



# CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Richfield, Minnesota

## Joint City Council and Transportation Commission Work Session

### February 1, 2022

**CALL TO ORDER**

Transportation Commission Chair Bradley called the work session to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Bartholomew Room.

*Council Members Present:* Mary Supple, Mayor; Sharon Christensen; and Sean Hayford Oleary

*Council Members Absent:* Simon Trautmann; and Ben Whalen

*Transportation Commission Members Present:* Husniyah Bradley, Chair; Jeff Walz, Jim Mahoney, Kyle Schmidt, Louis Dzierzak, Carl Woetzel, Rory Cook and Michael Kohout

*Transportation Commission Members Absent:* David Gepner

*Staff Present:* Katie Rodriguez, City Manager; Kristin Asher, Public Works Director; Joe Powers, City Engineer; Matt Hardegger, Transportation Engineer; Lance Bernard, Transportation Consultant; Scott Kulzer, Administrative Aide/Analyst; Jake Whipple, Civil Engineer; and Olivia Wycklendt, Civil Engineer

*Others Present:* Jan Matheus, Bike Advocates Liaison; Mike Devane, Community Services Commission Liaison

<b>ITEM #1</b>	<b>OVERVIEW OF A POLICY APPROACH FOR THE SUPPORT AND PRIORITIZATION OF REGIONAL INVESTMENTS TO THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND TO PROVIDE A BRIEFING OF UPCOMING CONSIDERATIONS OF SUPPORT FOR SEVERAL PROPOSED CORRIDORS OF COMMERCE PROJECT SUBMITTALS, AND DISCUSSION</b>
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Transportation Commission Chair Bradley introduced the topic and turned over the presentation to Public Works Director Asher. Director Asher introduced the topic and asked for guidance and feedback from the City Council and the Transportation Commission on the policy framework for regional projects involving highway expansion.

Director Asher turned the presentation over to City Engineer Powers and Transportation Consultant Bernard.

City Engineer Joe Powers introduced the Transportation Framework Discussion, which is to discuss a draft framework approach for evaluating, supporting, and prioritizing regional highway investments to the transportation system. City Engineer Powers expressed that this framework would be used to assess each regional highway investment on a case-by-case basis and decide which projects the City would or would not support. City Engineer Powers turned over the presentation to Consultant Bernard.

Consultant Bernard provided regional context in regards to external agencies and community members, including but not limited to stakeholders, state agencies, MnDOT, Met council, adjacent municipalities, and other transportation agencies. He stated many of these agencies have their own transportation policy plans, which outline regional priorities and needs in regards to transportation. Liaison Bernard mentioned that the City itself specifically has its own local guidance, such as the 2040 comprehensive plan. He stated this coupled with the City's guiding principles are some of the ways that Richfield makes decisions when it comes to improving the City or surrounding areas infrastructure. Consultant Bernard turned the presentation back over to City Engineer Powers.

City Engineer Powers emphasized to the Council and the Commission that Public Works staff would like to have the flexibility in the future, with the collaboration of the Commission and City Council, to assess these projects on a case-by-case basis to avoid missing out on certain benefits that would be unavailable to the City should we have a non-supportive policy when it comes to regional highway expansion projects.

City Engineer Powers asked the City Council and the Transportation Commission for feedback on the policy on the framework, and emphasized that comments or changes made to this framework would ideally ensure that future regional highway expansion projects can be assessed on a case-by-case basis. He also mentioned that several council members had reached out to City Staff prior to the meeting with comments on the framework, and asked Council Member Hayford Oleary to start the discussion as he had provided comments prior to the meeting.

Council Member Hayford Oleary stated that he feels that the future benefits of additional capacity on surrounding regional highways are minimal for Richfield. He expressed his concerns how expanding highways may lead to the City losing land, and cause more cars to be on the highway, contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. He stated that it appeared the framework provided by staff was written in a way that could be used to support or not support any project in its current state. Councilmember Hayford Oleary requested clearer definitions on two criteria within the framework: right-of-way impacts and greenhouse gas emissions.

City Manager Katie Rodriguez handed out an e-mail with comments on the framework from Council Member Whalen to the Commission, City Staff and City Council, as he was unable to attend the work session. He stated the frameworks criteria seems right and is a helpful tool for assessing regional investment projects. Council Member Whalen mentioned concerns about projects that add additional lanes, how emissions from cars would be assessed, and a lack of creativity when it comes to determining how to efficiently move more people through a corridor.

Council Member Hayford Oleary asked City Council and Commission what their starting thoughts are on regional highway expansion.

Commissioner Walz stated that surrounding highway expansion has reached a point where the City no longer reaps a benefit.

Commissioner Dzierzak expressed concerns that the framework approach for the assessment of regional highway projects doesn't have a scope for how a project will or will not address future needs, such as an increase of bicycle users or electric vehicles.

Mayor Supple said she was happy to see that the framework considers safety and mobility improvements for Richfield residents. She also emphasized that one of the criteria in the approach, "Have a voice to shape projects without limiting ourselves with a policy that narrowly defines the type

of project we support”, is important because Richfield and other municipalities have supported each other’s requests and needs by working and communicating together.

Commissioner Mahoney said he likes the idea of most of the framework, but that it is missing clarification when it comes to greenhouse gases. He stated he is concerned specifically about the air quality impacts for residents who live along these regional corridors. He added that these projects may impact property values in Richfield, and that any regional investment projects should benefit the community of Richfield as a whole.

Commissioner Woetzel added to Mahoney’s comment, saying that this framework should also be asking how the project is making Richfield a more beautiful place to live.

Commissioner Schmidt agreed with Councilmember Hayford Oleary, saying that the framework is a bit subjective. He suggested that we approach these projects by assessing how much this impacts a Richfield resident first, prior to how it impacts the population of the region as a whole.

Chair Bradley expressed her agreement with many of the comments shared during the discussion. She added she appreciates that promoting multimodal transportation options and reducing inequities is a part of the framework, as it helps ensure that it benefits all Richfield residents.

City Engineer Powers asked the City Council and the Transportation Commission if there were any parts of the framework approach that they did not like or did not think should be a consideration factor.

Commissioner Kahout wondered how regional investment projects would impact the parks that border regional highways in Richfield.

Commissioner Mahoney asked the City Council if there was specific input they wanted from the Transportation Commission on this framework.

Council Member Hayford Oleary queried if having local congestion being a consideration as a part of the framework necessary. He expressed his agreement with Commissioner Mahoney on having Air Quality as a separate criteria to Greenhouse Gases.

Commissioner Dzierzak voiced his concerns that by not having an overlying objective in addition to the case-by-case framework, there is a risk that other influences could determine whether or not a City supports a regional investment project.

Commissioner Mahoney requested adding “future” to the consideration factor “Fill a Gap or Need” to help address Commissioner Dzierzak’s concerns.

City Engineer Powers noted that these considerations within the framework are used through the lens of existing City policies.

Mayor Supple and Council Member Oleary discussed the importance of including mobility improvements. Director Asher clarified that the criteria of “Mobility Improvements” means that the proposed project would provide congestion relief to the local system.

City Engineer Powers continued the presentation, discussing the funding opportunity “Corridors of Commerce”, which are project applications proposed to MnDOT. Three applications, one of which impacts Highway 62 and the other two impact I-494 were submitted to the program. He stated that all projects submitted throughout the state get vetted by MnDOT overtime. To have these applications earn a better score and rank them as a better candidate for funding, MnDOT requires letters of support and council resolutions from impacted communities. City Engineer Powers stated that agreeing on a framework policy for assessing these types of projects is an urgent matter as letters of support are due March 1<sup>st</sup> of 2023 for these applications.

City Engineer Powers stated that the next steps in this discussion would be to refine the framework for the council work session in two weeks time. He stated that if City Council determines

they will support the resolutions of these projects, they will be passed the night before the resolutions and letters of support are due for MnDOT.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Bradley adjourned the work session at 7:06 p.m.

Date Approved: February 14, 2023

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Mary Supple  
Mayor

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Chris Swanson  
Acting City Clerk

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Katie Rodriguez  
City Manager