



RAMSEY COUNTY

Rice Street Visioning Study

DRAFT Previous Efforts and Studies Memorandum

Subject: **DRAFT** Previous Efforts and Studies Memorandum

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To: **Project Manager**

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Ramsey County

Introduction

Ramsey County is working to identify safety and transportation improvements on Rice Street in Saint Paul. This report summarizes the previous efforts and studies that have occurred in relation to Rice Street. The information in this memorandum will be used to guide the development of plan goals and objectives and inform improvement alternatives for the corridor.

Previous Efforts

Two efforts have been completed which provide direction for future transportation needs within and around the Rice Street corridor. The key points in each effort are summarized below by plan title.

Rice Street Transportation Safety Study (2018)

In June of 2018, Alliant Engineers published the Rice Street Transportation Safety Study in response to Ramsey County's identification of the need to conduct a safety and operational assessment along Rice Street from University Avenue to Larpenteur Avenue in St. Paul. The study provides an opportunity for the community to plan for and identify improvements that will continue to maintain the transportation system importance, as well as provide opportunity for a non-motorized transportation environment that is comfortable and appropriate for the adjoining land uses. The purpose of this effort was to:

- Identify future investments,
- Design a corridor that will enhance the safety for all modes of transportation,
- Promote economic growth and community investment, and
- Promote an all-abilities transportation network.

To achieve these goals, Alliant considered the following key objectives and considerations:

- Evaluate multiple potential lane configuration scenarios (high level) to help
- assess the need for either the four-lane segment or where a three-lane segment
- may operate satisfactorily along the corridor.
- Evaluate and identify the need for turn lanes.
- Evaluate the Como/Pennsylvania/Rice triangle to identify potential improvement
- options.
- Identify existing safety issues and evaluate potential improvement alternatives.
 - Identify pedestrian improvements.
- Evaluate existing parking regulations

By evaluating the objectives and considerations listed above, the study was able to identify several corridor deficiencies in mobility, safety, pedestrian accommodations, and parking accommodations along Rice Street. From here, Alliant determined alternatives for the Rice Street cross sections, the Como/Pennsylvania/Rice triangle, pedestrian safety improvement strategies, and bicycle lanes. After considering input from the Ramsey County Public Works, agency stakeholders, the public participation process, and the results of the technical analysis completed as part of the study, Alliant reached a preferred alternative with key elements that include:

- A three-lane cross-section with a 6-foot shoulder on Rice Street north of Maryland Avenue with the transition starting at Rose Avenue.

- High visibility crosswalk markings at all signalized intersections.
- Countdown pedestrian indication timers at all signalized intersections.
- Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) at Nebraska Avenue and Arlington Avenue.
- Pedestrian refuge median at Hoyt Avenue.
- Four-lane cross-section with dynamic parking (peak period restriction: 7-9 a.m. southbound and 4-6 p.m. northbound) between Como Avenue and Maryland Avenue.
- Exclusive left turn lanes on Rice Street at Pennsylvania Avenue and Como Avenue.
- Exclusive turn lanes at Maryland Avenue as part of the 4-lane to 3-lane transition.

District 6 Planning Council – Rice Street Parking Study (2010)

LSA Design published the Rice Street Parking Study in December of 2010 as an assessment of existing parking operations along Rice Street from the Burlington Northern Railroad Tracks to Larpenteur Avenue. The study also aimed to determine how much new parking may be required based on current and anticipated future developments. For the analysis, LSA Design used occupancy data, parking and building inventories, Rice Street business owner surveys, previous study work, and previous experience with parking to refine and determine the report's analysis.

The process consisted of a four-part analysis of the corridor.

- An inventory of the available parking for commercial and non-commercial parcels.
- An inventory of average occupancy rates, determined through on-site observation at 8:00 am, 12:00 pm, 4:00 pm, and 10:00 pm.
- An analysis of parking demand based on building use and square footage.
- An inventory of available on-street parking and the allowed duration of parking.

Results were organized into eight quarter mile zones beginning at the South end of the corridor.

- **Zone 1 (Burlington Northern Railroad Tracks to W Atwater St):** 415 off-street parking stalls; low average parking occupancy; two parcels requiring more parking than provided; and 30 on-street parking spaces.
- **Zone 2 (W Atwater St to W Front St):** 365 off-street parking stalls; mix of high and low average parking occupancy; a parking shortage of 11 percent; and 58 on-street parking spaces.
- **Zone 3 (W Front St to W Magnolia Ave):** 266 off-street parking stalls; low average parking occupancy; a parking surplus of 31 percent; and 60 on-street parking spaces.
- **Zone 4 (W Magnolia Ave to Maryland Ave):** 304 off-street parking stalls; varied average parking occupancy; a parking shortage of 5 percent; and 48 on-street parking spaces.
- **Zone 5 (Maryland Ave to Ivy Ave W):** 262 off-street parking stalls; low average parking occupancy; a parking surplus of 21 percent; and 68 on-street parking spaces.
- **Zone 6 (Ivy Ave W to Arlington Ave W):** 225 off-street parking stalls; low average parking occupancy; a parking surplus of 40 percent; and 4 on-street parking spaces.
- **Zone 7 (Arlington Ave W to W Hoyt Ave):** 565 off-street parking stalls; low average parking occupancy; a parking surplus of 30 percent; and 54 on-street parking spaces.
- **Zone 8 (W Hoyt Ave to Larpenteur Ave):** 439 off-street parking stalls; low average parking occupancy; a parking surplus of 32 percent; and no available on-street parking.

Previous Studies

Several studies have been completed which provide direction for future transportation needs within and around the Rice Street corridor. The key points in each study are summarized below by plan title.

SMaPI – A Living Document: Frogtown Small Area Plan (2019)

The Frogtown Neighborhood Association, in partnership with the City of St. Paul and roughly 2,500 Frogtown residents, published the SMaPI, or Small Area Plan, for the neighborhood in Summer of 2019. The organization describes this plan as a *Living Document*, meaning it is ever evolving with input from the community. Community input for this plan include six community healing meals, nine frogtown forums, five steering committee meetings, five FNA board meetings, a creative arts festival, the Frogtown annual celebration, surveys, and social media. SMaPI envisions how the Frogtown community would like the neighborhood to grow over the next decade. Policy recommendations related to the Rice Street Visioning Study include:

- Take a flexible, functional, and holistic approach to the design of public space, ensuring that it meets our sustainability goals and reflects our neighborhoods history, stories and cultures of its inhabitants, and the resident's pride of place, art, and community.
- Reduce dependence on motor vehicles by making Frogtown a more walkable, bikable, and public transit centric neighborhood.
- Advocate for the construction of traffic calming and pedestrian safety improvements such as medians, pedestrian refuge islands, neighborhood traffic circles, speed bumps, flashing beacons, leading pedestrian intervals, and bump-outs throughout the district along major corridors and bicycle boulevards.
- **Redesign Rice Street to prioritize pedestrians over automobiles.**
 - **Explore reintroducing on-street parking to Rice Street within the Capitol-Rice District.**
 - **Explore eliminating or reducing the land widths on Rice Street and expanding the width of the sidewalks.**
 - **Explore planting new street trees, installing planters, new benches, and installing pedestrian scale lighting on Rice Street.**
- Advocate for bike sharing facilities throughout the neighborhood.
- Improve and embed bike lanes/trail maps and signage along bike paths.
- Design sidewalks, alleyways, and parking lots to be spaces where community members are encouraged to engage with one another.
- Support construction and implementation of new multimodal connections, including buildout of the St. Paul bicycle plan and pursuing sidewalk infill opportunities.
- Take a “design thinking” approach when developing new infrastructure and public space.
- Connect Frogtown to St. Paul's park system by extending existing bicycle lanes and paths.

Keep Rice Street Bike Free! (2019)

In March of 2019, Ace Auto Parts, a local business located on Rice Street, published the Keep Rice Street Bike-Free Petition to prevent the city from installing bicycle lanes on the corridor. Ace Auto Parts wrote in favor of creating safe pedestrian crossings and on-street parking options throughout Rice Street to maintain a steady flow of business for community members. The company disagreed with the alternative to install bike lanes on each side of the corridor. This petition argued for:

- 3-lane road with on-street parking
- Enhanced and highly visible crosswalks
- Increased accessibility to Rice Street businesses

The number of signatures received in response to this petition is unknown.

Ramsey County Land Surveying Standards (2019)

With assistance from the City of St. Paul Public Works Department and the County Surveying Office, Ramsey County published the Minimum Standards for Land Surveying and Mapping Affecting Ramsey County Transportation System Right of Way and Adjoining Properties report in February of 2019. To meet the minimum standards in Ramsey County, the project Land Surveyor must:

- Contact the Ramsey County Surveyor and Chief Land Surveyor for St. Paul to discuss the project and acquire any pertinent and/or/necessary survey related information.
- Acquire title reports for all parcels affected by the project.
- Acquire all additional and necessary survey related information that is not provided in the title reports, including survey information filed with the city, state, and private Land Survey firms.
- Base all work on Ramsey County NAD83(2011 Adjustment) coordinates.
- Obtain coordinates for all U.S. Public Land Survey Corners necessary to complete the project from the Ramsey County Surveyor.
- Perform a thorough field search to locate all survey monuments and boundary evidence along and near the project corridor deemed necessary to determine the project right of way, intersecting rights of way, and interesting block lines.
- Analyze, compute, and map all subdivision plats, Registered Land Surveys, CIC plats, rights of way, intersecting block lines, intersecting lot lines and dedicated easements along the project corridor.
- Analyze, compute, and map all metes and bounds parcels and easements along the project corridor.
- Monument all angle points, points of curvature, and points of tangency for project right of way with a durable magnetic monument that shall have affixed thereon the license number of the certifying Land Surveyor.
- Prepare a Certificate of Survey or right of way plan that clearly identifies all project right of way lines, plat boundaries, block and lot lines and easement lines within the project area.
- Submit a preliminary Certificate of Survey or right of way plan to the Ramsey County Surveyor and the Chief Land Surveyor for the St. Paul for a complete review.

Rice-Larpenteur Vision Plan (2018)

In March 2018, the Gateway Planning Committee and the Community Advisory Group partnered with Ramsey County and the cities of Saint Paul, Roseville, and Maplewood to publish the Rice-Larpenteur Vision Plan in hopes to create a strategy to manage future growth and foster an attractive destination.

The purpose of this plan was to create a revitalization strategy to bring renewed public and private-sector investment to the Rice and Larpenteur gateway area. The plan attempted to foster an attractive destination with strong businesses, vibrant neighborhoods, and streets that are safe and comfortable for pedestrians. The plan also informed Ramsey County's transportation planning efforts for work that is expected to take place in the next 5 to 10 years. The corridor plan includes analyses of:

- land use and natural resources
- market conditions

- sidewalk width
- transportation and traffic
- community health indicators and resiliency
- bicycle and pedestrian circulation

The plan also includes short- and long-term policy recommendations for the Rice Street corridor:

Short Term Movement and Access Recommendations

- Implement enhanced pedestrian crossings (signal timing, pedestrian count-down timers, enhanced striping/pavement markings, and pedestrian ramps) along Rice Street at Roselawn Avenue, Larpenteur Avenue, Hoyt Avenue, Arlington Avenue, and Nebraska Avenue.
- Create mid-block pedestrian crossings (to include pedestrian rapid-flashing beacons, enhanced striping/pavement markings, and pedestrian ramps) at the intersections of N McCarrons Boulevard/Rice Street and S McCarrons Boulevard/Rice Street.
- Create a new traffic-controlled intersection (to include pedestrian crossing improvements) at the intersection of Elmer Street/Rice Street.
- Create a wayfinding system for directing bicycle traffic to the key destinations along the corridor.
- Reconstruct Rice Street from Larpenteur Avenue to Maryland Avenue.

Long Term Movement and Access Recommendations

- Reconstruct Rice Street from Larpenteur Avenue to County Road B.

Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan (2018)

The Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan was published by the City of Saint Paul in November 2018 as an addendum to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan. The Saint Paul Pedestrian Plan addresses citywide walking needs such as connecting the sidewalk system, providing safer ways to cross streets and education and enforcement programs to support safe walking. Rice street is referenced in the plan as a potential stand-alone multi-use path project, and as a street in need of better sidewalks and walking conditions. The plan includes a list of actions to achieve the plan's vision and goals of making walking safe for everyone and connecting vibrant communities in all parts of Saint Paul. A few examples of action items related to the Rice Street Visioning Study include:

- Plan, design, build and maintain the city's transportation system in a way that prioritizes walking first, followed by bicycling and transit use and lastly other vehicles.
- Follow best practices for marking crosswalks. Convert crosswalks marked with parallel bars to high-visibility crossings to improve visibility of crosswalks. Whenever possible, use durable crosswalk marking materials.
- Ensure visibility of pedestrian crossings. Review sign placement, street furniture, bus shelters, foliage growth, and parking restrictions at intersections as part of all reconstruction projects and requests for crossing improvements.
- Design streets in accordance with Saint Paul's Street Design Manual to promote a comfortable walking environment on all street types in Saint Paul.
- Explore programs or policy changes to encourage greater compliance with sidewalk snow and ice removal policies.
- Continue existing partnerships and create new partnerships for pedestrian and bicycle data collection.
- Pursue opportunities to install and maintain interim pedestrian crossing improvements using low-cost materials.

Right-Sizing Rice Street: Envisioning a more People-Friendly & Prosperous Street (2017)

In 2017, Saint Paul Area Association of REALTORS (SPAAR) and Blue Zones LLC partnered to develop and facilitate a walkability workshop “walkshop” to demonstrate the importance of walkability and how walkability creates a community that focuses on people and place, rather than speed.

The walkshop focused on how to ensure safe crossings and how to create a more pedestrian focused environment along Rice Street from Larpenteur Avenue to Lawson Avenue. The workshop brought together many partners, including the City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Rice Street business owners, North End residents, and local realtors. Together, participants discussed and envisioned a range of potential solutions to make rice street more walkable-people-and business-friendly.

Potential solutions/tools to consider for Rice Street include:

- High Visibility Crosswalk Markings
- Curb Extensions
- Tree Wells
- Lane Widths
- Road Diets
- On-Street Parking
- Bike Infrastructure
- Leading Pedestrian Interval
- Modern Roundabouts
- Liner Buildings

Saint Paul Bicycle Plan (2017)

The Saint Paul Bicycle Plan was published by the City of Saint Paul in July 2017 as an addendum to the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan. The purpose and vision of this plan was to establish a framework that will allow Saint Paul to accomplish the goals in the Comprehensive Plan to increase the mode share of bicycling, establish a network of bikeways throughout the city, and increase the number of people using bicycles.

The plan identified Rice street and neighboring streets such as Maryland Ave, as future investments in bikeway infrastructure. The plan provided recommendations and action items that should be incorporated into the next update of the Comprehensive Plan and other planning efforts that reference bicycling.

A few examples of action items and survey recommendation that could be related to the Rice Street Visioning Study include:

- Incorporate implementation of bikeways with routine maintenance projects whenever possible.
- Actively pursue designation and development of additional regional trails.
- Identify regional trail alignments within the regional trail search corridors and prepare regional trail master plans for trails where alignments are known.
- Create better connections to existing bikeways.
- Implement safer street crossings.
- Implement bike parking at popular destinations.

Rice Street Capitol Area: Parking Study (2017)

The Rice Street Capitol Area Parking Study was published in June of 2017 by the Walker parking consultants, in coordination with the City of Saint Paul and Minnesota Department of Transportation, to study existing and future parking conditions and needs and encourage residents to use existing infrastructure. The study covered lower parts of Rice Street and the Capitol area in Saint Paul. The goals and purpose of the study were to advance sustainability, financial, and development goals of area stakeholders, inform long range planning efforts and land use decisions, and maximize resources through collaboration.

Additionally, the study included the following action plans and recommendations:

- Planning Policy Recommendations
 - Continue to encourage evening/night/weekend land uses to balance the activity and parking needs generated by the State (and nearby hospitals)
 - Inform/guide State regarding partnering with private owners to improve utilization of existing and future parking supply
- On-street Parking recommendations
 - Identify locations where on-street parking could be added to increase supply, including road diets
 - Additional on-street parking will be desirable based on proximity to destinations, visual availability and as traffic calming when density/intensification increases
- State off-street parking
 - Follow the TDM plan (market rates, increase van/carpool spaces, subsidize alt. transportation options)
 - Consider shift work for more efficient use of office and parking space, as possible
- Private off-street parking
 - Partner with the State as possible to share parking, whether that is State lease of private parking, or private month-to-month lease of State parking

The Opportunity of a Lifetime on Rice Street – Streets MN (2017)

The Opportunity of a Lifetime on Rice Street article was published in January of 2017 by a resident named Ethan Osten who discusses the implications and safety concerns of Rice Street's existing roadway design. Rice Street primarily serves automobile dependent commuters and the street is currently designed to meet only their needs and not the needs of pedestrians. Because of this, many avoidable accidents have occurred, including the death of a child.

The purpose of the article was to discuss specific implications that need to be addressed in the upcoming plans for the Rice Street Study and possible pedestrian improvements.

Pedestrian improvements include:

- Multi-model improvements
 - Bicycle lanes and facilities
 - Crosswalks and crosswalk islands

Other stated recommendations include:

- 4-3 lane conversion
- Access to system of trails
- Additional street parking
- Drop turn lanes except at key intersections

Ramsey County All Abilities Network Resolution (2016)

In December of 2016, the All Abilities Network Resolution was presented to the Board of Ramsey County Commissioners to promote a quality, comprehensive transportation system in the county. The policy reads:

“The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners is committed to creating and maintaining transportation system that provides equitable access for all people regardless of race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual preference, health, education, abilities, and economics. This is broadly defined as an “All Abilities” Transportation Network. Transforming this commitment into reality requires consistent leadership and collaboration over time, and must incorporate the best ideas from across the region, state and country. The policy set forth herein has been created to unify County transportation efforts under a shared vision and implementation strategy, and to clarify its commitment to: people of all abilities; an integrated and fully interconnected transportation system that utilizes a variety of modes; and safety, health, mobility and connectivity for all residents and businesses.”

The policy applies to all transportation corridors and projects under County jurisdiction, including the Rice Street Visioning Study. The resolution was passed in a 6-1 vote.

Ramsey County-Wide Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan (2015)

Ramsey County published the Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan in 2015 as a framework for the development of walking and biking facilities in county communities. The plan is a set of tools, analyses and actions to engage community members at all levels in supporting a place where people of all ages and abilities can safely, easily and comfortably walk and bicycle. The plan includes six primary recommendations:

- Through collaboration with Ramsey County stakeholders and implementing agencies, establish and build a connected network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The emphasis is on building high quality transportation and recreation facilities.
- Identify specific opportunities to support local communities in developing design guidance that support all members of the community. This will include developing walkable and bikeable communities that offer easier access and connections to transit.
- Publish an annual report to help raise the profile of successes and challenges for walking and bicycling in Ramsey County. Focus on safety, connectivity, health equity, social and economic development and the quality of life improved by the county-wide active transportation system.
- Facilitate an annual forum for communities to evaluate their efforts, share best practices and collaborate on priorities for the coming year. Use this annual meeting as an opportunity to identify successes and discuss challenges.
- Develop a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) clearinghouse for spatial data related to walking and biking in Ramsey County. It can be used to map, visualize, analyze and interpret data to better understand relationships, patterns and trends related to walking and biking.
- Collaborate in developing a count program that documents the numbers of people using bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, such as sidewalks, trails or intersections. Understanding how people use existing facilities can help to prioritize future projects and help evaluate the success of investments.

Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan: Gaps & Barriers in Ramsey County (2015)

This system analysis, published by Ramsey County in 2015 as part of the greater Ramsey County Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan, identifies the areas that are the most deficient in walking and biking infrastructure and have the greatest potential for benefit. The analysis provides an overview of conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists on streets within the County. The results reflect the quality of streets and the experience of walking and cycling

rather than a simple documentation of the existing facilities. This report informs implementation of the Connected Ramsey Communities network. The results are organized into categories:

- **Activity Concentration:** Major activity areas include downtown St. Paul, the 3M campus in Maplewood, and along the Snelling Avenue corridor in Falcon Heights and Roseville.
- **Pedestrian Network Deficiency:** Sidewalk deficiencies are most common in lower density single family home neighborhoods in communities outside of St. Paul. Rice St is considered a low- to moderate-stress environment for pedestrians.
- **Bicycle Network Deficiency:** Most streets near downtown St. Paul, such as Como Ave and Rice St, are classified as high-stress streets for bicyclists. Rice St is considered a high- to extreme-stress environment for bicyclists.
- **Pedestrian Safety:** Corridors with the highest number of pedestrian crashes are typically near downtown St. Paul or an area with high activity concentration. The Maryland Ave intersection of Rice St reported the highest number of pedestrian crashes between 2004 – 2014.
- **Bicycle Safety:** Four corridors in the County stand out with concerning levels of bicycle crashes. These include University Ave, Snelling Ave, Rice St, and Summit Ave. The Arlington Ave intersection of Rice Street reported the highest number of bicycle crashes between 2004 – 2014.
- **Equity:** The North End and Frogtown neighborhoods include significant concentrations of equity populations. Most of Rice Street is utilized by populations with higher concentrations of equity populations.

St Paul's North End Community: A Report on Industrial, Commercial, and Residential Redevelopment (1998)

In August of 1998, the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs published the St Paul's North End Community report, supported by the North End Area Revitalization (NEAR) organization. The purpose of the report was to improve organizational understanding of who lives and works in the North End neighborhood and how residents and workers feel about the neighborhood. It is a community profile that analyzed community meetings, surveys to business owners and local residents, census data, realty information, and property tax records to assist in the improvement and redevelopment of the North End community.

From their analysis of the Maxson Stage community meetings and school data given to them at these meetings, the authors found a growing number Hmong residents in the neighborhood, a high number of construction jobs, and a worry from residents about the appearance of the neighborhood and declining property values. General findings from the survey to business owners along Rice Street included:

- A majority of stores along Rice Street are very small.
- A large proportion of businesses have been in the area for many years.
- Business owners believe that their clientele commonly extends beyond the North End neighborhood.
- Rice Street as a "good location" for business was a factor for some owners when locating their store to the area.
- Crime, loiterers, and lack of parking are the top three areas of concern for business owners on Rice Street.
- Those surveyed feel the availability of diverse business types is limited along Rice Street.
- Less than half of business owners see the city as "very responsive" to their concerns.
- A majority of businesses have remodeled in the past and many would like to expand in the future.

General findings from the survey to residents in the North End neighborhood included:

- Most residents do not intend to stay in their current home or the area for more than ten years.
- About half of respondents ranked the neighborhood as a “good” place to live.
- About half of respondents ranked the neighborhood as a “good” place to raise children.
- Most residents are satisfied with the availability and variety of local businesses and services.
- 85 percent of respondents shop on Rice Street on a regular basis.
- Almost all residents surveyed felt city officials are responsive to their concerns.

Lower Rice Street (n.d.)

Lower Rice Street, written by Jane McClure, is a historical account of the development of lower Rice Street. Published by the *Saint Paul Historical*, the account begins by describing the buildings and sections of the corridor that were lost during urban renewal, including one of the area’s few remaining barns that stood at 619 Rice Street. The account then goes on to mention that the area around Rice Street was originally marshes and tamarack swamps, but quickly developed into a bustling commercial district. This is largely due to the street’s prominence as a major north-south route connecting Saint Paul to outlying communities and the development of the streetcar system in the 19th century. Finally, the piece describes the mixed commercial uses present along Rice Street and the change in the neighborhood’s ethnic makeup over time.

Conclusion

This report analyzed previous efforts and studies to outline past recommendations in relation to Rice Street. The information in this memorandum, along with existing conditions analysis and public engagement feedback, will be used to inform the development of plan goals and objectives and improvement alternatives for the corridor.