

★ Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

44-I

Date July 11, 2011

Request from Council Member Skip Moore to discuss configuration of lanes and sidewalks on Grand Avenue Bridge over Walnut Creek Project.

Moved by _____ to

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
COLEMAN				
GRIESS				
HENSLEY				
MAHAFFEY				
MEYER				
MOORE				
TOTAL				

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVED

Mayor

CERTIFICATE

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

City Clerk



44-I

July 10, 2011

Honorable Mayor Frank Cownie
Des Moines City Council Members

The Waterbury Neighborhood Association (WNA) appreciates this opportunity to provide comments on the Grand Avenue Bridge at 63rd Street widening plan (Bridge Project) scheduled for 2012. WNA supports the replacement of the bridge and appreciates the City's willingness to work with neighborhoods to address our various concerns regarding both bridge design and detour routes during the construction phase.

WNA's primary concern is with the design of the bridge itself. We were informed at a May, 2011 meeting with City of Des Moines engineering staff that the Bridge Project would not allow for a sidewalk on the north side of Grand. A number of neighbors attending the meeting expressed concern with this and asked the City to reconsider.

As background, City staff indicated the degree of bridge widening is limited due to the location of the floodwalls to the north and west of the bridge and that the addition of a north sidewalk would prevent the addition of a second south turn lane from Grand onto 63rd Street. WNA Board members attending the May meeting questioned this conclusion, pointing out that the newly proposed vehicle lanes are 11' & 12' wide compared to the existing lanes that are 9 to 10' wide. Attendees asked that City staff consider borrowing enough space from the 11' and 12' lanes and the proposed walkway on the south side of Grand to also make room for a north-side walkway. Such a compromise would still allow for improved vehicle lane width but also include a much needed sidewalk on the north side.

The WNA understands there is limited space to work with on this project, but believe every possible avenue should be explored to maintaining a sidewalk on the north side of Grand and still allow for a double south turn lane from Grand onto 63rd Street. This should include, if necessary, obtaining variances from DOT or other lane-width guidelines or restrictions.

In reaching this conclusion, the WNA considered the following:

1. Once completed, the Grand Bridge project will need to satisfy the needs of Des Moines residents for a very long time – possibly 100 years or more. During that time it must satisfy the needs of pedestrians and bikers, as well as motorized vehicles.
2. The City of Des Moines has wisely embraced the concept of "Complete Streets". The focus of the Complete Streets concept is on transportation planning and




engineering to ensure roads are designed, operated, and maintained for all users; that transportation networks should be safer, more livable, and welcoming to everyone. The existing Bridge Project plan is not consistent with the Complete Streets concept.

3. User safety: bikers and pedestrians wishing to access businesses on the north and west of the Bridge Project will have an extremely difficult time doing so without a sidewalk on the north side. For example, a walker or biker heading west from the north side of Grand would have to negotiate at least two and possibly three major intersection crossings to get to the northwest corner of Grand & 63rd. If the bike trail is open, they would have to first take the trail to get to the south Grand sidewalk, cross 63rd Street at the light, then cross Grand to get back to the north side. If the bike trail is not open due to flooding, which is not a rare occurrence, a person would have to somehow cross to the south side of Grand without the aid of a crosswalk or traffic light before having to make the additional two crossings set out above. As a practical matter, if the trail is closed, a person headed west on the north side of Grand would not be able to safely cross, period! Such walker and biker impediments are totally out of character with the Complete Streets concept and quite frankly, are dangerous.

Again, the WNA strongly recommends every possible avenue be explored to maintaining a sidewalk on the north side of Grand in connection with the Grand Bridge Project.

Sincerely,



/s/Bryan Bunton, President
Waterbury Neighborhood Association