

To: **Mayor and City Council**  
Through: **Nate Burkett, City Manager**  
From: **Ross Beckwith, Public Works & Parks Director/City Engineer**  
Date: **September 27, 2021**

## **Butler Avenue Trail Study**

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### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

At the February 8, 2021 City Council meeting the City entered into a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) with Dakota County and South St. Paul for a Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) grant to conduct a feasibility study for a trail connection along Butler Avenue from Robert Street to Concord Street. WSB was hired as the consultant to complete the study and provided multiple alignment options. As a part of the grant, the cities were required to undertake a public outreach effort. An open house meeting was held on July 27, 2021 and was well attended by residents of both cities. At the open house, options of trail on the north side, south side, and with or without on-street parking were shown for feedback and discussion. In addition, a public comment survey was posted on Facebook. Results of both the survey and open house comments are attached.

Since the open house, MnDOT determined that the TH 52 overpass could not structurally withstand the additional weight of a trail or sidewalk on the south side. There is currently a sidewalk on the north side of the bridge, which would control where trail connections go on either end. This really forces the trail to be on the north side of Butler Avenue to avoid multiple crossings of the roadway by bicycles and pedestrians.

At a recent Council workshop in South St. Paul, there was only support for constructing a trail from Robert Street to Thompson County Park. There are trails through that park which connect to South St. Paul currently. There is no desire for any trails along Butler Avenue in South St. Paul. Discussing that information with Dakota County, such a trail from Robert Street to Thompson County Park does not complete the trail gap along Butler Avenue that exists to Concord Boulevard. Since there is already sidewalk along both sides of Butler Avenue from Robert Street to Thomson County Park, just widening one side to an asphalt trail is not a viable project.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The total budget for this preliminary engineering project is \$147,647 which includes the \$30,000 SHIP grant and a contribution from each City of \$8,824. To date, approximate 30% of the budget is spent.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff is recommending that this study end, before it moves into preliminary design. With a revised Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in the near future, the Butler Avenue corridor will get a new look on how it ties into our overall network. If there is a desire to bring this back at a later date that can certainly be done as it remains a priority trail gap for the county.

Attachment: Butler Avenue Trail Study and Community Feedback