

Mn/DOT Handles Congestion in Aftermath of I-35 Bridge Collapse

Extensive Traffic Management Capability, Security Drills Also Helped

During the evening rush hour on Wednesday, August 1, the I-35W bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis suddenly collapsed. With a typical daily volume of 140,000 vehicles, the rapid establishment of alternate routes was of critical importance. A traffic restoration team was assembled immediately at Mn/DOT to address the rerouting of motorists from the bridge.

Mn/DOT responded quickly by converting MN Highway 280 to a freeway, closing access points and at grade intersections to improve traffic flow and enhance safety. Along with I-94, Hwy 280 became the primary detour from the collapsed bridge. Within twelve hours of the incident, detour routes had been put in place and signs were displayed to alert drivers to these alternate routes.

On Thursday, a group was convened at the department to look at the wider traffic system in the area and determine how best to respond. The team identified twenty projects and worked throughout the weekend to prioritize and investigate these options.

By Sunday evening, a plan of action was finalized. Approval was granted on Monday and a contractor was selected on Wednesday. Work commenced on Friday and was completed over the weekend. Within ten days of the bridge collapse, the first round of response measures had been implemented.

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The collapsed I-35 bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, MN. (Photo: Courtesy of the Hennepin County Public Affairs Department)

“Meeting of the Minds” Maps Out Potential Solutions for Sustainable Urban Centers

Conference Brings Together Unlikely Participants

On September 12-13, 2007, “Meeting of the Minds,” an invitation-only leadership conference convened jointly by the University of California, Berkeley’s College of Environmental Design (CED), and Toyota Motor Sales, took place in Oakland, CA. This unprecedented gathering brought together unlikely participants: public and private sector innovators creating more sustainable cities, those improving transit systems, and those inventing smarter vehicles and cleaner fuels.

“Meeting of the Minds” provided a

platform for debate among largely disconnected worlds. According to a Meeting press release, the question that was central to the conference was “What city designs, urban vehicles, fuels, and transportation strategies do we need if our cities are to become more environmentally sound and more sustainable?”

“Meeting of the Minds” offered a unique venue for leading automotive technologists, transport engineers, urban planners/designers, and a host of other leaders

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“Meeting of the Minds” Try To Map Out Potential Solutions

to share their research and future visions, and to identify the challenges and potential solutions for a more sustainable future. The main goals of the conference were to identify the big challenges that lie ahead, to hear about the best designs being developed in real-world settings, and to map out potential solutions for sustainable urban centers which can be adopted as new approaches to urban life, clean vehicles, and smart transportation systems.

In addition to Toyota and CED, partners included: UC Berkeley’s Global Metropolitan Studies Program, LandDesign, Metropolis Magazine, American Planning Association, the University of California Transportation Center, 11th Hour Project, and EMBARQ, the World Resources Institute Center for Sustainable Transport. Urban Age Institute managed the program.

Gordon Feller, conference coordinator and CEO of Urban Age Institute, told *The Urban Transportation Monitor* that the conference convened to create a common framework for conversation among entities that were not likely to converse otherwise. Furthermore, the meeting was valuable in enabling the discovery of an action/research agenda and allowing participants to look at both successes and failures in their respective areas of expertise in order to determine the best possible course for the future. Of the 200 participants, approximately one-third were from the private sector, one-third were mayors/city managers, and one-third were from the independent sector (e.g., advocacy organizations), so there was a good representative balance.

In addition to discussing and researching alternative fuels and cars, the meeting provided a forum to discuss rideshare and carshare possibilities, and stimulated city-to-city learning patterns. Mr. Feller emphasized that the conference spurred a desire for ongoing conversation, and stated that he will be traveling to Portland, OR, early next month for the first of many follow-on events in individual cities throughout the U.S.

Lastly, Mr. Feller outlined the conclusions of the “Meeting of the Minds” conference:

None of the individual sectors can succeed in reaching their goals without the

other sectors.

One doesn't have to look too far into the future to see alternative transportation models because those models are emerging in current projects.

Cities that are partnering with each other need to depend on the private sector, too. This *has* to be a multi-stakeholder endeavor to succeed.

To view video of conference presentations or to see ongoing forum discussions, visit www.fora.tv/partner/MoM. For more information on the conference, visit <http://www.meeting-minds.org/>, or contact Bradley Damitz, media relations coordinator, Meeting of the Minds, tel. (415) 259-5766, e-mail: brad@meeting-minds.org.

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Continuous Flow Intersection (CFI) Recently Opened in Salt Lake City

thereby saving one phase per direction. This saving is significant particularly when a high volume of left-turn traffic is present at the intersection.

Prior to the CFI installation at this location, drivers at peak times had to wait up to four or five traffic signal cycles to pass through the intersection. The congestion caused by that delay was spilling over into other intersections as well, contributing to widespread delays throughout the area. Since installation of the CFI, preliminary reports suggest that wait times have been reduced to 1 or 2 cycles.

In addition to improving efficiency, CFIs are considered safe. By removing the left-turn from oncoming traffic, one potential source of accidents is eliminated. CFIs also are cost efficient when compared to other types of interchanges. The CFI in Salt Lake City will cost about \$8 million, compared to the \$30 million that a grade-separated interchange would have cost.

A potential downside of the CFI design is that, in some cases, it eliminates corner access to businesses or residents. In other cases though, the CFI helps to preserve access. UDOT officials determined that a grade-separated design at this location would have required the relocation of 9 businesses and several residences, while the CFI design involved only one business relocation.

Because the design is unfamiliar to most motorists, UDOT officials expect the learning curve to be one to two weeks. UDOT distributed information cards and is providing a “CFI tutorial” on its website to

help drivers understand the concept. There also are signal lights guiding drivers at the intersection.

Initial reports suggest that the transition is going smoothly. The only reported incident in the first few days involved a driver hitting a raised island, which was determined to be unrelated to the CFI design. Other than some minor signage and striping issues that traffic engineers might tweak, UDOT officials have been pleased.

A unique feature of the Salt Lake City CFI is that it is the first in the country to have full signalized pedestrian lighting. While the intersection is quite wide, the CFI design includes pedestrian islands on which to stop when crossing, thereby increasing safety.

For further information, visit <http://cfi.ppbh.com/index.php> or contact Jason Davis, UDOT, at tel. (801) 975-4806.



A continuous flow intersection (CFI) in Accokeek, MD, built in 2000. This CFI reduced average delay by 40-50%. (Photo: Courtesy of Google Pro)