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TOP STORY

Scott County, Prior Lake officials break down road projects

By Callie Schmidt cschmidt@swpub.com Jul 5, 2017



Prior Lake Mayor Kirt Briggs learned how to stream on Facebook Live at the Prior Lake City Hall open house on June 29. On the right, Marie Hoese starred in his live-stream about the open house focusing on Moving Forward 13-21. Briggs described this project as “the most important project ahead of me this term.”

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Photo by Callie Schmidt

Poster boards and TV screens broadcasting informational videos lined the hallways of Prior Lake City Hall June 29 while representatives from Scott County, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the city of Prior Lake joined together for an open house regarding three projects.

Organizers had one main objective: to help residents understand the basics of the projects and possible upcoming road work and give them an opportunity to contribute ideas and ask questions.

The main project at hand included proposed intersection improvements at County Road 21 and Highway 13 in downtown Prior Lake, named “Moving Forward 13-21.” The County Road 21 and Highway 13 intersection was identified as needing improvements years ago and was studied multiple times without finding a solution suitable to all project partners, according to the project website.

Project Manager Chris Chromey noted that most people just want something to happen and for the uncertainty to stop.

Scott County completed the Highway 21 Corridor Study in 2005 which created a concept plan based on issues of safety, mobility, access and economic vitality. The corridor would be in downtown Prior Lake between County Highway 82 and County Road 87, which would hopefully decrease traffic buildups and increase pedestrian access.

Other projects discussed that night included the city’s reconstruction of Duluth Avenue and Highway 13 and the MnDOT proposed reconstruction of Highway 13 from County Road 21 to Highway 282.

Mayor Kirt Briggs described this project as “the most important project ahead of me this term.” Briggs noted the big turnout for the open house and highlighted the presence of the full city council and state commissioners Mike Beard and Jon Ulrich.

Local reaction

According to Prior Lake resident Pat Heaney, the conflict lies between preserving downtown while getting traffic through more efficiently — but he feels downtown needs to be preserved at all costs.

“The process makes sense to me,” Woody Spitzmueller, another Prior Lake resident, said. “But the business community is split — not everyone will end up being happy.”

Ace Hardware owner Al Imholte is one example of this.

“Traffic gets backed up in nearly every city for a couple hours a day...people in Prior Lake are just starting to feel it more due to growth,” Imholte said.

Resident Dave Thompson noted how the project had been pushed off in the past, but with a new city neighborhood interest, he expects more movement.

“This is absolutely vital,” Thompson said. “It’s really exciting to see the county and city come together and listen to our community.”

Katie Miner, a traffic manager for Scott County, stressed the fact that no decisions have been made yet without input from residents.

“We’re taking a step back, taking our time and doing it right,” Miner said.

The next open house is slated for September, which will include project alternatives and options. A recommended alternative won’t come until the open house in November, and preparation for construction is scheduled for 2018.



Callie Schmidt

South St. Paul native. Reporting intern for Southwest News Media. News editor for The Bethel University Clarion. Junior journalism student at Bethel University. Avid adventurer; enjoys singing and playing guitar.