

**A Citizen Analysis of Transportation Issues
Affecting the City of Northfield
and Surrounding Area**

A Recommendation for Improvements in Safety, Access and Quality of Life Issues for Northfield Transportation

July 2000

**Prepared by the Northfield Industrial Corporation
Transportation Task Force**

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Preface

This report was compiled with the support of the Northfield City Council. Recommendations found in this report reflect the varied opinions of the members of the Task Force. Also reflected are comments and direction from a community meeting held at Bridgewater Elementary School on April 18, 2000 and site tours of various parts of the city by Task Force Members and other concerned citizens.

The basic principles followed during all these discussions have emphasized the following:

- The needs of the few must not outweigh the GREATER GOOD of the many.
- ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES must be considered carefully at every step.
- PLANNING for the future must become a well-practiced habit.

As we have studied the proposals and reports made to the city regarding transportation issues over the last 35 years, the following concepts seem to rise above the rest, namely:

Thoughtful planning as a critical element in ongoing development strategies, and preservation of Northfield as an independently viable community have held true over those 35 years. However, when planning solutions are not implemented or the solutions are tinkered with until they become unrecognizable, significant problems result.

It is the nature of City government that as time passes, the leadership changes. For this reason, it is critically important that two elements remain constant. These two elements are:

- the continuity of City staff bridging elected leadership changes, to ensure “institutional memory”;
- a long-range plan of which the City and its citizens have taken ownership, to maintain its basic goals

What is evident in our study of those 35 years of planning in Northfield is that (in most cases) solid long-range plans were brought forth and adopted by the City only to be underutilized or ignored. Further, over time the fundamental goals of those plans were dismantled and stripped of the context that made them effective. As subsequent leadership sets have come on board, the plans have increasingly diminished in the leadership’s “institutional memory” until the basic concepts are forgotten, or remembered so inaccurately, that they no longer make sense and are discarded completely. In these two scenarios the City Council then commissions a new plan and the process begins all over again. This kind of “planning” results in wasted money and time.

We call on City leadership to break this chain of dysfunctional planning and establish procedures to ensure continuity of community-wide planning goals and implementation. This goes well beyond the placement of lines on a map. It goes well beyond shying away from controversy. It establishes a planning process that provides a framework for development, a plan for preservation of agricultural lands and natural areas and makes services accessible to the citizens of Northfield via a diverse set of transportation modes.

City leadership must act to formalize a planning process that is both inclusive and comprehensive. Development pressures will clearly not decrease. To maintain Northfield’s strong identity as a unique and special place, careful thought must be given, and critical decisions must be made, to ensure that uniqueness well into the future. Those critical choices will shape the “preferred future” of who we are and where we live. We must model new ways of moving beyond “status quo” thinking, striving for the best, and not settling for compromised mediocrity.

The Task Force started out looking for a means to move in and around the city. We ended up focusing on ways to move in a new direction.

Introduction

“To avoid criticism do nothing, say nothing, be nothing.” *Elbert Hubbard*

I. *The Task Force*

A. The Northfield Industrial Corporation Transportation Task Force is an ad hoc group whose goal is to help promote action on specific community transportation needs. The group is made up of business owners, developers, college personnel, an architect, retirees, and received assistance from the Northfield Public Works Department (Randy Peterson), the Northfield Economic Development Authority (Dixon Bond), and the Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce (Kathy Feldbrugge).

B. The following means were used to gather information and historical perspective of transportation issues and concerns in and around Northfield:

1. All city transportation studies from as far back as 35 years ago were reviewed in order to evaluate these needs.
2. Site visits, video presentation, and anecdotal data were included in the process.
3. The Task Force also invited the public to submit their ideas and input at a Community Meeting held on April 18, 2000. Comments from the Community Meeting are included in each identified problem area.

II. *A Growing Town / Need for Informed Policy*

A. The City of Northfield is currently experiencing growth in many areas: residential, commercial, institutional and at both college campuses. Several of the growth areas (some being planned, others already under construction) are too recent to have been included in any of the previous transportation studies on record. These developments will result in significant traffic increases along certain routes and will drive development in the future if the City does not follow through with the process of long-range planning and associated policy decisions. This is a critical point in time which will impact the planned growth (or sprawl, if unplanned) of Northfield for generations to come.

B. It is said that if you don't plan for the future, any road will get you there. It is time to establish goals for a “preferred future” This future is the one of which all would prefer to be a part. We shape that future, still being formed, as we make decisions on these important matters. The marriage of thoughtful, long-range planning and associated, incremental decision-making can form that preferred future. It is not a sprint. Instead it is a measured process of fact gathering and consensus building; open policy discussion and informed leadership; and finally, the political will to do what is best for the many.

C. In addition to newly developing commercial projects, there are new neighborhoods being planned that will also affect traffic flow around and through the community. New traffic patterns, based on residents' access to schools, churches, retail areas, and workplaces, will need to interconnect with existing ones. This future development will also result in increased pedestrian and bicycle movement in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Transportation issues are not limited to motor vehicles; all modes must be included specifically public transportation and bike and pedestrian paths.

D. All roads planned or constructed attract development. The Task Force is concerned about the impact of consequential development and its effects on Northfield's quality of life and small town feel. We caution the City's political leaders and planning staff to carefully ensure that land uses designated adjacent to planned roads do not negatively impact environmentally sensitive areas or the Central Business District of Northfield. It is important to mention in addition the potential for disjointed development that by-passes historically create when they are super imposed over community transportation systems. The tendency is for development to follow the traffic and create satellite development areas away from the traditional city center. The effect is to marginalize the traditional center and create new problems in attempting to solve congestion issues. The City must carefully consider safeguards to prevent this type of satellite development from proliferating. To do otherwise creates a confusing urban framework of pocket developments only effectively accessed by vehicular (non-bicycle or pedestrian) transportation.

III. Staying in Front of Development

A. Much of the residential growth was anticipated in preceding transportation studies. Plans for addressing residential growth were recommended. However, implementation of those recommendations did not always keep up with the community's growth. As a result, problem areas arose.

B. When the expected impacts of future residential and commercial developments are added to the current transportation picture, it becomes obvious that corrective action will be urgently needed to address problems previously left unsolved or unaddressed. Furthermore, future transportation planning and its subsequent implementation must be considered as a whole, so that such problems are not allowed to recur.

C. Of particular importance, the proposed Menards in Dundas and grocery store with Target, along with additional development sure to come as well, will add substantial traffic to T.H. 3 in addition to that already foreseen. This will require the development of reliever routes to minimize the impact of traffic on the T.H. 3/Fifth Street intersection and the T.H. 3/T.H. 19 jointly used section. For example, this makes recommendations in this report for Jefferson Parkway, both to the east and west of TH 3 more critical to pursue. It also suggests the importance of completing Jefferson Road to CR 1, and the future upgrades of CR 1, CR 81, CR 78, and Decker Avenue, not specifically covered in the detail section of the Task Force's report.

D. The Task Force's efforts have been directed primarily at reviewing and prioritizing twelve (12) problem areas in our highway and street circulation patterns. Many, but not all, of these areas have been addressed in the past by the City Council and the Planning Commission. The recently approved Transportation Plan, to be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan, is the most recent example of that discussion. The Task Force wishes this document to also become part of the Comprehensive Plan Process and a kick-off point for Council action to address deficiencies in the existing transportation system. Each identified problem area has been addressed in this report with a description of the problem area, a discussion of the standards of **Safety, Access and Quality of Life**, followed by conclusions.

IV. Guidelines for the Common Good

A. During its review of these problem areas, the Task Force agreed that certain principles must always be kept in mind when addressing transportation issues, and indeed urban planning in general. These principles are:

1. The needs of the few must not outweigh the greater good of the many.
2. Environmental issues must be carefully considered at every step.
3. Planning for the future must become a well-practiced habit.

B. The group also settled on three standards against which each transportation proposal should be evaluated. These standards are **Safety, Access, and Quality of Life**. These standards were also given to the attendees of the community meeting as guidelines for their suggestions. As the problem areas were each discussed, it became readily apparent that all 12 were problem areas due to issues which fit into these standards. Whether the topic was bike paths, railroad traffic, internal circulation patterns, or moving through and around town - using these standards helped cut to the heart of the problem and helped focus our efforts. Each of the problem areas that follow is discussed as it relates to these three standards.

V. *Means to an End: Transportation System Financing & Acquiring Right-of-Way*

A. The Task Force recognizes that funding sources are required for the recommendations made in this report. Some of the recommendations made by this report will likely require significant funding from the City of Northfield. Most routes should be funded in accordance with the City's policies; meaning at least 50% of the cost will be assessed to a local development. The remaining 50%, as is typical, would be funded through a general tax levy or excess construction funds. However, beyond limited State Aid dollars and City maintenance funds, no dedicated funding program exists for roadway improvements. Consequently, some routes will require special funding.

B. We recommend that the City begin to develop a Transportation Fund, beyond its street maintenance and infrastructure replacement funding sources. This Fund would be dedicated to the construction of major collector or arterial roadways for routes falling outside of the City's State Aid network or other MnDOT and county funding sources. We suggest a funding program with sufficient annual funding for each year of a 20-year period to provide for completion of the road system proposed in this report. The total cost for the roadway systems shown in this report is estimated to be \$15 to \$20 million in today's dollars.

C. For major projects such as the Jefferson Parkway West bridge over the Cannon River, we recommend the City Council direct City staff to pursue Federal funding sources, grants, and low interest loans through the State of Minnesota. It can take several years to be eligible for these types of funds. Federal funds are available to projects included in the State Transportation Improvement Projects (STIP) list developed by MnDOT. This is a 3-year STIP list, meaning that projects applying for funds in 2000 would be eligible no earlier than 2003. Other possible funding mechanisms include use of a State Program offering low interest loans labeled the Transportation Revolving Loan Fund (TRLF). By use of TRLF dollars a major project could be funded with the intention of repaying the loan through a combination of several different funding sources.

D. The development and maintenance of a functional road system for the community of Northfield requires:

1. *The establishment and placement of most of the roadway corridors by City Council Action.*

The establishment and placement of roadway corridors will require that some preliminary engineering and environmental studies be conducted to ensure that the proper corridor is selected and recommended to City Council. This selection could be accomplished by the City Council ordering the preparation of feasibility reports for the identified roadway corridors.

2. *The appropriation of funds and acquisition of necessary rights-of-way.*
3. *The appropriation of funds for the construction and maintenance of the roadway system.*

VI. *Our Common Goal*

Northfield is graced with an attractive historical urban center, a relatively healthy business sector, and well-maintained neighborhoods. Added to these amenities is a small town feel that attracts many people. As our town grows, the challenge will be to plan, and adhere to, the implementation of a transportation system that can effectively handle the hustle and bustle of a vibrant growing town, and still complement the attractive and livable qualities its residents currently enjoy. This Task Force has tried to honor that goal and has tried to present findings in a way to encourage the City Council to adopt and implement transportation decisions to benefit the entire community of Northfield.

VII. *Members of the Northfield Industrial Corporation Transportation Task Force*

John Klockeman, Chair	Blumentals/Architecture, Inc.
Suzannah Ciernia	Life Skills Education
Bill Lindstrom	Northfield Retirement Center
Alan Marks	Northfield Printing
Noel Stratmoen	Northfield School Board
Ray Cox	Northfield Construction Co.
Joe Hargis	Carleton College
Ken Madole	Retired Engineer
Pete Sandberg	St. Olaf College
John Stull	Malt-O- Meal
Don Pavek	College City Homes, Inc.

Ex-Officio Members:

Dixon Bond	Northfield Economic Development Authority
Kathy Feldbrugge	Northfield Area Chamber of Commerce
Randy Peterson	Northfield Director of Public Works

Executive Summary of Recommendations

The NIC Transportation Task Force has focused on twelve roadway segments as identified on the enclosed map, most of which have been considered in previous transportation studies. In many cases, the Task Force reached conclusions similar to those arrived at by previous studies. The additional discussion and rationale may prove helpful. In a few study areas, the Task Force recommendations are somewhat different from previous conclusions, and add new elements. All study areas have been evaluated based on standards of safety, access, and effect on quality of life in Northfield. The study area conclusions are summarized as follows:

Area #1 Future T.H. 19 Bypass – Agrees with current City Council approach asking MNDOT to prepare a corridor study. Supports 320th Street option if handled carefully in Waterford area.

Area #2 Proposed Cedar Avenue Extension (320th Street to North Avenue) – Supports currently planned direct extension of Cedar Avenue south from 320th Cedar west intersection.

Area #3 North Avenue (T.H. 19 to Cedar Avenue) – Supports currently planned upgrade.

Area #4 Thye Parkway (Cedar Avenue Extension to T.H. 3) – Supports currently planned development.

Area #5 North Avenue (Zanmiller Drive to T.H. 3) – Proposes extending North Avenue to T.H. 3 as originally conceived in 1965.

Area #6 Proposed Cedar Avenue Extension (North Avenue to T.H. 19) – Supports current plan. Suggests addition of sidewalks and bikeways.

Area #7 Jefferson Parkway Extension (T.H. 19 to Armstrong Road) – Supports and suggests two alternative routes.

Area #8 Jefferson Parkway Extension (Armstrong Road to T.H. 3 across Cannon River) – Supports strongly. Discussion of alternative crossing locations.

Area #9 Jefferson Parkway Link (Sibley View Lane to Lake Drive) and (Michigan Drive E. to Spring Creek Road) – Supports immediate completion of this missing link.

Area #10 Jefferson Parkway Extension (Spring Creek Road to T.H. 19) – Supports completion as part of ring road to help relieve center city congestion.

Area #11 Spring Creek Road (Jefferson Parkway to T.H. 19) – Supports full pavement to T.H. 19, sidewalks and future upgrade south as area develops.

Area #12 T.H. 19 and T.H. 3 Common Roadway Segment – Suggests reintroducing turning lanes eliminated at 2nd Street and 5th Street.

In addition, the Task Force recommends that the City Council immediately consider a 20 year plan to finance transportation needs and begin, in certain cases, early acquisition for future road rights-of-way.

The report also raises general concerns about control of development adjacent to new roadways, the development of reliever roads for south commercial development, the adequacy of pedestrian and bicycle transportation infrastructure and public transportation, and how transportation plans can become transportation reality.

Identified Problem Area #1

FUTURE HIGHWAY 19 BYPASS

I. *Current Location:*

A. Currently, traffic moves from west to east via a two lane highway that curves through rural and residential acreage for about 1 mile before intersecting with Old Dutch Road and then the St. Olaf College entrance, just inside the city limits. Continuing past the college entrance, traffic moves between residential and commercial property to a major intersection with Armstrong Road that allows traffic to move to an Industrial Park on the right (south) and to a residential area on the left (north). Continuing past this intersection, traffic moves past more industry, past a large residential care facility, past active railroad tracks to a major intersection with T.H. 3. At that intersection (Fifth Street), T.H. 19 joins with T.H. 3 and takes a left turn north three blocks to 2nd Street, then right (east) across the Cannon River to a major intersection with Division Street, which is the north end of the central commercial district. At that intersection, T.H. 19 traffic turns left (northeast) moving between a Carleton College residential area and through a portion of the Carleton College campus, then past the Carleton Arboretum and once again east into a rural area via a two lane highway.

B. Comments From The Community Meeting:

- Concern about the number of railroad tracks T.H. 19 must cross.
- Concern about the number of trains that impact T.H. 19 traffic.
- Need more pedestrian friendly roadways, especially T.H. 19 and T.H. 3.
- Safe crossings for pedestrians and bikes.
- Eliminate the T.H. 19 and T.H. 3 commons.
- Second Street, T.H. 19, and T.H. 3 are a safety issue.
- Concern about the danger of railroad grade crossings and railroad crossing upkeep.
- Provide for through traffic on T.H. 19 to bypass the city.
- Provide for connections to the new hospital site via T.H. 19 bypass.
- Complete an east-west link.

C. Historical Discussion:

1. Hodne Comprehensive Plan of 1965 encouraged a bypass beginning at the T.H. 19 / Garrett Decker intersection, and following the Rice-Dakota County line east to North Avenue, continuing across Dresden Avenue, across T.H. 3, bridging the Cannon River, through the Carleton Arboretum, and continuing in an easterly direction to rejoin with T.H. 19.
2. Northfield Transportation Plan, June 10, 1998 recommends east-west movements including Thye Parkway connection between Cedar Avenue and Dresden Avenue continuing to T.H. 3. There is a discussion of the need or desire for a new river crossing for T.H. 19 north of Carleton College; and a west side bypass to remove east-west traffic from Greenvale Avenue, by following 320th Street west to Garrett Avenue South, to a new intersection at T.H. 19.
3. BRW Traffic Impact Study, August 24, 1999 recommended 320th Street as a vital and continuous link between Cedar Avenue, T.H. 3 and T.H. 19, to direct traffic away from the residential areas and to create a minor arterial, or major collector, providing a more direct connection and where related impacts to the area would be less.

II. *Discussion Based On Safety, Access, And Quality Of Life:*

A. SAFETY

The **FUTURE T.H. 19 BYPASS** improves safety at numerous existing locations and intersections. The intersections of St. Olaf College, Armstrong Road, the railroad tracks, T.H. 3 and T.H. 19, 2nd Street, Division Street, and Carleton College are busy at many times of the day and night. Providing a bypass will allow through traffic to skirt the city and alleviate these intersections of congestion. This bypass will reduce the volume of traffic on the common section. The reduction of traffic will reduce the traffic conflicts and the number of vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle accidents.

B. ACCESS

The city proper remains easily accessible from all directions via the current T.H. 19 and T.H. 3.

C. QUALITY OF LIFE

The quality of life aspect would be clearly improved in several locations, including: the large residential care facility, the north end of Division Street, and the Carleton College campus. Efforts must be made for minimizing the impact to Waterford; an environmentally responsible crossing of the Cannon River; and for avoiding the Carleton Arboretum before rejoining T.H. 19 east of the city. The City would experience less traffic on T.H. 3 and T.H. 19 between Fifth and Second Streets and on T.H. 19, within the City.

III. *Problem Area #1 Conclusions:*

The City Council, by resolution, has requested the Department of Transportation to conduct a corridor study of T.H. 19. The relocation of T.H. 19 from its existing location requires action by the State of Minnesota Department of Transportation. Therefore, it is not possible to designate a specific corridor location at this time. The Task Force does see considerable promise in the corridor of 320th Street. Thorough study of the corridor may present an alternative that does not cross the Arboretum in order to rejoin with existing T.H. 19 east of the community. The bypass to the north of the City provides the opportunity to remove highway traffic that divides the Carleton campus. In addition, it provides excellent access to the existing collector roads that have north-south directional orientation. The Task Force recommends that the Council direct staff to work with the Department of Transportation and develop a T.H. 19 bypass corridor to the north of the City.

Identified Problem Areas #2 and #6

PROPOSED CEDAR AVENUE EXTENSION (320TH STREET TO NORTH AVENUE) and
PROPOSED CEDAR AVENUE EXTENSION (NORTH AVENUE TO T.H. 19)

I. *Current Location:*

A. The existing Cedar Avenue access into Northfield is awkward, requiring frequent sharp turns on a narrow roadway with limited shoulders. This northwest entrance into the City cuts through an expanding residential and retirement housing area and brings traffic flow onto Lincoln Parkway and Greenvale Avenue, a low capacity residential street.

B. Comments From the Community Meeting:

- Northwest Access (Cedar Avenue into Town)
- Need Connector roads to proposed hospital site from the southeast part of town.
- Provide an outer ring and inner ring of roadways.
- Provide connections to the proposed hospital.
- The Cedar Avenue extension is an access issue.
- Need ring road and regional access to community.

C. Historical Discussion

This section was detailed in the 1998 Transportation Plan and the City Council took action on May 1 to bring much of this plan into focus. The Transportation Task Force supports the 2000 Comprehensive Plan Amendment that would extend Cedar Avenue (Dakota County #96) from its current junction at 320th Street to North Avenue in roughly a straight north/south line. This concept also proposes a connection from this Cedar Avenue extension to T.H. 19 and that it "should be designated as a major arterial and be as direct as possible".

The route and location for this last extension of Cedar Avenue to T.H. 19 is planned to occur with the proposed Northfield Hospital project, well ahead of roadways to the South. We suggest that final routing of the Cedar connection to T.H. 19 from the north will need to be near the existing Old Dutch Road intersection. Future alignments to the south will need to work from this point. An additional entrance to the St. Olaf campus is desirable and may factor in to the location of the roadway from North Avenue to T.H. 19.

II. *Discussion Based on Safety, Access, And Quality Of Life*

A. SAFETY

If constructed as proposed, this extension of Cedar allows needed access to proposed hospital development with improved traffic flow to north, south, and west on major highways and from southeastern areas of Northfield. Feedback at the NIC Transportation Community Meeting included a Cedar Avenue Extension as a Major Access issue for Northfield. Given the above current limitations, it is critical that Cedar Avenue be redesigned to allow for better intergration into a future transportation grid into and around Northfield.

The route improves travel time to hospital area for emergency vehicles, and for commuting to I-35 and Lakeville, Apple Valley, and other destinations. It also allows for another major entrance to St. Olaf campus to help reduce traffic into area roads during major campus events.

B. ACCESS

This route links into proposed parkway system to the south for maximum travel flexibility around the perimeter of Northfield, including truck and other through traffic, and allows for another major entrance to St. Olaf campus.

C. QUALITY OF LIFE

The proposed extension of Cedar Avenue relieves pressure on the Lincoln Parkway and Greenvale Avenue, and allows needed access to proposed hospital development with improved flow to north, south, and west on major highways and from southeastern areas of Northfield with a corresponding Jefferson Parkway extension. It allows for another major entrance to St. Olaf campus to help reduce traffic onto area roads during major campus events, and to speed access to Cedar and I-35 for commuting workers. It diminishes volume of traffic through residential sections of T.H. 19 west of St. Olaf campus.

III. Problem Areas #2 and #6 Conclusions:

The proposed development slated in this area and the importance of access to T.H. 19 and Cedar Avenue make planning and properly interconnecting these roadways of utmost importance. Inevitably all roadway locations are debatable and carry political pros and cons. However, in this area of our study these factors already are reasonably clear. They have been identified and agreed upon by the recent Comprehensive Plan Amendments, approved by the Planning Commission and City Council, and were examined carefully by this Task Force. It is the Task Force's hope that final planning can lead to action on implementation of these roadway sections in the very near future.

The Task Force suggests the incorporation of bikeways and sidewalks in this area. The proposed hospital, clinics, and other future developments in this area, along with a large nearby student population, demand bike and pedestrian considerations. The Mill Towns Trail also is close enough that a possible link to it should be planned adjacent to any Jefferson Parkway extension that may be built.

Identified Problem Areas #3 and #5

NORTH AVENUE (FROM T.H. 19 TO CEDAR AVENUE)

NORTH AVENUE (ZANMILLER DRIVE TO T.H. 3)

I. Current Location:

A. Rice County identifies 80th Street East as a connection between T.H. 19 and existing Cedar Avenue, west of the City of Northfield along the Rice-Dakota County Line. 80th Street East is often called NORTH AVENUE and is referred to by Dakota County as 330th Street. The street extending east from Cedar to Zanmiller Drive along the Rice-Dakota line has been named NORTH AVENUE by the City of Northfield. Presently, North Avenue terminates at Zanmiller Drive. North Avenue serves as collector street by utilizing parts of Zanmiller Drive, Meldahl Lane, and Lockwood Drive. A very indirect Connection to T.H. 3 can be accomplished by use of these streets, Lincoln Parkway, Linden Street, and Greenvale Avenue.

B. Comments from the Community Meeting:

- Provide an inner ring of roadways.
- Provide connections to the proposed hospital site, especially from the northeast.
- Access to the proposed hospital site from North Avenue to the west.
- Complete the east west link on North Avenue.

C. Historical Discussion:

1. Hodne Comprehensive Plan of 1965 encouraged a bypass beginning at the T.H. 19 / Garrett Decker Intersection, and following the Rice-Dakota County line east to North Avenue, continuing across Dresden Avenue, across T.H. 3, bridging the Cannon River, through the Carleton Arboretum, and continuing in an easterly direction to rejoin with T.H. 19.
2. Northfield Transportation Plan, June 10, 1998 makes no reference to North Avenue.
3. BRW Traffic Impact Study, August 24, 1999 recognizes a need for an East-West Connection to direct traffic from the residential areas.

*II. Discussion Based On Safety, Access, And Quality Of Life:***A. SAFETY**

The **NORTH AVENUE** (80th Street East) from T.H. 19 (west) to existing Cedar Avenue has a gravel surface and poor cross-section that presents a safety problem for emergency vehicles that will need access to the proposed hospital site. The segment between existing Cedar Avenue and Zanmiller Drive has been constructed to a reasonable standard for a collector street. The segment between Zanmiller Drive and T.H. 3 has not been constructed, so it does not provide reasonable continuity or serve as a collector route within the City.

B. ACCESS

Providing continuity across the northerly-developed area of the City, as well as to the west on 80th Street East, is essential for direct access to the proposed hospital site, and its medical campus, in addition to the proposed residential campus, and extensive neighborhoods that have grown on this side of town. Completion of the route provides an east-west connection with all north-south routes that enter the northern part of the City west of the river.

C. QUALITY OF LIFE

Those that reside in the rapidly growing northwestern developed area of the community lack direct access to T.H. 3, and a westerly route out of the City. As all modes of traffic from this new development increases, North Avenue will need to be utilized to handle the east-west movement for which it was originally designed. The Task Force strongly encourages this link include safe and attractive pedestrian walk ways and bike lanes to enable all to enjoy a more user-friendly circulation within the town.

III. Problem Areas #3 and #5 Conclusions:

The improvement of North Avenue from T.H. 19 to the existing Cedar Avenue is an essential transportation link for the proposed hospital, medical center, St. Olaf residential housing, and aforementioned neighborhoods. The proposed facilities are expected to be located between the proposed Cedar Avenue Extension and the existing Cedar Avenue just north of North Avenue.

North Avenue between Zanmiller Drive and T.H. 3 has been constructed to a reasonable standard to serve the existing and potential needs between existing Cedar Avenue and Zanmiller Drive. A connecting link of North Avenue needs to be constructed to provide continuity of service, access to the street system in the northern developed part of the City. Without completing the above segments of North Avenue, this important collector street will not comply with Comprehensive Plan provisions to establish collector streets along section and quarter section lines. This segment can be completed far earlier than Thye Parkway because it is much shorter and already within the municipal boundry.

Identified Problem Area #4

THYE PARKWAY (CEDAR AVENUE EXTENSION TO T.H. 3)

I. *Current Location:*

A. Currently, **THYE PARKWAY (CEDAR AVENUE EXTENSION TO T.H. 3)** is included in the comprehensive Transportation Plan adopted by the City Council. The plan includes this roadway to be located between the proposed Cedar Avenue Extension and T.H. 3. The roadway is located from the west along a quarter section line to a point easterly of the existing Cedar Avenue, then southeasterly to align with a constructed portion of **THYE PARKWAY**. The proposed roadway would be constructed easterly to join with T.H. 3.

B. Comments from the Community Meetings:

- Concern about the lack of access to the north and west.
- Need to provide multiple routes to the hospital, especially from T.H. 3.
- Provide Thye Parkway as on the City Proposed Plan map.
- Concerns about ring road commercial development.
- St. Olaf College does not support roadway or commercial development of Thye Parkway between existing Cedar Avenue and Cedar Avenue Extension.

C. Historical Discussion:

1. Hodne Comprehensive Plan of 1965 makes no reference to Thye Parkway.
2. Northfield Transportation Plan, June 19, 1998 states that Thye Parkway will be an essential link between Cedar Avenue and T.H. 3 located halfway between Lincoln Parkway and 320th Street, located whenever possible along the quarter section line. It should be designed to be a convenient collector route for residential traffic in that area and for future adjacent area industrial development closer to T.H. 3.
3. BRW Traffic Impact Study, August 24, 1999 makes no reference to Thye Parkway.

II. *Discussion Based On Safety, Access, And Quality Of Life:*

A. SAFETY

THYE PARKWAY (CEDAR AVENUE EXTENSION TO T.H. 3) as shown on the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, will be a properly designed east-west collector street between Cedar Avenue and T.H. 3. Construction and use will provide an opportunity for reducing traffic on Greenvale Avenue and Lincoln Parkway thus improving safety for school children and pedestrians.

B. ACCESS

Developing Thye Parkway is another important step to the overall concept plan for providing suitable east-west access.

C. QUALITY OF LIFE

The impact to quality of life is significant... especially in the northern part of the city where residents are aware of large volumes of east-west traffic using streets ill-designed for high volumes of traffic (i.e. St. Olaf Avenue, Greenvale Avenue, and Lockwood to North Avenue.)

III. Problem Area #4 Conclusions:

The construction of Thye Parkway from Cedar Avenue to T.H. 3 is a very important component in the transportation plan for the proposed medical campus and the neighborhoods north of Greenvale Avenue.

Identified Problem Areas #7 and #8

JEFFERSON PARKWAY EXTENSION (T.H. 19 to Armstrong Road)

JEFFERSON PARKWAY EXTENSION (Armstrong Road to T.H. 3)

I. *Current Location*

A. The location of this area is accurately described in the name. This is not a new topic and certainly is one that elicits a wide variety of options and opinions as you poll the citizenry of Northfield. What we, the Task Force, discovered is that even though the precise route is still being debated there seems to be a fairly strong consensus that an additional Cannon River crossing in the southwest corner of Northfield is both desirable and necessary. The route, however must both respect and protect the environmental integrity of the river and its nearby watershed, including Heath Creek and Spring Brook (Rice Creek). The Task Force holds that this is a challenge but doable.

B. Comments from the Community Meeting:

- Concern about the conflict between vehicular traffic and train traffic on T.H. 19.
- Concern about congestion at the T.H. 19 & 3 Commons.
- Expressed need for connector roads to the proposed new medical campus from southeast corner of Northfield.
- Provide an interconnected outer ring system and an inner ring system of roadways.
- Build a parkway belt line providing access north and south with rail and river bridges.
- Concern about railway grade crossings.
- The need for ring road and regional access to community.
- Provide better access to college campuses.
- Provide Jefferson Parkway extension to T.H. 19.

C. Historical Discussion:

Many of the solutions that have been discussed historically can be grouped into the following categories:

1. Jefferson Parkway Extension west at the Ice Arena:

a.) *Linking to Armstrong Road only*

This proposal is least expensive, but has the least to offer. It forces this potential ring road to be diverted back to the northeast and toward the City making it counter-productive. The expense of bridging over the Cannon River, Sechler Park and the railroad tracks would be required. The north landing area of the bridge would take advantage of the elevated height of the former "Rytway" site.

b.) *Crossing Armstrong Road at the former "Rytway" building with Industrial Boulevard extended west to T.H. 19 near the existing Old Dutch Road intersection*

This proposal does accomplish the ring road link to T.H. 19 at the Old Dutch Road intersection. This is less expensive than letter "c" below. It routes the Extension northwest angling across the site east of the existing Malt-O-Meal Distribution Center where it ties into the existing Industrial Boulevard alignment. Industrial Boulevard would then be extended west, south of the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses site, then curve north to T.H. 19

near the existing Old Dutch Road intersection. North of T.H. 19 in this location is the proposed route for the connection between North Avenue and T.H. 19. This route takes great pains to avoid crossing Heath Creek, which is of note. Unfortunately, it misses the opportunity to provide a long-term Creek preservation solution and access solution for the acreage west of the Creek.

- c.) *Crossing Armstrong Road west of the former "Rytway" Building where Armstrong Road turns north/south and crossing Heath Creek twice to T.H. 19 at the existing Old Dutch Road intersection*

This proposal also accomplishes the ring road link to T.H. 19 at the Old Dutch Road intersection. Directing the Extension farther west would allow for a curved, elevated bridge route missing the existing Sechler Park baseball fields, and would instead cross (elevated) the less developed soccer field to the west (east of softball fields 1 and 2). This alignment would then continue across the railroad tracks and land on the site (with elevated topography) just west of the brick, former "Rytway" Building. This alignment would intersect with Armstrong Road, possibly with a traffic signal, and continue west. The land west of Armstrong could become the gateway to a "Park Preservation Zone", which could follow Heath Creek as it winds north and west to Old Dutch Road and beyond. The development proposal calls for a 300 foot wide conservation/nature buffer west of Heath Creek through the development.

2. River crossing proposals south of Jefferson Parkway and north of County Road 1:

Several other ideas have surfaced addressing a bridge south of Jefferson Parkway and north of County Road 1. These proposals all have limitations, in that they don't easily connect to other arterial routes, or cross the Cannon River at even more difficult/wide wetland areas. The exception is the concept of developing County Road 1 as a south ring road. Perhaps in the future this idea is worth pursuing. However, it also is limiting in the fact that it has a difficult interface with the railroad in Dundas and it forces circulatory traffic too far south and west before it can proceed north. A crossing to connect at 100th Street was also considered.

II. *Discussion Based on Access, Safety, And Quality of Life*

A. SAFETY

The overall concept of extending Jefferson Parkway across the river and connecting to T.H. 19 west is well supported by safety concerns. This would lead to reduction of the current congestion at the intersection of T.H. 3 and T.H. 19 at 5th Street. It would also address the much larger traffic volumes anticipated over the next five years. It would alleviate congestion in the "commons area" of the two highways (T.H. 19 & T.H. 3) and the intersection of the two at Second Street. Both safety and access are issues at the current grade level railroad crossing on West 5th Street.

B. ACCESS

Access to the west, to the Interstate via T.H. 19 from south and southeast Northfield are served by the extension of Jefferson Parkway. Most recently, the issue of access to the new proposed northwest medical campus from heavily populated areas south of the City Center has created more impetus to provide this access. Proposed large residential development in the southeast area of Northfield only

add to this need. Avoiding (or at least diminishing) the congestion and delays at the 5th Street/T.H. 3 & T.H. 19 intersection and the intermittent railroad crossing conflict are significant reasons for supporting a new south river crossing.

If the area west of Heath Creek is to develop, the question of how and where the Creek will be crossed will need to be answered. Simply responding, "the Creek must be avoided" ignores the best interests of the watershed and its future viability. The necessity is present for a focused public dialogue about this question. This is an excellent catalyst for the formation of sound public policy addressing environmentally aware and responsible development as a continuation of the development pace decisions established with the agreement reached with Bridgewater Township.

C. QUALITY OF LIFE

Quality of Life aspects are mixed, with the Cannon River crossing and impact on the nearby creeks being negatives, although the treatment of either could minimize the effects. Such crossings of environmentally sensitive areas must be considered carefully at every step. The crossing of Sechler Park, for example, could require the relocation of baseball diamonds in current use if not routed properly. Whether this route requires the relocations of the fields or not, the principle of "greater good" should guide this decision.

The crossings of Heath Creek in a carefully thought out process of preservation and conservancy may be, in fact, accomplished more effectively in a comprehensive development project rather than as a "one-bridge-at-a-time" effort that does not establish a conservation buffer. Crossing Heath Creek is, without question, a challenge. It's a challenge that, if addressed properly, could extend a park preserve into the new neighborhood and beyond. Again, much public discussion needs to occur and hard questions need to be asked.

III. *Problem Areas #7 and #8 Conclusion*

There is no question that issues of safety, access and quality of life support the construction of the Jefferson Parkway extension across the Cannon River and the railroad tracks, connecting to T.H. 19 west. The precise footprint on the west side of the River may be better identified by highway engineers who could quantify cost differences to compare with the environmental and development interests in the area. This proposal is critical to the entire transportation plan, and even more so as a reliever of congestion from traffic generated by commercial development on T.H. 3 south.

Identified Problem Areas #9, and #10

JEFFERSON PARKWAY LINK (Sibley View Lane to Lake Drive) and
 JEFFERSON PARKWAY LINK (Michigan Drive E. to Spring Creek Road)
 JEFFERSON PARKWAY EXTENSION (Spring Creek Road to T.H. 19)

I. *Current Location*

A. There are two uncompleted links of Jefferson Parkway located east of T.H. 246 and west of Spring Creek Road. The location of the links is shown above. Completion of these links would allow traffic to utilize Jefferson Parkway from T.H. 3 easterly to Spring Creek Road. Jefferson Parkway north and east of Spring Creek Road as shown on the approved Comprehensive Plan Map crosses Woodley Street (County Road 28) east of Heywood Road, crosses Wall Street Road (County Road 79) and intersects T.H. 19 about ½ mile east of Spring Creek Road.

B. Comments from the Community Meeting:

- Need roads around the community.
- Provide an outer ring and inner ring of roadways.
- Build a Parkway belt line.
- Need ring road and regional access to community.
- Provide Spring Creek Road connection between Jefferson Parkway to Woodley Street.

C. Historical Discussion

Jefferson Parkway has been constructed to a reasonable standard between T.H. 3 and Sibley View Lane. The Parkway serves much of the southeastern portion of the City and provides access to schools and significant housing development. The 1965 Comprehensive Plan identified the area served by Jefferson Parkway as a major residential growth area.

II *Discussion Based Upon Safety, Access and Quality of Life*

A. SAFETY

Sidewalks along both sides of this completed facility provide for safety of pedestrians. The roadway widened to Parkway standards provides an element of safety for bike riders. The recently completed divided roadway section provides turn lanes out of the fluid lane for safe turning movements.

B. ACCESS

The completed roadway will provide a means for travel on the east side of the community between T.H. 19 and T.H. 3. With other contemplated road improvements, the east and south east City residents that need to travel to the west and north will have convenient access.

C. QUALITY OF LIFE

Completion of Jefferson Parkway will reduce traffic at the Fifth Street intersection and thereby reduce congestion. It will provide a convenient means of access to other parts of the City for a large and growing residential area. Traffic that does not have an origin or destination in the City has the opportunity to bypass the downtown.

III *Problem Areas #9 and #10 Conclusion*

This collector roadway is needed to provide safe access from residential areas to State highways. Completion of all segments should proceed without delay.

Identified Problem Area # 11

SPRING CREEK ROAD (Jefferson Parkway to T.H. 19 East)

I. *Current Location*

A. Spring Creek Road extends from T.H. 19 on the north, southerly to the City limits. From the City limits, this road extends southerly to County Road # 1 and is called Hall Avenue.

B. Comments from the Community Meeting:

- Provide an outer ring and inner ring of roadways.
- Safety for walkers and bikers access to parks.
- Provide Spring Creek Road connection between Jefferson Parkway to Woodley Street.

C. Historical Discussion

Spring Creek Road was a township road before it was taken into the City. Some portions have improved surfacing while the greatest portion remains unimproved gravel surface. The Comprehensive Plan has identified this as a local street.

II. *Discussion Based on Safety, Access, and Quality of Life*

A. SAFETY

There are many pedestrians and bike riders that utilize this road. In addition, there is a golf cart and walkway between two portions of the Northfield Golf Club that is a blind crossing for motorists. Sidewalks and properly marked crossings are needed to protect pedestrians. Improved roadway surfacing and intersections are needed for safer travel on this road.

B. ACCESS

While this roadway should not be designated a high use collector street, it is important to upgrade and preserve the roadway as an internal access link between the south and north portions of the city. This roadway should include sidewalks, as it provides good access to area schools.

C. QUALITY OF LIFE

Surfacing of gravel portions would reduce the dust problems.

Spring Creek Road provides a convenient access from T.H. 19 on the north to County Road 81 on the south.

II. *Problem Area #11 Conclusion*

It is important to upgrade and preserve the roadway as an internal access link between the south and north portions of the City, and to provide a reliever route to commercial development on T.H. 3 south. The roadway should include sidewalks, because of the many pedestrians that use the area.

Problem Area #12

T.H. 19 AND 3 COMMON ROADWAY SEGMENT

I. *Current Location*

A. The common T.H. 3 and T.H. 19 segment lies between Second Street and Fifth Street in the center of Northfield. This narrow four lane non-divided roadway has many turning movements into business and intersecting streets, which provide access to the historic shopping district. The high traffic volume and conflicting turning movements contribute to a high accident experience. The Council has received recommendations for improvement of this road segment from a Highway Center Section Committee.

B. Comments From The Community Meeting:

- Provides bike lanes.
- Provides a pedestrian friendly roadway. Improves the T.H. 3 Second Street intersection.
- Provides additional sidewalks.
- Provides a safer T.H. 3 Second Street intersection.
- Provides pedestrian crossing and can provide for improved turning movements.

C. Historical Discussion

The Center Section Committee studied this segment of roadway for more than two years and has submitted recommendations to the Council. The Minnesota Department of Transportation is in the process of final design and acquisition of right-of-way. It is expected that the improvement project, long delayed, will be constructed in 2002.

II. *Discussion Based Upon Safety, Access, and Quality of Life*

A. SAFETY

The completed reconstruction provides bicycle lanes for each direction of traffic with connections to existing bike trails.

The completed reconstruction provides a divided four lane roadway for increased safety.

The completed reconstruction provides sidewalks on both sides of the roadway for pedestrian safety.

The completed reconstruction provides improved road alignment for safer travel.

The completed reconstruction will provide improved road geometry at the Second Street intersection

B. ACCESS

The Malt-o-Meal access will be improved after the new construction.

In general very little direct access will be affected with the improvements. Some directional access may be limited because of the divided, safer, roadway to be constructed.

C. QUALITY OF LIFE

The design incorporates improved pedestrian crossings and sidewalks and bicycle lanes for pedestrians and bike riders.

Curvature at Second Street will be improved for ease of driving.

Center median will reduce accidents and provide for ease of driving.

III. Problem Area #12 Conclusion

The Council will soon be receiving final recommendations for construction by MnDOT. The proposed reconstruction plan includes bicycle lanes and a four lane divided roadway. The recommendation to Council by the Center Section Committee did not include some turn lanes at Second and Fifth Streets. Turn lanes serve the function of facilitating the movement of traffic in heavily traffic areas. Failure to construct these turn lanes results in impeding the movement of traffic. In as much as this segment of roadway has a projected 16,000 ADT in the year 2020, construction of the turn lanes is advisable. It is the plan of MnDOT to reconstruct this segment of roadway in the year 2002. It is expected that reconstruction will result in improved safety and access. Traffic on this section will be relieved if the rest of the transportation plan is completed as recommended.

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