

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The study process utilized to prepare this report began with collection of a variety of data and information to better understand the forces and issues associated with neighborhood character, traffic and pedestrian movements, the East River Road Parkway bridge and Bridal Veil Creek and Falls. A series of public meetings were held to solicit feedback from residents regarding the existing problem and potential solutions. A set of guiding principles were developed through community input to measure the desirability of the various improvements options subsequently developed. The four guiding principles are:

- Improve Franklin Avenue/East River Parkway Intersection Function for Pedestrians, Bicyclists and Vehicles
- Improve Trail Linkages for Pedestrian and Bicycles
- Restore and Enhance Views of Bridal Veil Falls
- East River Parkway Bridge Soundness

Utilizing technical data, community input, the guiding principles identified above and engineering and design expertise URS prepared a series of potential improvements options. The options were discussed and refined through successive meetings with neighborhood residents, Public Works and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board over the course of the summer.

The potential improvements can be generally described in three groups. Group one includes two options that do not alter traffic patterns in the neighborhood but do include the replacement of the bridge over Bridal Veil Falls. Group two includes the Do Nothing option and two additional options, which do alter, traffic movements in the neighborhood. Group three includes five options that alter traffic movements in the neighborhood and reconfigure the East River Road/Franklin Avenue/27th Avenue intersection into a four-legged intersection (3 options) or a roundabout (2 options).

In addition to the ten improvements options, the report details two additional amenities that should be considered by the City for this neighborhood. One amenity includes the construction of a scenic overlook to Bridal Veil Falls in the corner of Franklin Avenue and East River Parkway. The second amenity investigates the possibility of adding water flow over the falls during dry weather periods. Both of these additional amenities can be accomplished independent or in conjunction with any of the ten improvements options included in Groups 1, 2 and 3.

The study includes estimated engineering and construction costs for all of the improvements options and also identifies existing funding sources and funding gaps for the options in matrix form.

Preferred Option

Based upon feedback from neighborhood representatives and residents, elected officials, public works staff and park and recreation board staff, Option A is the preferred option to include with the capital improvements program. Option A includes the removal of the existing bridge, construction of a new bridge with a 28 foot wide roadway, 6 foot wide sidewalk (north) and 16 foot trail/sidewalk (south). The proposed bridge alignment is curved to provide more enhanced views of Bridal Veil Falls by exposing an additional 17 feet of the waterfall. The new bridge would be designed so as to not preclude potential overlook improvement or future improvements to the existing intersection at Franklin Avenue. Option A is described in detail in Section VI. Improvements Options of this report. The estimated design and construction cost for Option A is 1.97 million dollars.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Minneapolis City Council, Mayors office and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board approve the inclusion of the East River Road Bridge Improvement Project (outlined as Option A in the Bridal Veil Falls Area Study Feasibility Report) as a part of the 2006 Capital Improvements Program.