

Hear Every Voice

Case Study: St. Peter 169 Redesign & Construction Project



Redesign and construction of a major downtown thoroughfare in St. Peter, Minnesota

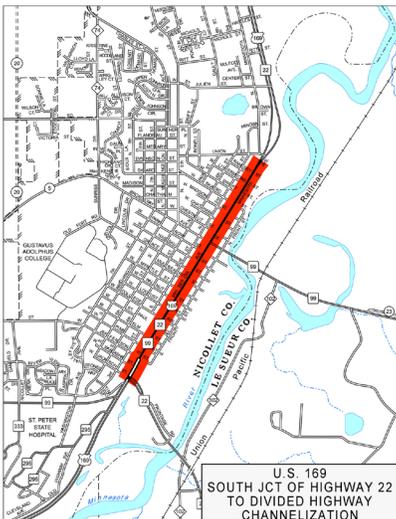
St. Peter, Minnesota

Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), City of St. Peter, Nicollet County, State Historic Preservation Office, Shafer Contracting Co, Inc. (consultant), RLK Engineering (consultant), American Engineering Testing (consultant), HZ United (consultant), Killmer Electric (consultant), Zan Associates (consultant)

Context: Situated in south central Minnesota, St. Peter is a small town of just over 11,000 residents according to the 2010 U.S. Census. Downtown St. Peter, designated as a Commercial Historic District, runs along Minnesota Avenue, also known as Trunk Highway 169 (TH-169), a major north-south Minnesota state highway. Initially conceived as a grand avenue that would terminate at the anticipated state capitol in St. Peter, Minnesota Avenue was never fully constructed as intended. Thus, the grand promenade and the street corridor were subsequently wider than they needed to be. Saint Paul was ultimately designated as the capitol city, and this main corridor in St. Peter became a trunk highway and major thoroughfare between southern Minnesota and the Twin Cities.

With an estimated 20,000 annual average daily traffic (Imboden et al. 2010), and an exceptionally wide street width, the commercial corridor was not safe for pedestrians. In 2009, with project partners and funding sources, MnDOT and project consultants began the process of redesigning and reconstructing this corridor to make it a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

TH-169 project location



Source: MnDOT 2010

Project Details

Location

Organizations

Case Summary

Visualization

Internet

Meeting Activity

Phone-based

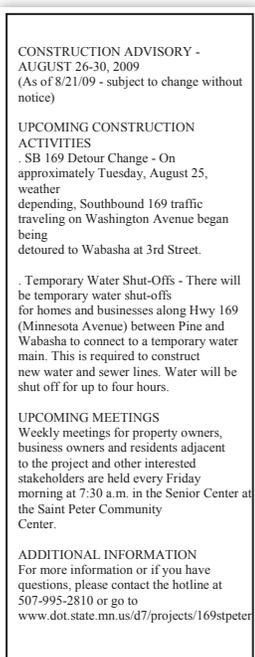
Public Involvement during the construction phase of the project¹

The Trunk Highway 169 reconstruction in St. Peter balanced an emphasis on public input with well-established construction practices and a quick timeline. The reconstruction was funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and thus the project timeline was abbreviated. An interview with a consultant from ZAN Associates revealed that the public involvement efforts were closely influenced by the International Association for Public Participation's Spectrum of Participation. They focused on "informing" the public, using a diverse set of tools to ensure that the community was aware of the status of the reconstruction project. They also sought to gather input from the community as early as possible in the process.

Specific techniques used in the participation effort included:

Weekly e-mail updates. The consulting team sent e-mail updates at the end of each week. These messages were distributed via a listserv that included interested residents and businesses. The e-mail messages ensured a consistent flow of information.

Weekly newspaper updates and articles. Another outreach approach involved preparing weekly construction updates to be published in the local newspaper. This technique ensured that interested parties without Internet access still had an opportunity to receive information about the project. The consulting team worked closely with the newspaper's publisher and editor in developing articles about the project, ensuring that residents were consistently updated.



CONSTRUCTION ADVISORY -
AUGUST 26-30, 2009
(As of 8/21/09 - subject to change without
notice)

UPCOMING CONSTRUCTION
ACTIVITIES
. SB 169 Detour Change - On
approximately Tuesday, August 25,
weather
depending, Southbound 169 traffic
traveling on Washington Avenue began
being
detoured to Wabasha at 3rd Street.

. Temporary Water Shut-Offs - There will
be temporary water shut-offs
for homes and businesses along Hwy 169
(Minnesota Avenue) between Pine and
Wabasha to connect to a temporary water
main. This is required to construct
new water and sewer lines. Water will be
shut off for up to four hours.

UPCOMING MEETINGS
Weekly meetings for property owners,
business owners and residents adjacent
to the project and other interested
stakeholders are held every Friday
morning at 7:30 a.m. in the Senior Center at
the Saint Peter Community
Center.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
For more information or if you have
questions, please contact the hotline at
507-995-2810 or go to
www.dot.state.mn.us/d7/projects/169stpeter

Sample of a weekly construction advisory that was submitted to the St. Peter Herald by ZAN Associates.

Source: Imboden et al. 2010

Visualization

Internet

Meeting Activity

Phone-based

Project hotline. The project team set up a hotline for residents and business owners. The hotline was connected to the consulting team's cell phones, and the public was informed that calls would be answered 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Interviews conducted by Imboden et al. (2010) revealed that while the hotline worked well overall, there were a few instances when urgent calls came in during the early morning before the consultants' on-site office opened and thus no one was available to take the calls.

Targeted outreach to the business community. The project team made a concerted effort to reach out to local businesses potentially affected by the construction. Many businesses collaborated, with partial funding from the St. Peter Chamber of Commerce, in establishing Discover 169, an interest group of local businesses. The group sponsored public events to build awareness of local businesses, including social/family activities, prize competitions, and games. The consulting team took part in the events and co-hosted some of them.

Weekly public meetings during construction. As a complement to weekly written updates via e-mail and the local newspaper, weekly public meetings were also held. At the meetings, the consulting team provided an update about the project and addressed questions from attendees. Interviews by Imboden et al. (2010) suggested that the meetings were generally not well-attended, perhaps as a representative from Zan Associates noted, because information was already widely available via other methods.

Public meetings prior to construction. In addition to meetings held during the construction process, efforts were made to engage the public prior to the start of the project. The early public meetings were intended to respond to questions about the proposed construction and gather feedback about flexible parts of the construction process, such as how to handle cross-street closures.



Conceptual renderings by project team. Renderings were presented at public meetings and posted on a project website.

Source: MnDOT 2009

Project website. A specific website was developed for the TH-169 project. The website contained basic information about the project. Weekly updates provided in other forms, as described above, were posted on the website as well, ensuring the ongoing availability and record of project-related communications. Efforts were made to ensure that all communication from the consulting team and MnDOT included the URL for the website.

Press releases. In addition to the weekly updates for the local newspaper, the consulting team prepared targeted press releases for distribution to the broader community through the larger Mankato media market nearby. The press releases coincided with project milestones and were released as official MnDOT press releases. Interviews revealed that efforts to reach out to the Twin Cities media market were unsuccessful.

Door-to-door outreach. The consulting team conducted in-person outreach to businesses and residents located in the TH-169 corridor and on planned detour routes. These outreach visits were conducted early in the process, with the intent of signing people up for the project listserv. Interviews with the consulting staff suggested that most individuals were comfortable using e-mail as their source for construction updates. For those uncomfortable or without access to e-mail, or for those that did not speak English as their primary language, the consultants made several in-person visits.

169 Highway Reconstruction Project website: <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/d7/projects/169stpeter/index.html>

International Association for Public Participation. 2007. Spectrum of Public Participation. Retrieved from http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/IAP2%20Spectrum_vertical.pdf

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References