



What is the Downtown Minneapolis Freeway Study?

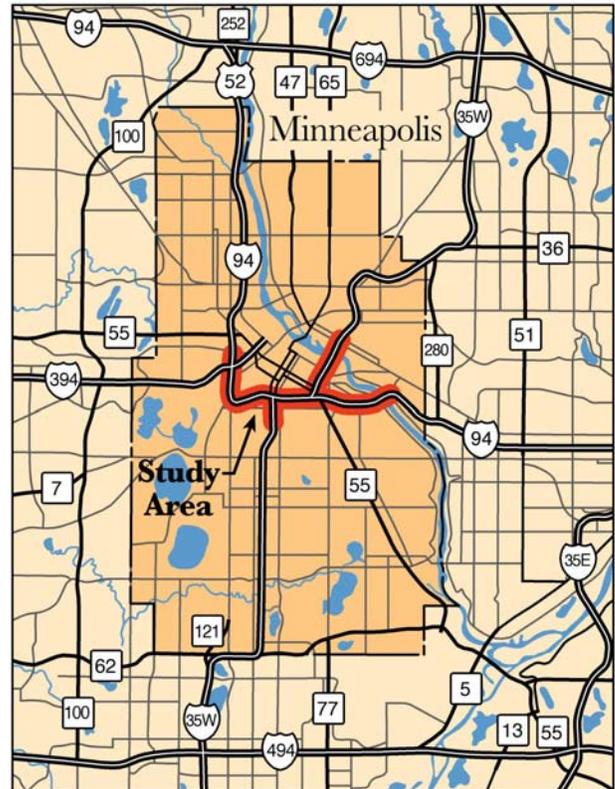
The Downtown Minneapolis Freeway Study is a special long-term planning study led by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT). It addresses transportation problems and needs at the convergence of I-35W and I-94, near Downtown Minneapolis—the most heavily traveled freeway segments in Minnesota. The Downtown Freeway Study is the first step in a long process to develop any major freeway improvements.

The Study Area (see map) includes freeway corridors along I-35W and I-94, bounded by the following limits:

- I-35W from 28th Street on the south to University Ave./4th Street SE on the north
- I-94 from Highway 55 (Olson Mem. Highway) on the west to Riverside Avenue on the east

Why is Mn/DOT Doing the Study?

The importance of the Downtown Minneapolis Freeway is proven by the Study Area's high traffic volumes and related transportation data. One out of eight trips inside the I-494/I-694 Twin Cities ring-road system pass through the Downtown Freeway Study Area and the interchange infrastructure carries as many as 500,000 vehicles per day. Portions of the Study Area experience severe congestion up to five hours per day—speeds at or below 20 mph. The Study Area also has more freeway crashes than any other place in Minnesota, with an average of about 3-4 crashes per day (2002-2004) and an afternoon peak-hour crash rate that is about 15 times the Twin Cities Metro average. The cost from crashes is about \$22 million each year, not including the cost of motorist delays.



In addition to these congestion and safety issues, the following projects, studies, and issues are known as “catalysts” for the Study—reasons why a long-term plan is needed now:

- **I-35W Corridor Improvement Program (46th Street to Downtown)**—This proposed project includes increasing the capacity on I-35W south of Downtown from four to five lanes in each direction and adding freeway access at Lake Street.
- **Managed Lanes and Development of Bus Rapid Transit**—The proposed I-35W project (noted above) will also include lanes for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and High-Occupancy Vehicles (HOVs). That plan includes bus stations in the freeway median (for example, at Lake Street). Recognizing the future importance of managed lanes for transit and other modes, the Downtown Freeway Study will explore possible extensions, including special connections to and from Downtown streets.
- **I-35W Mississippi River Bridge, Industry Square/Washington Ave. Interchange (south of the River), and SE University Ave.–4th Street Interchange (north of the River)**—This area includes an important bridge over the Mississippi River that will need to be reconstructed or replaced in the coming years; it also includes interchanges with important local arterials near each end of the bridge.

Save the Date!

Focus Groups to Meet June 6, 7, and 12 (NOTE: for more information, see page 2)

Please plan to attend one of the following Focus Group meetings nearest your area of interest:

When: Three sessions from 5:30 - 8:00 p.m., with some emphasis on the three geographic areas noted below:

- June 6: East (east of Downtown Minneapolis)
- June 7: Central (areas closest to Downtown)
- June 12: West (west of Downtown)

Where: Lutheran Social Services Building, 2414 Park Avenue South, Minneapolis. Off-street parking is available in the building's west lot.

- **I-94 Lowry Tunnel and Vicinity**—The I-94 Lowry Tunnel, on the west side of the Study Area, is often considered a bottleneck. Therefore, the Downtown Freeway Study will address a range of proposals at this location.
- **Access Minneapolis Study (10-Year Transportation Plan)**—The City of Minneapolis is currently working on a transportation plan that has relevance to the Downtown Freeway Study because the City is considering changes to nearby local street traffic patterns.

Other factors being considered include:

- missing freeway system connections (I-35W southbound to I-94 eastbound and I-94 westbound to I-35 northbound); and
- several other related transportation plans, studies, or proposals.

What is the Study Process and Schedule?

The Downtown Minneapolis Freeway Study process will: (1) evaluate existing conditions, to understand major problems and set goals; (2) develop/brainstorm a range of long-term visions; (3) use these visions to evaluate refinements and shorter-term possibilities; and (4) identify potential projects and document the results in a Strategic Plan. Most of this work is scheduled for completion by late 2006, with completion of the Strategic Plan expected by early 2007.

Who is Involved in the Study? What are the Focus Group Meetings?

Mn/DOT is leading this study, in partnership with Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis. Broad participation and input is obtained through work with an Advisory Committee, which includes representatives of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, Hennepin County, and the Cities of Minneapolis, Richfield, and Bloomington.

Focus Group members were identified based on the Mn/DOT study team's research to identify appropriate nearby neighborhoods, major businesses, institutions, and freeway users. Mn/DOT also received assistance and input directly from the City of Minneapolis. The Focus Group meetings are being held to obtain input about existing conditions, including the role of the freeway system, and to help share visions for the future. Focus Group meeting participants will be asked to discuss expected trends, including future scenarios for land use, development, neighborhoods, businesses, and transportation.

Focus Group meetings are scheduled for three weekday evenings, from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM at the Lutheran Social Services Building (2414 Park Avenue; Minneapolis). The scheduled dates are:

- Tuesday, June 6 (East Emphasis: I-35W crossing the Mississippi River East of Downtown and I-94 to the east)
- Wednesday, June 7 (West Emphasis: I-94 West and Southwest of Downtown and the Lowry Hill/Tunnel area)
- Monday, June 12 (Central Emphasis: The I-35W/I-94 Commons and I-35W South of Downtown)

Focus Group meeting participants are encouraged to attend the meeting that is most appropriate to their geographic interest; but they may also attend any meeting(s) that are convenient or of special interest.

What's Next? How Can I Stay Informed?

The Study will ultimately suggest and evaluate potential future freeway system scenarios. By the end of 2006 to early 2007, a number of visions will be developed in the form of concept designs. In addition, the Mn/DOT team will identify possible strategic projects based on those visions. At about the same time, this information will be shared with Focus Group participants and with the general public. One or more public meetings will be held.

Currently, there is no funding available for any significant project development in the Downtown Minneapolis Freeway Study Area. If any major project proposals go ahead in the years to come, a substantial effort will be given to public involvement. In the meantime, to learn more about the Downtown Minneapolis Freeway Study or to share your input, please contact either Jerome Adams or Tom O'Keefe:

- Jerome Adams, Mn/DOT Project Manager: 651/582-1320 jerome.adams@dot.state.mn.us
- Tom O'Keefe, Mn/DOT Area Manager: 651/582-1296 thomas.okeefe@dot.state.mn.us



I-35W / I-94 Downtown Minneapolis Freeway Study (Mn/DOT SP 8825-204)

Focus Group Meetings

June 6, 7, and 12, 2006 (Lutheran Social Services - 2414 Park Avenue; Minneapolis)

AGENDA

FOCUS GROUP MEETING OBJECTIVES:

- Introduce the Downtown Minneapolis Freeway Study - part of a long-term transportation planning framework
- Discuss the community and transportation issues most important to stakeholders, with some emphasis on geographic subareas (June 6 – East; June 7 – Central; June 12 – West):
 - Existing conditions – transportation problems and needs; neighborhood and business interests; freeway system benefits and concerns
 - Long-term future vision – transportation performance and facilities; local development, image, and business environment

AGENDA ITEMS:

(5:30-6:00 pm) Registration

1. (6:00 pm) Welcome and Background - Introduction to the Study

- Welcome & Introductions (Tom O'Keefe-Mn/DOT)
- Focus Group meeting – review objectives, agenda, and ground rules (Doug Abere-CH2M HILL; Scott McBride-SEH)
- Study background and transportation planning objectives (Doug Abere-CH2M HILL)

2. (6:30 pm) Small Group Discussions and Summaries - Existing Conditions

Address such questions as:

- What existing conditions or features on or near the Downtown Minneapolis Freeway immediately come to mind?
- How does the Downtown Freeway system serve your transportation or community needs; how does it fall short?

3. (7:00 pm) Small Group Discussions and Summaries - Future Vision

Address such questions as:

- What is a positive and realistic long-term vision for the future Downtown Freeway system?
- How might the Downtown Freeway play a part in positive change, if it were better maintained/ managed or significantly improved?

4. (7:30 pm) Summary and Conclusion - Discussion to Emphasize Key Themes and Goals

(7:45 to 8:00 pm) Conclude/Adjourn