

Public Involvement Plan

CSAH 44 and TH 14 Interchange

Preliminary Design and Environmental Documentation



CSAH 44 AND TH 14 INTERCHANGE

Prepared by:



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Introduction

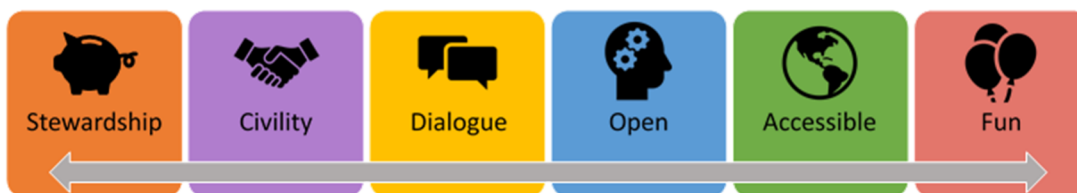
Purpose of the communications and involvement plan

The purpose of the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is to identify the goals, strategies, audiences, and actions necessary for connecting and engaging with the public and stakeholders regarding the preliminary design of the County Road 44 (CSAH 44) and Highway 14 (TH 14) in Olmsted County, near Rochester, Minnesota. This is intended to be a living document that will be updated and amended as the project moves forward community outreach and stakeholder engagement.

The involvement goals guiding this plan include:

- Keep stakeholders informed of this project and understand how they can participate.
- Provide meaningful opportunities for public and stakeholder project participation.
- Be clear with the public regarding their opportunities to participate in the “inform” and “consult” levels of engagement performed during this project as determined within the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) spectrum of public participation.
- Communications are clear, comprehensible, and consistent (look/feel, how the project is referenced, information being shared, etc.).
- Community expectations are established appropriately (e.g., type of work, phases, limits, resources for staying in touch).
- Community members are provided opportunities to identify issues and comment on proposed alternatives.
- Provide clear communications about engagement opportunities to identified stakeholders.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES



Project Overview

The purpose of this project is to provide engineering services for the preliminary design and environmental documentation of the CSAH 44 and TH 14 Interchange and its supporting roadways. The construction of a new interchange with fly-over ramp will help Olmsted County achieve a vision of improving safety and mobility continue and supporting regional growth and economic development for years to come.

Highway 14 is a rural divided express-way facility with at-grade intersections, including CSAH 44 (formerly known as CR 104). This roadway is a key north-south route on the western edge of Rochester and serves both commercial growth to the north as well as residential areas to the south.



Drone image oof the existing at-grade CSAH 44 and TH 14 Interchange

This project will result in an approved environmental document and staff approved layout—everything needed to move for-ward into final design. Community and stakeholder input and participation will ensure the most feasible preliminary roadway and multiple bridge designs to improve safety and mobility for all stakeholders.

Project Background

The Rochester area is one of the highest growth areas in Minnesota. This growth is fueled by the world renown Mayo Clinic and other key businesses. It attracts workers from smaller communities all around southeast Minnesota and visitors from around the world. Trunk High-way 14 is an important east-west linkage that connects many smaller communities to Rochester. These communities act as bedroom communities to Rochester. As Rochester has grown, so has travel on TH 14 which has resulted in safety

and mobility concerns. To help mitigate these issues, major sections of TH 14 to the west of Rochester have been improved over time.

In 2008, Olmsted County and other key stakeholders began working to address these safety and mobility issues and proactively plan for growth along the western edge of Rochester. A Corridor Preservation Study was done that evaluated existing issues and future needs. It also developed alternatives for addressing these needs. This study resulted in a future concept and right-of-way (ROW) footprint for future improvements to the corridor. This study recommended the following:

- That CSAH 44 (formerly CR 104), be elevated to principal arterial status as it will play a significant north-south mobility role in this area.
- That the CSAH 44 and TH 14 intersection be converted to a grade-separated interchange with rail grade-separation and an overpass to 7th Street to maintain good connectivity with local streets.
- That the County preserve right of way and carefully plan local access for future CSAH 44 to minimize safety issues and support effective movement of people and goods through this area.

Safety has continued to be a key problem which has resulted in MnDOT committing to modify this intersection to a Reduced Conflict Intersection (RCI) in 2022. More recently, a TH 14 corridor planning study was completed in 2020 (just to the west of the project area). This study further reinforced safety and mobility concerns on TH 14 in this area and it identified the interchange at CSAH 44 as a critical transportation initiative serving Olmsted and Dodge counties. This consensus-driven vision for TH 14—function with improved safety and mobility in this area—begins with the improvements at CSAH 44.

Issues and Challenges

Preliminary design of the CSAH 44 and TH 14 interchange will be an opportunity to address several design challenges as well as better accommodate existing and future development in the area.

Address Existing Safety and Mobility Issues: There are many well identified safety and mobility issues along Highway 14. The existing CSAH 44 and TH 14 intersection is a skewed at-grade crossing of TH 14 and the Canadian Pacific Railway line. A preferred interchange alternative will reduce conflict points for pedestrian and vehicular traffic along this key arterial commuter and freight corridor.

Utilities: The project must account for the presence of both large-scale transmission utilities, local distribution facilities, a large gas main running along CSAH 44, which crosses TH 14.

Rail Coordination: A significant challenge will be developing alternatives maintaining the vertical and horizontal clearances required by Canadian Pacific, specifically for an interchange





design to eliminate the at-grade intersection of TH 14 with CSAH 44. This has the added advantage of eliminating the highway/rail at grade intersection.

Agency, Community and Stakeholder Identification

Project Management Team

A Project Management Team (PMT) will meet routinely to discuss progress, public engagement activities, review agency, stakeholder, and community input as well track the project schedule. Staff attendance at Project Management Team meetings will vary, but it is anticipated that meetings will include representatives from:

- Olmsted County
- MnDOT District 6
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Consultant team

Stakeholder and Agency Coordination

The project will hold periodic meetings with internal stakeholders to assist in preliminary design, environmental documentation, and public outreach. SRF will work with Olmsted County to determine a list of stakeholders necessary to engage including, but not limited to representatives from:

- Olmsted County
- MnDOT District 6
- MnDOT Central Office
- FHWA
- Canadian Pacific Railway (CP)
- Rochester Council of Governments (ROCOG)
- City of Rochester

Community Profile

Residents near the project area



Those who live and work near the CSAH 44 and TH 14 interchange will need to be engaged using both passive and active methods throughout the process. Residents near the project area include those living in City of Byron, City of Rochester, and Olmsted County. This includes businesses in the commercial and industrial area on the north side of TH 14 as well as residential properties in the southeast quadrant of TH 14/CSAH 44.

Demographics of Olmsted County, MN

Included below are demographic breakdowns of the residents in Olmsted County. The communities nearest the project area are predominantly white. Still, it will be important to include instructions for requesting translation services on public-facing documents. This will allow residents with limited English proficiency to be able to engage with project materials. If requested, it is anticipated that key project materials could be translated in Spanish, Somali or other requested languages to help reach Rochester area residents.

Race/Ethnicity	Percent
White	80.1%
Latino/a	4.93%
American Indian / Alaska Native	0.23%
Black / African American	5.99%
Asian American / Pacific Islander	5.79%
Identify another way	2.96%

Most residents in Olmsted County drive alone to work, and the average commute time is 17.1 minutes.

The 3 most common commutes in 2019:

- Drove Alone (73%)
- Carpooled (12.1%)
- Worked At Home (4.93%)

The project will consider access needs for underrepresented populations to provide those impacted by the project with meaningful opportunities to be informed and participate in public input opportunities.



Vulnerable Populations

Vulnerable and traditionally underserved groups, including seniors, differently abled communities, non-English speaking populations, and low-wealth communities will be considered in aspects of project engagement and design, including ADA considerations.

Drivers



Project construction will affect commuters, freight movements and area residents. These stakeholders will be informed and involved in the process to learn about their current issues with the at-grade intersection and to gather ideas to inform design. This engagement may include commuters, trucking operations, business owners, and residents.



Pedestrians, Cyclists, Zero Car Households, and Transit Riders

Pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users are important interest groups to keep informed and involved regarding planned improvements near the CSAH 44 and TH 14 interchange. Residents living near the interchange south of Highway 14 will be engaged in planning for bike and pedestrian access.



Businesses

Business owners in the project area will be critical to engage from an early point in the process. From existing issues to construction impacts, this project will have several points of contact with the nearby business community. Local businesses will be engaged early and often through stakeholder meetings, open houses, and project updates.

Key Community Stakeholders

The following have been identified as possible community partners/stakeholders to involve. This list is expected to grow as relationships are built and networks are leveraged.

Directly Impacted	Indirectly Impacted	Agency Partners
Residents who live adjacent to the CSAH 44 and TH 14 intersection	Area residents (Rochester, Byron, and others)	Olmsted County
Property owners adjacent to the CSAH 44 and TH 14 intersection	Trucking and freight industry	MnDOT
Commuters who use the corridor/intersection.	Business owners who use the US 14 corridor (Kasson, Byron, Kalmar Township, Salem Township, Dodge Center, Rochester, others)	City of Rochester
Canadian Pacific Railroad	Regional Bike and Pedestrian users	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Intersection Bike and Pedestrian users		Rochester Council of Governments (ROCOG)
		Police/Fire/EMT

Engagement Approach and Strategies

The following engagement events, strategies and online tools will be used to facilitate multiple rounds of outreach and public input. We intend to inform and involve area residents, businesses, area stakeholders, governmental jurisdictions, and the public throughout the duration of the design process through a combination of in-person and online engagement methods.

In-person Engagement Methods

The project will host two community open houses and a series stakeholder meeting at key project milestones. We anticipate hosting the first open house in person (provided conditions allow) to connect with area residents and businesses at the outset of the project. SRF will tailor engagement approaches as necessary and collaborate with the PMT to determine the viability of hosting a second public open houses virtually. This recommendation is based on our success hosting virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic and our recent experience facilitating engagement in the area.

- **Open houses (2).** Two open house meetings will be held during the project when it is deemed safe and feasible. These meetings should be engaging, comfortable events with visually appealing materials that help facilitate project understanding. Open house meetings will be promoted via traditional media, a social media campaign, a virtual newsletter to project contact list, and a targeted mailer to a mailing list that includes nearby residents, businesses, and targeted audiences.

Options to comment will be provided in conjunction with each meeting. The SRF team will develop and promote a community survey to gather input and promote public participation at this phase in the process.

- **The first Open House** meeting will be held early in the design process, and the timing of this event makes planning for COVID-19 an important consideration. The purpose of the open house will be to introduce the project, educate the public on initial data gathering results, gather public input, answer community questions, and provide opportunities for the public to identify issues, opportunities, and preferences for several interchange design alternatives.
 - **The second Open House** meeting will be conducted after the evaluation of interchange alternatives. This meeting will be an opportunity for the public to review a preferred interchange alternative and provide detailed feedback on design considerations. Please refer to the overall project timeline chart on page 8 to see where public meetings will fit into the project schedule.
- **Stakeholder meetings.** These meetings, less formal than open houses, will be used to share project updates and facilitate discussion with key area stakeholders. It is anticipated the project will facilitate two meetings with stakeholders that may be directly impacted by, or have an interest in, improvements to the CSAH 44 and TH 14 intersection.

This engagement approach will seek to involve area stakeholders and businesses throughout the process. These focus group events could be facilitated in person or virtually. With direction from the PMT, the SRF engagement team will coordinate, market, and lead the stakeholder meetings. These meetings will be selectively targeted toward obtaining input from specific stakeholder populations, including a combination of business owners, homeowners and/or pedestrians/bicyclists.

- **Passive engagement.** There may be options to provide hard copies of project materials, accessible for those who may not have internet access. Hard copies of project materials, including project background information, project handouts, and all publicly accessible documents, could be available at Olmsted County offices, public libraries, or other community destinations.



Project area (looking southwest) showing preferred concept developed from previous corridor study. Other alternatives will be developed as part of the current project.

Online Engagement Methods

Online engagement will be used in various contexts to engage with the public, stakeholders, and agencies. Project materials will be uploaded to the Olmsted County's project website with links on how to respond with any questions or comments. The project page will provide an overview of project information, including links to engagement materials and public input opportunities.

To make the project materials accessible and approachable, the project team will host a variety of options for the public to learn about the project including:

- **Virtual Meetings.** Participants can connect live with project partners to answer their questions and provide feedback could not attend. Project handouts, presentations and comment forms will be included on the project webpage to augment virtual meeting interactive options. We recommend that any virtual meetings be hosted via Zoom Webinar platform, with options to call in or join the meeting via broadband. Meetings will include a presentation from the project team and a facilitated Q & A to ensure opportunities for live interaction. Meetings will be recorded and made available on the project website after the event.
- **Interactive surveys and maps.** Community surveys will be considered as tools for engaging people on key project questions while also educating people about the project. Community surveys can be used to gather public feedback, identify issues and concerns, gather input on design alternatives and demographic information about participants.

Communications Approach and Strategies

To provide impactful, effective, and timely communication, the team will look to utilize a combination of existing communication tools available to Olmsted County and project partners. The following communication strategies and outlets will be leveraged to build awareness and gather public input for multiple rounds of public outreach.

- **Project Website:** A project website will be periodically updated to share project updates, feedback opportunities, contact information and materials presented at open house meetings. Throughout the project, stakeholders will be directed to use the website to get the latest information. SRF will assist in ensuring that items posted to the project website area ADA compliant, including screen-reader compatibility and closed captioning for any project videos.
 - <https://www.olmstedcounty.gov/post/csa-44-formerly-cr-104-and-th-14-intersection>
- **Mailings.** Project staff will supplement in-person and online communications efforts with mailings sent to residents and businesses within an identified area near the intersection. These mailings will help to promote open house meetings, invite stakeholders and participate, and share information with residents who may not otherwise be involved in the project.
 - SRF will work with Olmsted County to determine an appropriate area for a mailing list (approximately 200 postcard mailings).
- **Email list:** Community members will have the option to sign-up for project updates via Olmsted County website. Email update will promote engagement opportunities and project updates. Email updates will be a straightforward way to communicate directly to residents, city partners and other stakeholders. During engagement events, project staff are encouraged to ask stakeholders to sign up for email updates or visit the Olmsted County website to enroll in project updates.
- **Social Media:** Facebook and Twitter provide effective and affordable platforms for the consultant team and project partners to provide project updates, inform stakeholders of upcoming engagement events and share opportunities to provide feedback during comment periods and public input opportunities. Agency social media accounts should be considered primary tools for informing the public, including Facebook advertisements and event boosts.
 - **Olmsted County**
 - Olmsted County Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/OlmstedCounty/>
 - Olmsted County Twitter – <https://twitter.com/olmstedcounty>
 - MnDOT District 6
 - MnDOT District 6 Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/MnDOTsoutheast>
 - MnDOT District 6 Twitter: <https://twitter.com/mndotsoutheast>
 - **City of Rochester**
 - City website: <https://www.rochestermn.gov/>

- City Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CityofRochMN>
 - City Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CityofRochMN>
- **ROCOG**
 - ROCOG website: <https://www.olmstedcounty.gov/government/boards-commissions/rochester-olmsted-council-governments-rocog>
 - ROCOG Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ROCOG.mpo/>
- **Print and traditional communications:** The project will share information on major project developments and public input opportunities via local media and earned advertising.
 - Consultant staff may develop informational posters to promote specific project events or distribute general project updates. These posters would be posted at community gathering spots such as grocery stores, the Rochester Public Library, and government facilities.
- **Local Media**
 - The project team will coordinate notifications with local media outlets to inform the public about upcoming engagement events and provide other important updates regarding project information and timelines. It is anticipated that a traditional press release will be prepared and distributed to local media prior to each large public event.

Outlet	Type
Post-Bulletin (daily newspaper)	Newspaper/Website
Rochester's News Talk KROC (1340 AM, 96.9 FM)	Regional Television/Radio
Agri News	Newspaper/Website
Stewartville Star	Newspaper/Website
Kaal-TV	Regional Television/Radio
KIMT3	Regional Television/Radio
KTTC-TV	Regional Television/Radio

Project Timeline

An overall timeline identifying key project milestones is shown below. For each round of engagement, a detailed communications and engagement will be prepared and coordinate

OVERALL WORK PLAN AND TIMELINE (CONDENSED)

