

**RESOLUTION**  
**By Wonsley and Ellison**

**Expressing the City's priorities for Olson Memorial Highway / Highway 55**

Whereas, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is planning to implement near-term safety improvements on Olson Memorial Highway in 2023 and is undertaking a multimodal study on the corridor to determine the scope of a future reconstruction project that is scheduled to occur in 2028; and

Whereas, the State of Minnesota and the United States of America made deliberate and targeted transportation infrastructure investment decisions that discriminated against, displaced, and disrupted historically redlined communities; and

Whereas, the completion of Highway 55 in north Minneapolis destroyed businesses, homes, places of worship, and other community assets, and physically divided neighborhoods along what was 6th Avenue North and were the victims of prejudiced city funding, banking, licensing, and policing practices; and

Whereas, before it was destroyed by Olson Memorial Highway, 6th Avenue North was a vibrant, predominantly Jewish and African American cultural corridor that provided surrounding residents with walkable access to shopping, entertainment, and community connection, with over 60 storefronts lining the seven blocks from Lyndale to Emerson Avenue North in the 1920's; and

Whereas, the many bars and restaurants on 6th Avenue North were a hub of the Twin Cities jazz scene and the area was referred to as "the Beale Street of the North," providing a place for world class jazz musicians to train and perform, as well as bringing up the next generation of musicians including Prince and producer Jimmy Jam; and

Whereas, the community along 6th Avenue North was targeted for one of the area's first experiments in the use of federal dollars to clean up a "blighted" neighborhood, install a highway, and build public housing in the late 1930s; and

Whereas, today the residents of neighborhoods adjacent to Olson Memorial Highway lack a walkable neighborhood due to the size and speed of the roadway as well as the historic destruction of small businesses, and are subject to noise and air pollution from vehicle traffic and the trash incineration; and

Whereas, research shows exposure to pollution from traffic can result in fetal and newborn illnesses, asthma attacks among children and adults, plus impaired lung function, impaired cognitive function, cardiovascular illness, multiple cancers, and premature death; and

Whereas, transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Minnesota, and the City of Minneapolis set a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2050; and

Whereas, the 55411 ZIP code, which borders Olson Memorial Highway immediately to the north, has the highest asthma hospitalization rate in the seven county metropolitan area which is impacting children's school attendance and contributes to educational disparities; and

Whereas, the neighborhoods that border Olson Memorial Highway are a rich and diverse community wherein the majority of residents are people of color; and is home to the highest density of children in the city of Minneapolis; and

Whereas, approximately 30% of surrounding residents live below the federal poverty threshold, 20% of residents do not have access to an automobile, and the neighborhoods surrounding Olson Memorial Highway are designated as an urban food desert by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Access Research Atlas; and

Whereas, improvements on Olson Memorial Highway were promised as part of the METRO Blue Line Light Rail Transit Extension project but did not materialize when the project was re-routed; and

Whereas, the City of Minneapolis has adopted a Vision Zero goal, which aims to eliminate traffic deaths and severe injuries by 2027; and

Whereas, the City of Minneapolis has adopted the Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan, a policy framework that prioritizes walking, bicycling, and transit, with goals of increasing equity in our transportation system, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving human health through improved air quality and increased active travel, and enabling the safe movement of people, goods, and services across the city; and

Whereas, improving safety and multimodal transportation access on the Olson Memorial Highway corridor is identified as a priority in the City of Minneapolis Transportation Action Plan; and

Whereas, observed vehicle traffic on Olson Memorial Highway has declined over the past decade and is comparable to traffic levels on arterial city streets; and the vast majority of the vehicle trips originating in this corridor are short distance local trips; and

Whereas, the land near an attractive, revisioned multimodal street would be valuable for delivering new jobs and tax-base; and meeting the consistent Northside demands for reparative investments in the community; and

Whereas, cities across the country have successfully replaced highways with local streets and community development;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by The City Council of The City of Minneapolis:

That the City of Minneapolis strongly opposes the repair or reconstruction of Olson Memorial Highway in its current form.

Be It Further Resolved that the City of Minneapolis supports the Minnesota Department of Transportation in implementing immediate design changes to improve safety and multimodal transportation access, including restriping the roadway to reduce and narrow travel lanes, ADA improvements, adding dedicated transit and bike lanes, improving pedestrian lighting, reducing crossing distances, and increasing the number of crossing locations.

Be It Further Resolved that all projects on the Olson Memorial Highway corridor must seek to eliminate fatalities and severe injuries for all transportation users.

Be It Further Resolved that the City of Minneapolis supports highway removal in the planned 2028 project on the Olson Memorial Highway corridor and restoration of 6th Avenue North, with the characteristics of a walkable neighborhood commercial street, and supports MnDOT in applying for the U.S. Department of Transportation's Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program and supports a turnback to a local unit of government.

Be It Further Resolved that MnDOT right-of-way should be repurposed for community-guided development, including new deeply affordable and public housing, affordable commercial space and new parks and community gardens.

Be It Further Resolved that the City of Minneapolis supports a redesign that prioritizes public health, racial equity, safety, affordability, accessibility, and sustainability.

Be It Further Resolved, the City of Minneapolis supports new State of Minnesota and Federal Government redevelopment requirements and associated funding programs added to the highway repositioning projects available to the local redevelopment authority to assist in real estate development that will redress the harm caused by original construction and continued use of the roadway.