

Concerns Grow Over Second Avenue Reconstruction

The number of groups, organizations and individuals submitting concerns to the provincial Ministry of Environment and Climate Change with respect to the reconstruction of Second Avenue has grown by a third. At least nine requests for further evaluation of the project have been sent to the Ministry compared to six last year and three the year before.

As a result of the previous submissions, the city was required by the Ministry to respond to certain project plan deficiencies and to resubmit for further consideration. The latest project plan was completed in April and the response by the public within the 30 day appeal period has shown that there are still serious concerns that have not been addressed.

The major concern involves the matter of additional storm water run-off that would be created by the expanded road surface that would flow to Ramsey Lake untreated, the City's major recreational and drinking water source that has shown increased levels of phosphorus, salt and other contaminants that have most likely contributed to increased water use warnings and beach closings in recent years. Other environmental issues raised include air and noise pollution plus safety and social concerns by increasing the road way to five lanes and construction of a seven lane signaled intersection in a largely residential area with a high proportion of children and older adults.

Several groups in particular are concerned about safety matters involved in road widening and construction of the planned very large new signaled intersection. Presently, accidents are infrequent on this roadway and at the intersection of Scarlet Drive. Recent City statistics have shown that a significant percentage of motor vehicle and pedestrian accidents occur at large signaled intersections, similar to that proposed for this site. It is well known and recognized that roundabouts are far safer than traditional intersections, and this option is being requested for objective third party evaluation as an alternative to a signaled intersection at this location and the required road widening. Roundabouts, once installed, inevitably result in a very high degree of public acceptance on the part of motorists, pedestrians and cyclists and are more economical to maintain.

A one lane roundabout that could accommodate present and predicted traffic volumes, would also answer to a large degree the concerns with respect to storm-water, air and social issues. There would be fewer traffic lanes required and as a roundabout requires less road surface area there would be less storm water run-off into the watershed and Lake Ramsey. In addition, with virtually no stop and go traffic caused by signaled traffic lights, there would be less resultant air pollution through vehicle emissions and less noise and, as an additional benefit for motorists, less gas consumption. Fewer lanes would mean the roadway would be back further from the social housing units in the area and would allow for off-road bike accommodation. Fewer lanes would mean the "berm" separating the roadway from the dog park and community garden area from noise and view could remain. In total, the environmental impacts would be far less and as a bonus the area would be more attractive for those passing through and more livable for area residents.

Those interested in learning more about this important community issue are encouraged to visit the website www.minnowlake.ca where all available submissions are accessible plus past history and related information involving alternative solutions to the current plan.