Main Street reopens today in Coon Rapids, Blaine

By Peter Bodley on August 2, 2012 at 8:46 am

Main Street (County Road 14/125th Avenue N.E.) in Blaine and Coon Rapids reopens to traffic today (Thursday, Aug. 2).

That was the pledge by Anoka County Highway Engineer Doug Fischer and Tom McCrossan from the project contractor, C.S. McCrossan, at a grand opening ribbon cutting celebration on the grounds at Roosevelt Middle School, Blaine, late yesterday afternoon (Wednesday, Aug. 1).

"The road will definitely reopen," Fischer said.

But Fischer said was not prepared to say when that would occur during the day, he said.

It might take place in phases, he said.

But all four lanes of traffic will be open at some point today (Thursday), Fischer said.

"This is a historic event for us," he said as he presided at the grand opening ceremony.

However, the construction work is not yet completed.
There will continue to be lane closures while workers finish off the median, construct the trail that will run the length of the project on the south side and put the final lift of asphalt on the surface, according to Fischer.

Nor will the intersection traffic signals at Avocet Street, Foley Boulevard, University Avenue, Jefferson Street and Oak Park Boulevard be operating immediately, Fischer said.

Reconstruction of Main Street/125th Avenue from Crane Street in Coon Rapids to Ulysses Street N.E. in Blaine began in September 2011.

Since last fall the segment from Avocet Street to Foley Boulevard, where the overpass over the single-line Burlington-Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad track has been built, has been shut down to traffic.

And in March, the portion of Main Street from Foley to University Avenue – the Blaine/Coon Rapids border – was closed.

The segment from Crane to Avocet streets in Coon Rapids was shut down for a short period earlier this summer, while the part of the project from University Avenue to Ulysses Street in Blaine has been reduced to one lane in each direction since last fall.

Speakers at the grand opening celebration included Anoka County Commissioners Andy Westerberg, Robyn West and Carol LeDoux, Blaine Mayor Tom Ryan, Coon Rapids Mayor Tim Howe, State Rep. Melissa Hortman, McCrossan and Rick Jonas from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).

According to Westerberg, who is chairman of the Anoka County Board’s Public Works Committee, this was an exciting day and the culmination of the hard work of all those present.

He thanked the traveling public, businesses, schools, the library and the area residents for their patience while the project was under construction.

Westerberg talked about the history of the road, how it was State Highway 242 until it was turned back to the county in 2007.

"It was a tired, old two-lane highway and had a horrible accident history," Westerberg said.

Since then the county has been able to reconstruct County Road 14 from Coon Creek Boulevard in Coon Rapids to Highway 65 in Blaine to a four-lane urban highway in three projects, he said.

The first was the Highway 65-County Road 14 interchange, then the segment from Coon Creek Boulevard to Crane Street in Coon Rapids, Westerberg said.

This third and final project has reconstructed 3.5 miles of the original five-mile length of 242 and it has taken only a year instead of several years if it had been split up into
smaller projects, he said.

And it has been the single largest road project in the county's history, according to Westerberg.

The construction cost is $35.7 million and when costs are factored in like preliminary engineering, right of way acquisition and inspections, the total is around $41 million, Westerberg said.

However, the county was able to tap into state turnback dollars to pay for the bulk of the project cost, while the cities of Blaine and Coon Rapids also contributed to the project cost.

The project is also unique in that Anoka County is the first county in the state to use the design-build method, in which the project engineering and construction are done simultaneously instead of separately, which is traditional.

This saved both time and money, Fischer said.

And both the contractor, McCrossan, and its partner, SRF Consulting, the design engineer, have been great to work with, he said.

They were chosen by the Anoka County Board through a value added process, which not only considers cost, but also quality, innovation and quality assurance, from requests for proposal sent out by the county after it had had preliminary engineering work to establish the project parameters, Fischer said.

According to Fischer, the design-build method has been used by the state on some projects, but until legislation, which Hortman, who represents portions of Coon Rapids and Brooklyn Park and grew up in Blaine, authored in House, was approved, it was not available to counties or cities.

The county's Main Street/125th Avenue N.E. reconstruction has been a pilot project for design-build and a manual has been created for other counties and cities to follow, Jonas said.

"This has been a job well done," he said. "It has been built right."

Both Ryan and Howe said this project was an example of the two cities and the county working together to get things done.

"This is the main east west route that is very important to the area," Howe said.

Under the project, Main Street/125th Avenue N.W. has been increased from two to four lanes with a raised median, curb and gutter and a pedestrian trail the full length of the project.

The existing five signals are being replaced with new signals with protected turn lanes.
According to the Anoka County Highway Department website, the project benefits will include increased safety and mobility due to additional capacity; reduced delays and congestion from improved intersections, improved roadway access, improve bike and pedestrian safety and mobility and increased longevity of the roadway in areas with poor soil.

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