



TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Milton Dohoney Jr., City Administrator

CC: Nick Hutchinson, City Engineer
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SUBJECT: April 7, 2025 Council Agenda Response Memo

DATE: April 3, 2025

CA-10 - Resolution to Approve a Contract with the Michigan Department of Transportation for the Nixon Road Reconstruction Project and Appropriate \$9,425,310.00 in Contributing Funds (8 Votes Required)

Question: City staff has conducted a high degree of public engagement on this project from 2017 to 2024. Can staff provide a few highlights of this engagement, including the number of public information sessions and examples of adjustments made as the result of public input? (Councilmember Watson)

Response: The public engagement has been extensive on this project. There were seven large engagement events providing opportunities for the public suggestions, input and feedback. These were conducted in multiple formats including informational sessions, online surveys, stakeholder meetings, and public workshops. There have also been numerous smaller neighborhood and resident meetings. Below are a few examples of design changes that were implemented resulting from public input:

- Design adjusted to protect significant trees,
- Revised lane markings and islands at Aurora Street and Nixon Road to improve large vehicle access,
- Additional temporary signage added near the Traver Lakes Association to limit cut through traffic during construction,
- Raised crosswalks added at Traver Blvd and Nixon Road to increase pedestrian/student safety,

- Roundabout at Sandlewood Circle adjusted to limit impacts on natural features/trees,
- Sidewalk at Traver Blvd adjusted to limit impact on natural features/trees,
- Bus stop placed on west side of Nixon Road between Meade Court and Traver Blvd,
- Roundabout removed at Argonne Drive to reduce number of roundabouts while still providing satisfactory traffic circulation, and
- Removal of the concrete median north of Traver Blvd to allow left turning vehicles.

Question: This project has a hefty price tag. Are there comparable projects that occurred pre-pandemic that might illustrate how much costs have gone up for road reconstruction? Does addressing the water main, storm sewer, and road reconstruction all at once help the City achieve cost savings or other efficiencies? (Councilmember Watson)

Response: The Nixon Road Improvement Project does not have an exact comparable project given its mix of three roundabouts and utility work, but the cost of road and utility construction in Michigan has risen significantly since the pre-pandemic period. Several factors, including inflation, labor shortages, material costs, and supply chain disruptions have contributed to these increases. In 2024, the Michigan Highway Construction Cost Index (MHCCI) saw an increase over 25% since 2020 with the national average increase of over 60%. The city has seen road and utility construction costs rise in a similar manner depending on size and type of project, for example our unit cost estimates for water main have risen 50-60% since 2020 based on bid pricing data.

In regard to combining and addressing water main, storm sewer, and road improvements at the same time, that is a priority of many city projects. By grouping improvements into a single construction project, we typically see: 1) better unit pricing due to the higher volume of work, 2) better use of resources as we're not reconstructing a roadway multiple times for separate utility projects, 3) shorter construction schedules and less disruptions to residents and businesses when compared separate projects impacting the same corridor, and 4) we also have efficiencies in cost and community impact related to the planning/design/engagement process.

CA-11 - Resolution to Approve a Professional Services Agreement with Transportation Engineering Design, DPC for Multi-Lane Road Reconfiguration Evaluation (\$280,000.00)

Question: How much does a road reconfiguration typically cost? For example, the one implemented on Main near Stadium. (Councilmember Akmon)

Response: The project for Council approval on April 7 is for evaluation. For this project, staff reached out to three consultants for early cost estimate prior to the publication of the RFP (request for proposals). Each firm provided a range of estimates for the evaluation. The firms were asked to use the S. Main St near Stadium project as a recent model for their estimates. This model allows for a wide range of data collection and modeling of impacts to vehicular movements. The mid-point of the averaged range was approximately

\$834,000, following the S. Main St example. This approach would require corridors to be evaluated individually, or a few at a time, across years.

The proposed contract amount is significantly lower than consultants' estimate. Realizing the urgency expressed by Council to mitigate the safety risks of multi-lane roads, the RFP asked for all ten City-owned multi-lane corridors at the same time and emphasized a lighter, planning-level evaluation to identify reconfiguration opportunities across the City in line with the priorities of the Moving Together Towards Vision Zero Transportation Plan. The result of this work will be conceptual plans for cross-sections and key intersections on these corridors. Further design may be needed to advance any particular corridor to construction. The study will provide a conceptual starting point for lane configurations if there is a capital project in these corridors or if the City prioritizes advancing a corridor independent of a capital project.

Toole Design's proposal put the greatest emphasis on a planning-level evaluation and put strategic attention for data collection and modeling on the most challenging corridors in the evaluation. The proposal stayed focused on this core work without many secondary features. The resulting proposed fee stayed within a range that would allow for the project to be completed in one year.

Question: Ann Arbor has an adopted goal of reducing VMT by 50% by 2030 to achieve our climate goals and our Transportation Plan recognizes the multi-lane roads present an ever-present threat to the safety of our residents and impediment to traveling by modes other than car. The goal of this multi-lane road reconfiguration evaluation is focused on informing the City on how to reconfigure our roads to support these established goals.

We are seeking to build a transportation network that supports the people and growth we will and hope to see in our community but is not built on outdated assumptions that growth requires a growth in single-occupancy car travel. As such, I want to ensure that the assumptions that are built into analyses don't rest on traditional approaches to forecasting travel needs. There are some elements of the consultant's responses that suggest that they may not be developing a new model that meets Ann Arbor's future needs, such as the following elements of Toole's proposal:

- We will look at model data from SEMCOG and workforce commuting data from the Census to understand more detailed travel patterns and forecasts for these streets.
- The total capacity of the corridor to carry people during the peak hour will be assessed, making reasonable assumptions on transit ridership, bicycle mode share for short trips, and pedestrian trips.
- Shows high potential for roadway reconfiguration and improvements in multimodal safety and access, with minimal impacts to vehicle operations.

We already know that traditional evaluations will suggest that future growth will result in more cars. However, we need these roads to serve our community's travels differently in the future in order to advance our climate and safety goals. How will this evaluation be

constructed in a manner that allows us to sensibly redesign our roadways so that that residents, commuters, and visitors will be able to easily and safely be able to access destinations by transit, bike, foot, and other micro-mobility devices? Can you please explain what new models are being developed to accomplish these goals; we can't use the same old models that led to our street grid as it exists today? (Councilmember Briggs)

Response: The Multi-Lane Road Reconfiguration Evaluation project is focused on the goals of Vision Zero safety and 50% reduction of in-town VMT as adopted in the Moving Together Towards Vision Zero Transportation Plan. To achieve these goals, the transportation system is being rebalanced to expand and complete networks that are comfortable and efficient for local walking and cycling trips, prioritizes efficient, frequent transit service, while accommodating trips by freight trucks, buses, solid waste vehicles, emergency vehicles and personal motor vehicles that serve residents, employment centers, and patronize businesses.

This project focuses on rebalancing the multi-lane roadways whose design and adjacent land uses are reflective of an age that centered motor vehicle speed and access. To study these roads for proactive opportunities for rebalancing, the proposal seeks background information sources to be aware of the underlying population and employment distribution both present day and forecasted. These forecasts can give a general sense, based on some considered assumptions, of population and employment location changes across time. Where people live and work has a strong relationship to the trips they make. Land use, pricing, and roadway design policies will also influence how these trips are made.

Since Ann Arbor is rebalancing roads, slowing vehicle speeds, expanding transit service, and increasing the accessibility and comfort to walk, cycle and roll, conventional assumptions that defaults to assuming a trip will be an automobile trip is not a useful approach. This project will collect data on present day multi-modal roadway use for information on present day conditions (i.e., where is roadway space underutilized?). It will also seek out present day trip pattern information to get a general sense of trip purposes and distances that are suitable for walking, cycling, or transit service (i.e., what trips could be nudged to more efficient modes?).

The proposal will develop concepts that rebalance space in the right-of-way to prioritize transit, walking, and cycling while lowering vehicle speeds and therefore the risk of severe crashes. Motor vehicles are the most common mode of travel in the City and the continued functioning of basic vehicular circulation will be part of the tradeoff considerations informing the concepts.

Toole Design's proposal emphasizes the use of person trips rather than vehicle trips as the core unit of analysis, which reduces some of the distortion produced by vehicle-based analysis. The models that Toole Design will use will be local traffic simulation models based on present day multi-modal data and supplemented by understanding of background regional forecasted population change and City land use and transportation policies for VMT reduction. The modeling tools are not new but will be used to analyze all trips rather than an analytical focus on motor vehicle trips.