

GrandView District Small Area Plan

Transportation Work Group

Work Session #1 – September 21, 2011

Scope of Issues

The Transportation Work Group (TWG) is focusing on issues related to movement, accessibility, parking, transit and infrastructure related to the GrandView Small Area Plan (SAP). Recognizing that there is understandable overlap with the work of other groups within the plan, the TWG has identified eight primary subject areas on which to focus its efforts:

1. Multimodal access to and through the District
2. Multimodal circulation within the District
3. Park-and-Ride role, and other local parking issues
4. Rail and/or other mass transit options
5. Connections across Hwy 100 and rail line
6. Reconfiguration of Hwy 100 ramps
7. School bus garage alternatives
8. Infrastructure and site engineering issues

Key Issues and Questions

For each of the subject areas, this report will summarize the “big picture” issues, provide known specific background information that will help to understand the transportation related opportunities of the study area and identify a number of additional questions.

1. Multimodal access to and through the District

Big Picture: Driven by development of the road network and the topography of the area with its material change of grade from north to south, bicycle and pedestrian access to the GrandView district is one of the most striking and apparent limitations to the accessibility of the area. Residents of neighborhoods directly adjacent to the District often are unable to get to businesses and facilities within the district safely without resorting to car transportation. Bikers and pedestrians seeking to traverse the District face many of the same limitations.

Specific Information:

1. As part of its 2007 Comprehensive plan, the City of Edina also adopted a bicycle transportation plan developed for the Bike Edina Task Force (BETF) by the consulting team at Community Design Group (CDG). This document is accessible on the City of Edina web site at: http://www.ci.edina.mn.us/traffic/L5_BikeTaskforce.htm.
2. The Edina Transportation Commission (ETC) is proposing the city adopt a “Living Streets” resolution (attached) which applies the concepts of “complete streets” expressed in legislation passed by Minnesota in 2010 along with “green streets” concepts that focus on environmental impacts of street design. The TWG believes that the concepts espoused by the “Living Streets” resolution are strongly aligned with the GrandView Small Area Guide principles, and should be applied as a guide for the GrandView SAP.
3. City of Edina and other jurisdictions have the following near-term plans related to road or other infrastructure improvements within or connecting to the GrandView District, which may present opportunities to reconfigure: (Identify – TBD)

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Questions:

How can adjacent neighborhoods be connected to Grandview District?

What are the preferred modes for visitors to access the District?

Can a balance be struck between accommodating through-traffic along Vernon and to/from Highway 100 while providing safe and convenient local access?

2. Multimodal circulation and movement within the District

Big Picture: Related to the issue of access to and through the District and exacerbated by the barrier presented by Highway 100, bicycle and pedestrian mobility within the GrandView District is one of the most apparent limitations to the usability of the area. Walking tours of the area quickly highlight the mobility limitations and risks for non-motorized transit. The City of Edina has recent experience with developing improvements to non-motorized accessibility within the Promenade development in the Southdale area.

Specific Information: see #1 above

Questions:

Are local roads within the District necessary?

Can existing roads be re-aligned, modified or combined?

How can grade changes be incorporated into site plans to encourage pedestrian connections?

Can Highway 100 be 'capped' to unify the west and east sides of the District?

Are there opportunities for skyways over roads, or tunnels in any locations?

3. Park-and-Ride, and other Parking Issues

Big Picture: As a commercial and neighborhood center, GrandView has a number of car parking options and many known constraints for parking. Examples of identified key parking issues include shortages of employee parking for the school bus garage, for Edina Family Physicians employees, for businesses in the Jerry's complex, for the Washburn McCreavy funeral home and for the Eden Avenue Grill. The District also provides some parking for bus commuters on weekdays. Future options may include constructing additional public parking options alongside Highway 100, making effective use of the grade changes in the area to "tuck under" some or most of the parking structure below grade. Whether such a structure could also incorporate necessary facilities to serve the need of the school district bus garage (see #7 below) is another idea to be considered. Whether to support existing activity in the District, future planned activity in the District or expanded transit options, car parking needs to be considered and planned for as part of the Small Area Plan.

Specific Information:

1. The city-owned parking ramp adjacent to Jerry's is used as an impromptu park-and-ride, with daily commuters catching buses at the intersection of Vernon and Interlachen. An estimated XX people per day make use of this unofficial park-and-ride option. The ramp also serves businesses in the area with parking for employees and customers.
2. The GrandView District has been identified as a future location of a park-and-ride in the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan of the Metropolitan Council.

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Questions:

Can the city parking ramp be expanded upward?

How can a multi-use garage be shared by existing and future users?

How to stimulate Met Council action toward implementing the park-and-ride 2030 vision for the District in the near-term, and could it provide a source of funding?

4. Rail and/or other Mass Transit Options

Big Picture: The location of the GrandView District at a vibrant crossroads of a major regional highway and busy local surface streets assures that traffic and transit issues will remain important. Situated along Highway 100 and a parallel rail line used for freight traffic today, GrandView has the opportunity to integrate into regional transit solutions over time. Highway 100 is acknowledged to be a heavily traveled route in the regional highway network which is prone to peak time traffic jams, particularly to the north of the GrandView District. The existing rail line by its presence suggests the notion of future rail transit options, which is compelling to many who have observed the characteristics of the area. The GrandView Small Area Guide principles specifically speak to “facilitating multiple modes of transportation” and that the plan should “preserve future transit opportunities provided by the rail corridor”.

Specific Information:

RAIL: Rail line is owned by Canadian Pacific (CP), and is used for low-frequency (X times per week) freight rail services primarily serving the XXX business. Trains pass through Edina and adjacent communities at low speeds. Plans for commuter rail and intercity passenger rail services using this corridor have surfaced over the past 15 years. Many neighbors along the rail line have aversion to potential for increased rail traffic, and increased rail speeds. Minnesota legislature enacted in 2002 a law known as the “Dan Patch Gag Rule” which precludes consideration of commuter rail along the corridor passing through GrandView District.

BUS: Bus service to and through the GrandView District consists of the following routes:

Metro Transit Bus Routes - Routes 46, 146, & 568 along Vernon & 50th (east-west); Route 567 along Eden & Normandale; express to downtown Minneapolis; Route 589 along Highway 100; express Bloomington to downtown Minneapolis (no stops in Edina).

Southwest Transit also operates express buses through Edina to downtown Minneapolis. One bus stop shelter is known to exist in the District, on the south side of 50th Street in front of City Hall. There are benches at bus stops in a few other locations.

Questions:

What is the potential for future passenger rail?

Can a future branch of the Southwest Light Rail extend to Grandview?

Are there possibilities for Bus Rapid Transit at Hwy 100 & Vernon?

What is current and projected ridership on existing bus routes?

Are any issues relating to the Southwest LRT plan that may impact freight rail traffic volumes through GrandView?

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5. Connections across Highway 100 and rail line

Big Picture: Related to the issue of mobility within the district, the two major north/south corridors through the GrandView District present obvious and significant barriers to more cohesively connecting land parcels and activities within the District. Highway 100 is traversed by the two major east/west roads that define the primary boundaries of the District – Vernon Avenue / 50th Street on the north side and Eden Avenue on the south side. Making these two paths more usable for non-vehicle movement is a minimum objective of enhancements in the GrandView District, and more significant connection across the divide of Highway 100 is desired. Similarly, the rail tracks owned by Canadian Pacific cut through the District, traveling above Eden Avenue and below Vernon Avenue, and creating another north/south barrier to movement across the District from east to west. Finding creative solutions to these challenging barriers will go a long way toward creating a more cohesive neighborhood in the GrandView District.

Specific Information: Highway 100 is three lanes of traffic in each direction; along with the on/off ramps in the center of the GrandView District, this creates a total span of about XXX feet from the west side to the east side of the highway. The Vernon Avenue and Eden Avenue overpasses were built in 1970, and each received high grades on recent structural inspections (2007).

Questions:

What is the feasibility of ‘capping’ the highway and/or rail tracks?

Can the rail tracks be lowered?

Could tunnels be incorporated to cross below the rail tracks?

Who would be responsible for these connections?

How could these connections be funded?

6. Reconfiguration of Highway 100 ramps

Big Picture: The entry and exit ramps to and from Highway 100 within the GrandView District were built in 19XX, and present a complicated and land-intensive maze of access points. There appear to be redundant on-ramps to 100N and 100S. The 100S on-ramps present a notably hazardous intersection with poor visibility and a high accident rate. Preliminary review of the ramp configurations suggest that more efficient and effective alternatives may exist, and may be able to be incorporated into future MnDOT planning. In addition to the ramps in the immediate GrandView District, opportunities to incorporate changes at the Benton Avenue interchange with Highway 100, one mile south of the District should also be considered in finding more optimal solutions to traffic flow and land use in and around GrandView.

Specific Information: Traffic accident statistics in the area, compared to other areas. Traffic counts data.

Questions:

What are the boundaries and ownership status of each of the highways and roads in the District?

Who owns adjacent parcels of land? What would be the ownership status of any land “liberated” from highway-related requirements in the event of ramp reconfiguration (e.g., can ownership be transferred from MnDOT to the City?)?

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7. School Bus Garage

Big Picture: As part of any material redevelopment plan for the GrandView District, the status of the current Edina School District bus garage facility needs to be addressed. The facility is adjacent to the west of the city's public works site, and while apparently functional for the school district's needs, the operation is visually unattractive, and creates complex logistics at peak times when buses are active. From the perspective of the school district, the location of the bus garage within the District is desirable, as it is centrally located and near Highway 100, and conveniently located for efficient routing of bus schedules. The school district is open to alternatives, but has historically had no interest in participating in solutions that require capital investment by the school district.

Specific Information: Details will be provided in the report from the Land Use Work Group.

Questions:

Alternative solutions to the current bus garage that should be evaluated include:

1. Moving the operation to a new location out of the District
2. Incorporating the bus garage operation into the Southdale transit hub plan
3. Utilizing the Public Works facility as a bus garage, or other sharing of facilities between City and School District
4. Improving the current bus garage site
5. Incorporating the bus garage operation into future parking structures to be built in the District

8. Infrastructure and Site Engineering

Big Picture: Opportunities to enhance sustainability as part of any material developments in the District should be captured and incorporated into future plans. Rain water, energy efficiency, materials, etc.

Specific Information: TBD

Questions:

Are there any planned infrastructure projects (such as sewer replacement) that would drive an opportunity to make other structural changes within the District?

Does the planned water treatment facility in the lower level of the city parking ramp have any bearing on other infrastructure issues?

How will storm water be handled on site?

Can grade changes be integrated to enhance site design?

To what degree can sustainable energy practices be implemented throughout the District?