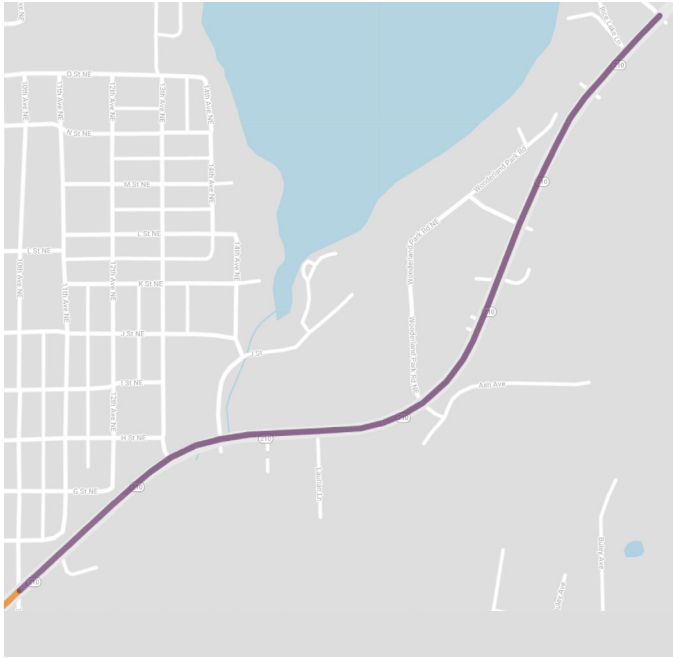
CONCEPT 3

KEY THEMES

- Traffic congestion
- Roundabouts
- Sidewalk/trails

OPEN-ENDED COMMENT EXAMPLES

- "I live on County Rd 18. So I travel the east mall/railroad area multiple times a day. Concept 3 is a great solution to the current traffic flow issues. I dread going in and out of the mall area. Concept 3 would make access in/out of Cub foods safer and less congested and eliminating the stoplight keeps the traffic flowing. Many times the traffic is backed up on 25, when traffic on 210 is light. I am hoping that there is a bike path included at some point down City Rd 18 to the Mall/railroad area, as well."
- "I think I prefer concept 3, looks like it would relieve a lot of congestion problems around those areas.."
- "I prefer concept 3. It truly pulls the Hwy 25 traffic away from the 8th Ave intersection, relieving congestion and too many exits/options off the roundabout which will make the roundabout traffic more efficient. I know the squeaky wheels sometimes talk smack about roundabouts but they are really a huge improvement and minimize traffic jams as people currently try to make left hand turns across traffic and start to take risks as the wait time increases. Turning left can sometimes be very dangerous when trying to see around campers, boats, semis, etc. Roundabouts make it easy to turn right just to get out and then switch directions by traveling all the way through the roundabout. They should continue to do roundabouts because they make sense."



MOST COMMON THEMES

- Median
- Speed of traffic
- Turn lanes
- Sidewalk/trail

NUMBER OF COMMENTS RECEIVED



KEY TAKEAWAYS/CONSIDERATIONS FROM COMMENTS

The key takeaways from this section focused on the size of the median and the speed of traffic being inappropriate or unsafe for the area. Beyond those two concerns, individuals generally agreed with the proposed concept for this corridor.

OPEN-ENDED COMMENT EXAMPLES



"PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE reduce the size of the median between Rice Lake Ln and Pine Shores Rd. The wider portion of the median on the SW end is unnecessary and only reduces the length of the left turn lane onto Pine Shores Rd. With the amount of eastbound traffic at certain times of day, the speed of said traffic, and the need for eastbound traffic to merge into one lane just beyond the turn, the short-left turn lane can be problematic."

Summary of Online Survey

Overview

The project team conducted a survey for the Brainerd Lakes community – those who drive, ride, walk or do business along Highway 210/Washington Street in Brainerd. The survey asked participants a series of standard questions about their use and perspectives related to Highway 210/Washington Street. In addition, respondents had the opportunity to share concerns and needs through an online comment map. The results of the survey are summarized in this document.

The survey was distributed to the Brainerd Lakes community via press release, social media, project website, emails to key organizations and word of mouth.

Average time
to complete



Survey Available

Nov. 12

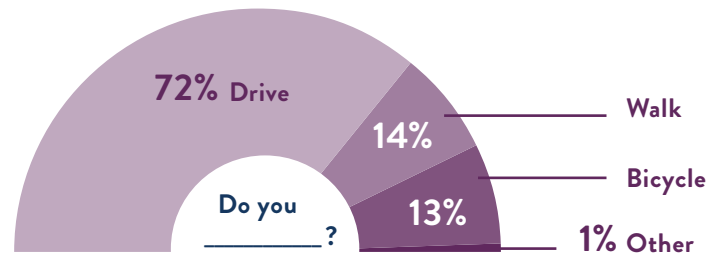
Dec. 12

Survey Themes + Insights

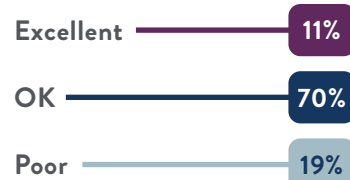
The findings from the survey are summarized by theme in the following sections:

Experience and opportunities

- Most people use Hwy 210/Washington St. for non-work-related travel, commuting to work.
- Most drive and a small percentage walk or bicycle.
- Most feel the stretch of roadway works OK but could use improvement, while very few believe it is excellent and does not need change.
- Most believe the stretch works poorly for walking and bicycling, many others believe it to be OK but could use some improvement.
- Common themes with additional comments focused on intersections (too many stop lights, needing more turn lanes, and better timing of stop lights) followed by pedestrian/bicycle friendly wishes (adding additional room for bike lanes).



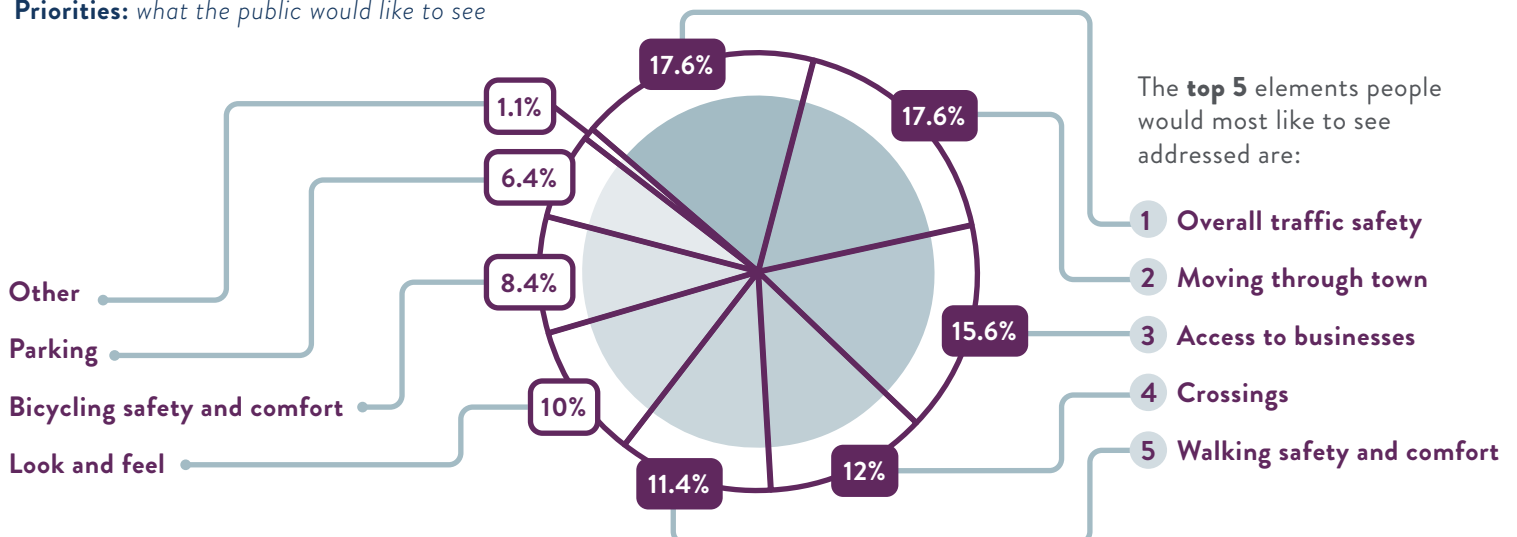
How well does this stretch of roadway work for driving?



How well does this stretch of roadway (and sidewalk) work for walking and bicycling?



Priorities: what the public would like to see



Survey Respondents

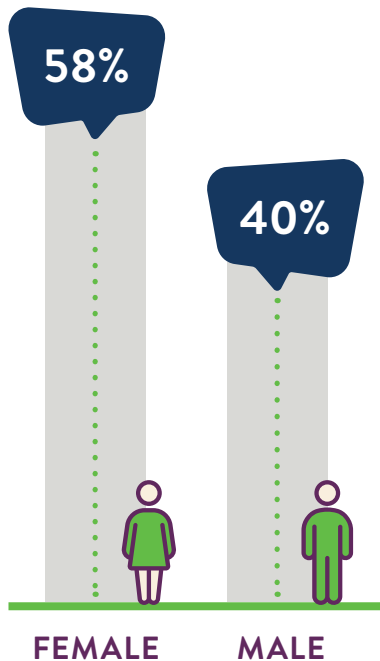
Demographics

**1,010
individuals**

responded to the optional demographic questions asked at the end of the survey.

GENDER

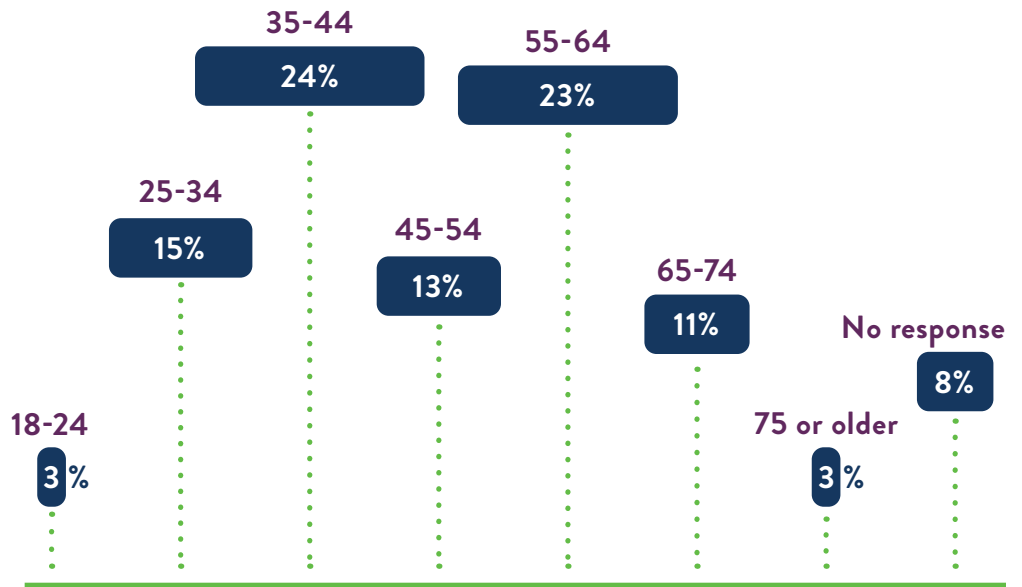
There were more respondents that identify as female than male.



2%

A small portion chose not to identify or identified as other.

AGE GROUP



RACE/ETHNICITY

Most individuals identified as White.



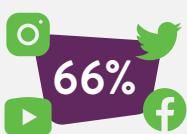
The second largest response was either no response, "rather not say," or other.



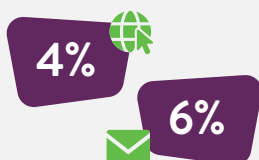
The fewest responses included those that identified (in order of most to least) as:

Native American 0.9% Black 0.6% Hispanic 0.5%

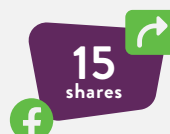
Channels successful in connecting with the community



Most respondents heard about the survey through MnDOT social media.



The two lowest-ranking communications channels were MnDOT Website and MnDOT email.



When asked if they would share the survey with others, those that did shared it through Facebook rather than Twitter.

Platform usage:



Respondents were split nearly evenly between web and mobile usage. Slightly more took the survey using their mobile device.

Phase 3 Engagement Summary

Overview

MnDOT connected with the Brainerd area general public and business community to inform and gain feedback on the proposed design for the Hwy 210/Washington St. corridor. Outreach activities included an in-person business meeting and open house on Aug. 31, 2022 and an online self-paced engagement site that was available to the public from Aug. 22–Sept. 12, 2022.

Outreach promotions

1. Flyers at the Crow Wing County booth at the County Fair
2. Flyer inserts in the Brainerd Public Utilities bill
3. Project website updates
4. Business flyers hand-delivered by City staff
5. Social media posts and a targeted ad
6. Government Delivery email updates



Business meeting

Attendance

46



38 in-person
8 online via zoom

In-person open house

Attendance

41



Written comments

10



Top 3 open house takeaways:

1. Many were against the proposed roundabouts and concerned they would not work but some agreed they would improve traffic and safety
2. There is a desire for a trail crossing under the river bridge
3. Most agree that changes are needed at the Hwy 210/10th Ave. intersection to address speeding traffic



Online self-paced engagement site

Total visitors

1,767



Average time on site

1:57
minutes



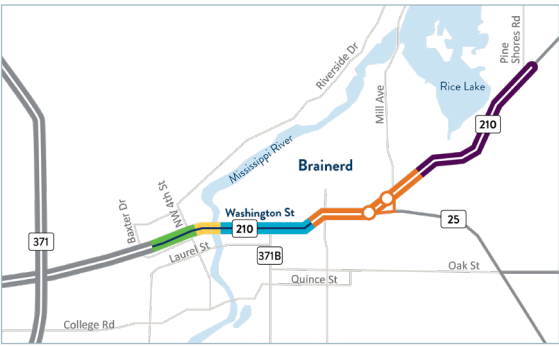
Total comments

117

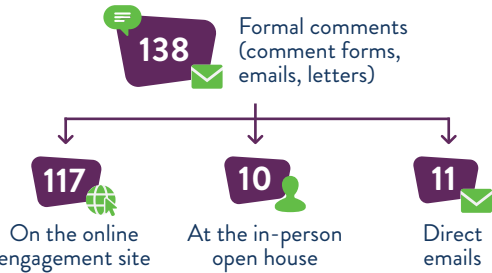


Note **only 7%** of the site's visitors provided comments. Based on previous experience it can be reasonably assumed that the majority of the **other 93%** were likely in support of the design or indifferent.

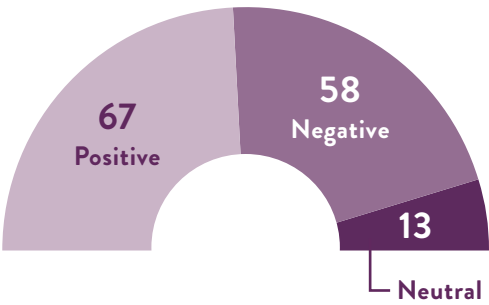
Comments by project segments:



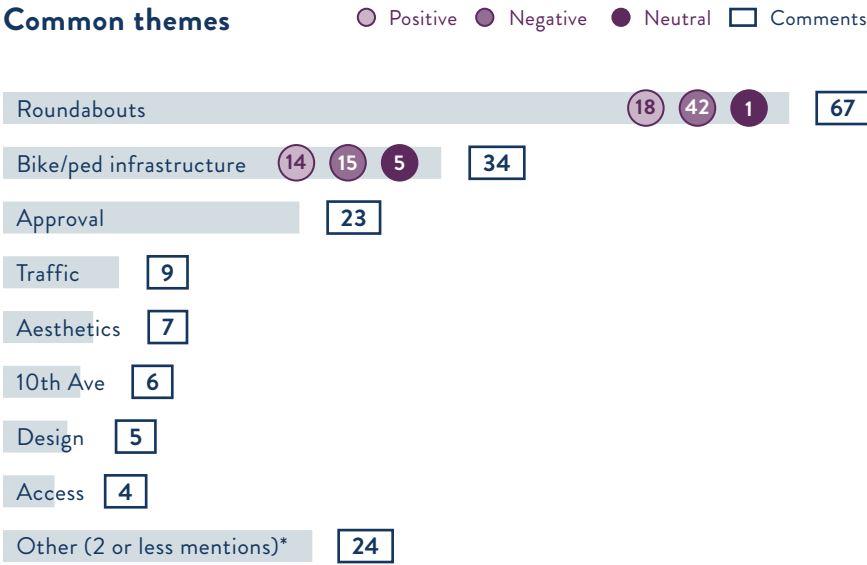
What did we hear?



Overall sentiment



Common themes



*"Other" includes business access, disapproval, general design, left turn lanes, maintenance, outside project scope, parking, ambulance routes, river bridge, green infrastructure, intersections, lighting, signage, speed, traffic signals and turn lanes

Key takeaways and comment highlights

→ Mixed reactions about the two proposed roundabouts

.... "I think a roundabout at 210 and Mill Avenue is a terrible idea. The wait at the lights can be long but I think a roundabout would be awful."

.... "I like the roundabouts and the "no left turn" from the shopping center to Mill. All looks safer and better manages traffic."

.... "Please keep the light with 8th street going North, and no roundabouts on 210. A round about on 8th and Hwy 25 Eastbound will be nice."

→ Proposed pedestrian and bike infrastructure improvements are valued but many would like to see more

.... "Wide sidewalks are much appreciated."

.... "Good improvements. Safer sidewalks are so needed along 210. Thank you."

.... "11-foot lanes and 3-foot shoulders are too narrow for safe bicycle access. Need wider shoulder and marked bike lanes!"

.... "No back-of-curb sidewalks. Boulevards/buffers for snow storage and keeping plows from covering sidewalks - make your winter maintenance easier through design."

→ Overall design approval

.... "Looking forward to the updates as a start to revitalize east Brainerd!"

.... "I like it. I drive through those intersections daily. Sometimes multiple times per day. This should help the backups."

.... "Nice! I like how it looks with the trees and the roundabouts look great it looks like traffic will flow well."