

April 2021



US Highway 212 Rural Freight Mobility and Safety Project

Carver County, MN



Primary Contact

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Carver County*

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PROJECT NAME

US Highway 212 Rural Freight Mobility and Safety Project, Phase 2 (Benton Township) – Cologne to Norwood Young America

ELIMINATE
the freight bottleneck

EXPAND
rural access and opportunity

IMPROVE
roadway safety

ENSURE
sustainability and equity

PROJECT LOCATION

The project is located on US Highway 212 between County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 34 in Norwood Young America to CSAH 36 in Cologne in Benton Township, Carver County, MN. The Project is located approximately 8 miles west of the Minneapolis – St. Paul, MN-WI (Twin Cities) Urbanized Area and is designated as a Rural Area. The project is located in MN Congressional District 6.

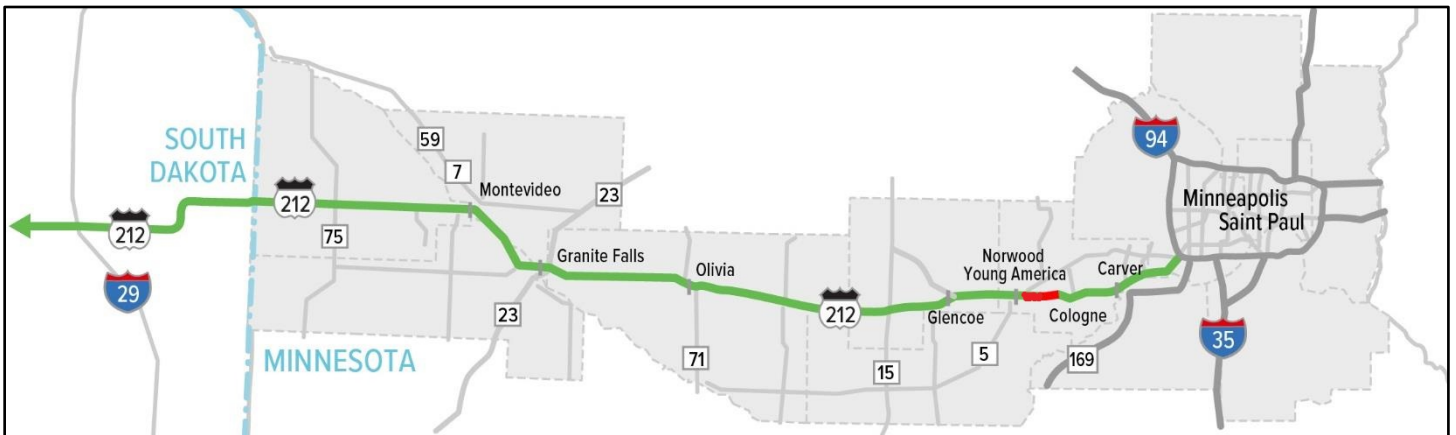


Figure 1. Project Location

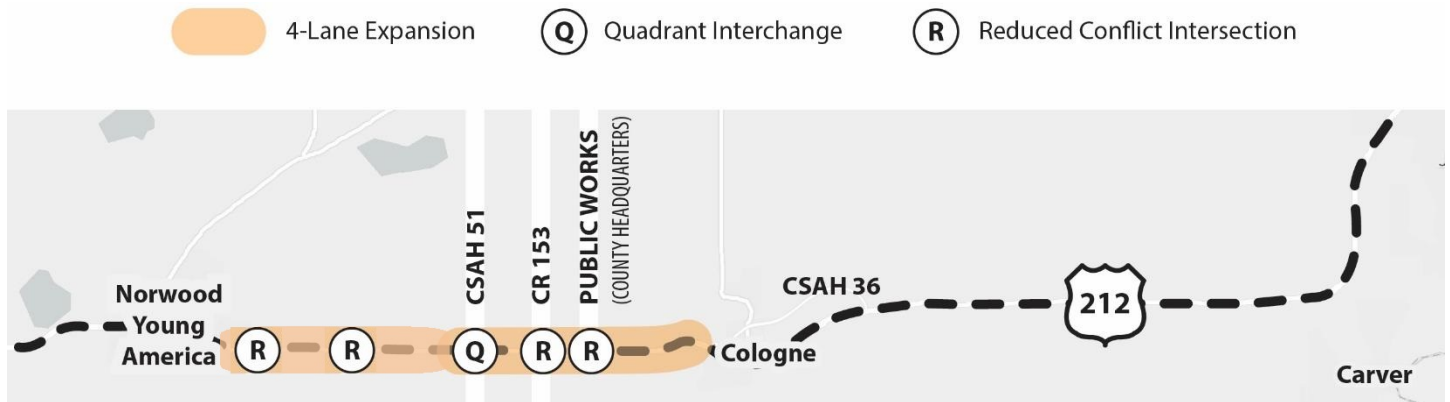
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The US 212 Rural Freight Mobility and Safety Project will expand 5.5 miles of US Highway (US) 212, an existing Principal Arterial roadway, from a rural two-lane undivided highway to a four-lane divided expressway from CSAH 34 in Norwood Young America to CSAH 36 in Cologne and construct Reduced Conflict Intersections (RCIs) and a grade-separated interchange.

The US 212 Rural Freight Mobility and Safety Project will expand US 212 between CSAH 34 and CSAH 36 from two to four lanes, install RCIs at four key intersections, and construct a grade-separated interchange at CSAH 51.

This Project will improve the rural transportation system and freight travel by reconstructing the 90-year-old roadway, adding capacity to address high crash rates, and reconfiguring intersections to address unsafe conditions. These improvements will vastly improve freight efficiency, improve rural safety, and strengthen rural access to economic opportunities. This project will address the only remaining two-lane gap on US 212 between Glencoe and the Twin Cities, making it a continuous four-lane highway.

Figure 2. Proposed Project Elements



PROJECT NEED

US 212 is identified by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) as a Critical Rural Freight Corridor in the Minnesota Statewide Freight System and Investment Plan (2018) through the project area. The roadway provides essential freight connection for over 22,000 square miles of Southwest Minnesota that does not have access to the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metropolitan Area (Twin Cities) using the Interstate Highway System. The roadway has 1,300 heavy commercial annual average daily traffic (HCAADT) and moves large amounts of freight from Minnesota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana.

US 212 is a vital connection for freight transportation and rural access to education, healthcare, and employment.

The existing project corridor is a two-lane undivided rural roadway with narrow lanes, narrow shoulders, limited turn lanes, poor roadbed condition, and unsafe intersections. These inadequacies create bottlenecks in the interstate freight supply chain and perpetuate safety issues, which lead to truck travel time delay and reliability uncertainty.



This Project will improve freight mobility and connectivity for freight haulers who utilize the roadway, the over 65 major freight generators who are located along the entirety of US 212 in Minnesota, and most dramatically for the 12 freight generators located immediately adjacent to the project area. As part of the US Highway 212 Corridor Study, 16 major freight generators were interviewed, and all supported the Project. US 212 was identified by every business interviewed as key to receiving inputs to production and shipping manufactured goods to the market.



Figure 3. Freight along US 212

These improvements will reduce heavy commercial vehicle operational costs by more than 17 percent, or 10,500 hours annually.

Proposed Project improvements will focus on safety, reliability, and efficiency for the local rural community as well as regional freight traffic. According to MnDOT crash data (2020), 20 percent of all crashes within the



Crash along the eastern end of US 212 (4-lane to 2-lane transition)

project area involve medium to heavy freight trucks, and other freight-related vehicles. The proposed improvements, specifically installation of RCIs, an interchange, wider shoulders, and medians between travel lanes, will reduce overall crash frequency at the intersections along US 212 by up to 78 percent and the frequency of severe (fatal and serious injury) crashes by 100 percent.

The installation of RCIs, an interchange, median, wider shoulders, snow fence, and ensuring adequate clear zone will reduce the crash rate for fatal and serious injury crashes by up to 100 percent.

Expansion of US 212 will directly benefit rural Minnesotans, freight haulers, local and regional businesses, the surrounding environment, commuters, and the local economy. Expanding the roadway will relieve congestion and reduce idling, creating a cost savings for commuters and freight vehicles, reducing negative impacts on the environment, and improving travel time reliability. Reconstruction of the roadway, improved intersection geometry and decreased delays benefit freight haulers, the regional economy, and local businesses. As freight is less likely to be damaged due to poor pavement, drivers will have more reliable delivery schedules, and vehicles will experience improved safety at intersections, the efficiency and use of US 212 by regional businesses will increase.

This Project benefits rural Minnesotans, freight haulers, local businesses, and the regional economy.

DOCUMENTATION OF WHETHER THE PROJECT IS ON THE STATE, TRIBAL, OR TERRITORIAL TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (STIP); AND ON THE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP), IF APPLICABLE

A segment of the project was recently awarded federal transportation funding and is approved for inclusion in the Metropolitan Council's TIP, and thus the STIP, which is scheduled for final federal approval in November 2021. The funding award letter is attached for reference and specifically specifies the project will be included in the upcoming TIP/STIP.

SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR THE FULL SHARE OF THE COST OF THE PROJECT BEYOND THE AMOUNT REQUESTED

Below is a breakdown of the project funding package. Local funding from Carver County is dedicated to the project via leveraging a new, non-federal revenue source passed by Carver County in 2017. Per Minnesota

Statute, Carver County enacted a one-half cent local option sales tax and \$20 wheelage tax on vehicle purchases to finance the local share of this project.

- **Total project cost: \$59,400,000**
- **Priority Project Request: \$25,000,000**
- Secured Federal transportation funds (STPBG): \$3,500,000
- Carver County Local Option Sales Tax: \$17,000,000
- TH Bonds – Project Development: \$3,900,000
- MnDOT – Construction Administration: \$2,500,000
- Minnesota Highway Freight Program (Federal): \$7,500,000

LETTER(S) OF SUPPORT FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT, TRANSIT AGENCY, OR OTHER NON-FEDERAL SPONSOR

Please see the attached letter of support from MnDOT. MnDOT is committed to providing State funding for this highway project, which is under their jurisdiction. MnDOT is a dedicated partner in this Project. MnDOT has established a firm commitment of investment towards improving the US 212 corridor. Since the roadway is a US Highway, future ongoing maintenance and operations of the new facility will be managed by MnDOT.



The [Southwest Corridor Transportation Coalition](#) (SWCTC) was formed to work cooperatively with MnDOT, local governments, businesses, state, and federal legislators and interested citizens to advocate for transportation improvements on US Highway 212 and State Highway 5. The SWCTC is a strong partnership with broad representation from all sectors. In total, 41 communities and local chambers of commerce have passed resolutions supporting improvements to expand the capacity of this highway including the Board of Commissioners of every county along the corridor.



Carver County has solicited input on the Project from several freight generators in the US 212 Corridor. [Letters of support](#) have been received by business and industries in the Corridor.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS THAT HAS BEEN OR WILL BE FOLLOWED TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON THE PROJECT

Carver County worked with MnDOT and nearby cities and townships from 2013 to 2020 to complete a corridor study for the US 212 project area. The study looked at lower-cost ways to make improvements to the corridor

while working towards the long-term conversion of the corridor to a four-lane facility and included multiple public engagement efforts including public open houses, stakeholder interviews, and public input surveys.

“Expanding Highway 212 to four lanes will save us time and money, but the safety benefits of the expansion are the most valuable to us.” – Michael Foods Inc.

“Many production inputs at our 1,500-person Hutchinson facility come via the Highway 212 corridor. Any delay in receiving these inputs hurts our bottom line.” – 3M

In 2020, additional public engagement was conducted with a focus on environmental justice communities - including low-income populations, communities of color, and senior and youth communities. A survey was distributed to over two dozen locations, specifically chosen to include senior/assisted living and low-income housing locations, and representative of locations that use the corridor everyday as there is no other similar connecting highway serving this rural area. Through direct mail and online distribution, surveys were targeted toward populations not typically involved in transportation projects, such as residents under age 18, disabled, and low-income. Over 430 responses were received, of which 70 identified as members of diverse populations (over the age of 65, or Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Black/African American or American Indian). Over 60 percent of respondents listed difficulty turning on and off US 212 and the number of crashes on US 212 as their top two concerns along the corridor. The project specifically addresses these concerns, calling for dramatic safety improvements to improve highway access and reduction of crash rates.

Public engagement and communication efforts will continue throughout project development and through construction of the project in order to maintain communication with residents, property owners, and special population groups.

PROJECT PHASE (E.G. PLANNING, FINAL DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION)

- Study and Concept Phase: 2013-2020
- Preliminary Design and Environmental Documentation: 2021-2022
- Final Design: 2022-2023
- Right of Way Acquisition and Letting: 2023
- Construction: 2024-2025

STATUS OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Development of the Environmental Assessment and preliminary design for this Project are in progress. Wetland delineation is planned for the summer of 2021. The Project will benefit from existing MnDOT programmatic agreements and agency liaisons to maximize the efficiency of environmental review and permitting processes. MnDOT has executed a programmatic agreement with FHWA and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to streamline the Section 106 review process. Additionally, MnDOT has established an agency liaison with the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to directly manage the Section 404 permitting process for state highway projects.

WHETHER THE PROJECT HAS RECEIVED FEDERAL FUNDING PREVIOUSLY, AND IF SO THE SOURCE AND AMOUNT

A piece of the project was recently awarded federal STPBG transportation funding of \$3,500,000 through the Metropolitan Council's competitive grant solicitation. The funding award letter is attached for reference.

CERTIFICATION THAT THE MEMBER, THEIR SPOUSE, AND THE OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS DO NOT HAVE A FINANCIAL INTEREST IN THE PROJECT

There is no financial interest in this project from the Member, their spouse, or other family members.

Transportation Advisory Board

of the Metropolitan Council of the Twin Cities

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STA

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Transit

Amity Foster
Transit

George Schember
Freight

Nick Fox
Non-motorized

February 17, 2021

Angie Stenson
Carver County Public Works
11360 Highway 212 Suite 1
Cologne, MN 55322

RE: NOTICE OF AWARD
2020 Regional Solicitation Project Selection
010-596-013

Dear Ms. Stenson:

Thank you for submitting transportation project proposals in the 2020 regional solicitation process. A total of 132 applications to the Regional Solicitation met the qualifying criteria. Teams of transportation professionals from around the region scored the responses to the weighted criteria and ranked the projects by their total score.

On December 16, 2020, the TAB completed its review and discussion of the funding options and awarded funds to 55 projects. The Metropolitan Council concurred with the decision on January 27, 2021.

Carver Co has been approved for federal STBGP funding for the following project and program year:

14050	US 212 & CSAH 51 Intersection Safety Project	\$3,500,000	2025
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The selected projects have been approved for inclusion in the region's 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the State TIP, currently being developed by the Metropolitan Council and MnDOT, respectively, and scheduled for final federal approval in November 2021.

In the meantime, you should contact Colleen Brown, Federal Aid Program Manager, at the MnDOT Metro State Aid Office at colleen.brown@state.mn.us to arrange a meeting and begin developing your projects.

Awarded projects must consider a range of project alternatives during the environmental process. The preferred alternative that comes out of the environmental process may be different than the project awarded funding by TAB. As such, project sponsors may need to submit a request for a scope change and/or a TIP amendment to the TAB and Metropolitan Council, which may result in a reduced award. **The TAB strongly encourages project sponsors to make every effort to get their projects ready for bid opening in the program year. Please refer to the base schedule in the attached program year policy.**

If you have any questions, please contact TAB Coordinator Elaine Koutsoukos at elaine.koutsoukos@metc.state.mn.us.

Sincerely,


James B. Hovland (Feb 18, 2021 19:34 CST)

James Hovland, Chair