
Sponsor: Public Works

Meeting Date: 9/23/2025

Title: State Aid Variance Request for New Brighton Road Improvements

File Number: 2025-362

Background and Rationale:

Ramsey County Public Works has a pavement preservation project on New Brighton Road, from County Road D to County Road E2, in the cities of Arden Hills and New Brighton, scheduled for completion in 2026. The project includes improvement of the deteriorating pavement, Americans with Disabilities Act improvements, as well as new signing and striping along the entire corridor.

New Brighton Road is a two-lane roadway that varies in width from 24 feet to 28 feet of pavement with irregular gravel shoulder widths. There are approximately 1584 vehicles per day that drive this road. The pavement is in poor condition and requires resurfacing.

The Canadian Pacific railroad bridge goes over New Brighton Road south of County Road E2 and north of 1st Street SE. The bridge has been in place since 1900, with a remodel in the 1980s. Due to the construction of the bridge, the roadway width in this area is reduced to accommodate the bridge piers, thereby narrowing the roadway.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MDOT) State Aid Operations Rules Parts 8820.9926 (Minimum Design Standards: Rural Suburban Undivided; Reconditioning Projects) and 8820.9956 (Minimum Vertical Clearances for Underpasses) set forth design standards that must be met with respect to roadway widths and minimum required vertical clearances under bridges. The width of the roadway under the bridge and the clearance from the roadway to the bridge do not meet these requirements for a county highway.

To meet such requirements, the railroad bridge would need to be replaced. Replacement of the bridge would require collaboration with the railroad company on a new design, addressing right-of-way impacts, and incurring substantial costs to the County and/or the railroad. The bridge is not scheduled for replacement; therefore, the recommendation is to seek a variance from MNDOT State Aid requirements to allow the paving project to proceed as planned, leaving the existing non-standard conditions in place.

There have been zero recorded crashes at this location and advance warning signs are currently and will remain in place, letting drivers know of the upcoming narrow roadway and low clearance bridge.

Pursuant to MDOT State Aid Rules Part 8820.3300 Subpart 3, the MNDOT Commissioner is requiring *“a resolution by the recipient of the variance that indemnifies, saves, and holds harmless the state and its agents and employees of and from claims, demands, actions, or causes of action arising out of or by reason of the granting of the variance. The recipient of the variance shall further agree to defend at its sole cost and expense any action or proceeding begun for asserting any claim of whatever character arising as a result of the granting of the variance.”*

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Request a variance from the Minnesota Department of Transportation State Aid Operations Rules Parts 8820.9926 (Minimum Design Standards: Rural Suburban Undivided; Reconditioning Projects) and 8820.9956 (Minimum Vertical Clearances for Underpasses), to allow a combined lane (paved) and shoulder width of 9 feet 11 inches at the railroad bridge crossing (Bridge Number 90407), station 56+00 to station 58+50, on New Brighton Road in lieu of a combined lane (paved) and shoulder width of 12 feet, and to allow a vertical clearance of 14 feet 3 inches for the bridge, station 56+00 to station 58+50, on New Brighton Road in lieu of the required 16 feet 4 inches, for State Aid Project 062-674-002.
2. Indemnify, save and hold harmless the State of Minnesota and its agents and employees of and from claims, demands, actions, or causes of action arising out of or by reason of the granting of the variance, and further agree to defend at its sole cost and expense any action or proceeding begun for asserting any claim arising as a result of the granting of this variance.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Miller, seconded by Commissioner Jebens-Singh. Motion passed.

Aye: - 7: Jebens-Singh, McGuire, McMurtrey, Miller, Moran, Ortega, and Xiong

By: 

Jason Yang, Chief Clerk - County Board