



## PROJECT UNDERSTANDING

### 33rd Street South Corridor Project

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#### Background

The St. Cloud metropolitan area has experienced significant increases in land development, population and traffic growth that are straining the current transportation network. Continued rapid growth is expected, particularly in the southwest portion of the thriving metropolitan area.

Traveling efficiency is compromised due to the lack of functional east-west arterials in the southwest portion of the metropolitan area, as well as the lack of connectivity to the regional transportation system. The Southwest Arterial Alignment Study, completed by Stearns County in 2001, concluded that the current 33rd Street South alignment between CSAH 74 and CSAH 75 is a logical location to develop a proper east-west arterial with a new connection at TH 15. Using the existing 33rd Street for the majority of the proposed alignment will minimize impacts to both the environment and existing developed areas. When completed, the project will define the ultimate alignment, profile, and typical section of the 33rd Street Corridor and how it ties into CSAH 75 and TH 15. This will allow an official map to be developed that identifies the existing and future needs of the road, and serves as a corridor protection blueprint for agencies monitoring development.

The City of St Cloud's Comprehensive Plan includes a Master Plan for the 33rd Street South Corridor. This Master Plan will help guide development and preserve right of way throughout the corridor. The adopted transportation principles state that 33rd Street South should be developed with a "parkway" design, and should connect neighborhoods to the larger transportation system and the region.

The St Cloud Area Planning Organization's transportation model indicates that 20-year traffic projections will reach 20,000 vehicles/day along parts of the proposed corridor. These volumes will potentially increase by an additional 6,000 vehicles/day when the future Mississippi River crossing is constructed to connect 33rd Street South eastward to TH 10.

#### Project Objectives and Goals

Upgrading 33rd Street to a continuous east-west arterial will help create a well-spaced transportation system that will help spur future economic and residential development. The objective of the project is to evaluate the 33rd Street South corridor and set the framework for developing an east-west arterial connection between TH 15 and CSAH 75 that will accomplish the following goals:

- Improve safety and mobility for all users
- Control/modify access points consistent with its functional class
- Balance the competing needs for mobility and access
- Accommodate forecasted traffic demands based on development
- Account for additional traffic influx from planned arterial connections
- Minimize impacts to property, utilities, and environmentally sensitive areas
- Consider storm water management and soil conditions
- Provide a tool for preserving right of way and controlling development
- Gain consensus from the public and regulatory agencies
- Provide safer accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Integrate a parkway theme that includes considerations for landscaping and noise attenuation
- Coordinate with other traffic and transportation studies occurring around the project area

### **Critical Project Considerations**

Integration With Current and Future Transportation Systems: To the east, this project will set the stage for a future Mississippi River crossing and ultimate connection to TH 10. A full access connection is planned at TH 15 to the west, and eventually the alignment is planned to continue west of TH 15 and turn north to again access CSAH 75. The broader vision is to establish a more defined “beltway” around the St Cloud metropolitan area.

Various transportation studies and plans are currently being developed around the project area that must be considered as the 33rd Street South Corridor project develops. These include the TH 15 and TH 23/CSAH 75 Corridor studies, the Southwest Beltway EIS Scoping Study, and a potential interchange implementation at County Road 136 and I-94.

Public and Stakeholder Involvement: With an objective of developing new roads that not only meet St. Cloud and Stearns County needs, but also address needs of other affected stakeholders, public involvement is critical to the project success. The varied concerns, issues and values of the public and non-traditional stakeholders will be considered and incorporated into the project development process.

Corridor Protection: The project will involve developing a preferred alternative geometric layout and completing required environmental documentation. This will require submitting National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) documents for the preferred alignment and recommended preliminary design.

These documents require environmental studies, traffic data collection and analysis, cost estimate development, land use reviews, thorough public involvement, and development of mitigation options. Preliminary geometric layouts will be prepared, and the submittal of documents required to “Officially Map” the corridor in accordance with Minnesota Statute Chapter 462.

Combined, these actions will identify and protect the corridor for future use. The protected corridor will enable orderly development as the population increases, reducing “growing pains” and minimizing construction costs that can result when new roads must be built through already developed areas.