



4646 Dakota St. SE  
Prior Lake, MN 55372

Nov. 22, 2011

## A Message from the Mayor

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# County Rd. 21: What's In Line for the Baseline Option?

Article for Mayor Mike Myser

Your City Council is trying to address two competing objectives with respect to County Rd. 21 as it passes through downtown:

1. Assure effective pedestrian and vehicle access to downtown area businesses and residences without severing the north and south downtown.
2. Provide cost effective County Rd. 21 improvements which will facilitate effective transportation throughout our community as traffic increases.

In 2005, Scott County and the City of Prior Lake adopted the County Rd. 21 Corridor Study. The study identified several improvements needed to maintain adequate access to the downtown area as traffic volumes increase from 10,300 trips per day to 27,000 trips per day over time. Five concepts were reviewed with the City Council approving what is now referred to as the Baseline Option.

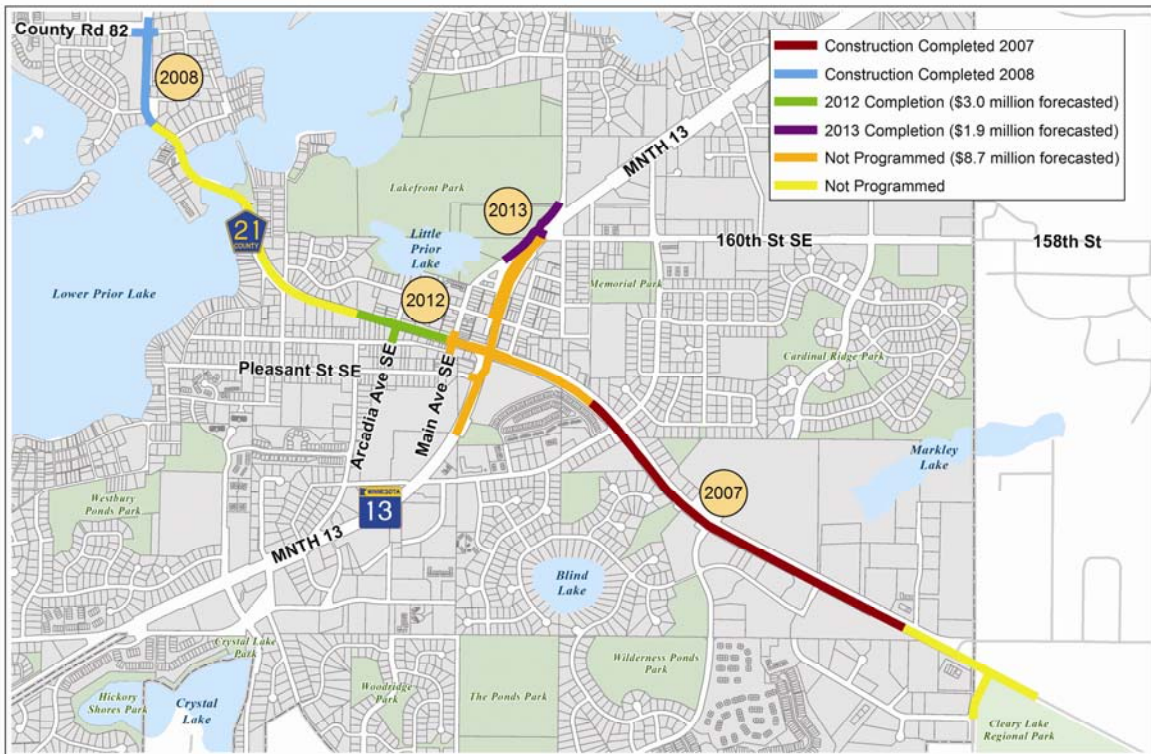
In 2010, the City Council authorized a thorough analysis of the Baseline Option and two more options (a bridge and a realignment option that would not bisect the north and south downtown). Consultants had warned that splitting downtown could seriously harm business, which was an unacceptable option for a council focused on growing and expanding the Prior Lake business base.

The Council also wanted to independently evaluate key aspects of each option to make the best possible decision for the entire community. The responsibility of such an important decision demanded asking tough questions and getting acceptable answers to increase the probability of a thriving future downtown area. This analysis also included many well-attended public meetings.

On Friday, Oct. 7, 2011, the Council reaffirmed its endorsement of the Baseline Option because it solved the congestion problems, did not compromise pedestrian and vehicle safety and did not negatively impact downtown businesses. The Council also found the other options' benefits were not strong enough to invest an additional \$14.95 million of your tax dollars.

The Baseline Option calls for a raised median, widening of County Rd. 21 downtown with a right turn in/right turn out only for Main Ave. and offset pedestrian crossing to allow pedestrians to go north or south across County Rd. 21 one lane at a time. This option also calls for a full signalized access at Arcadia Ave. making it the key access to downtown.

While the Council's action ended the realignment option, it was just the beginning for the Baseline Option. Some steps have already been undertaken to make the Baseline Option function (see map below). The lights and widening of County Rd. 21 from Franklin Ave. east is one example (in red); the signalization and improvements around County Rd. 21 and County Rd. 82 is another (in blue).



*The graphic (above) portrays the completed Baseline Option as it is conceived today. Of course, there could be new or different ideas or changing circumstances determining the final look of County Rd. 21 into the downtown area.*

### Implementing the Baseline Option

Plans and programming for construction of a full access intersection at Arcadia Ave. are set for mid-summer 2012 at a cost of \$3 million (in green), with \$750,000 covered by Scott County. Once complete, the primary north and south downtown connection for residents and businesses will be at Arcadia Ave. On or before the completion of that project, the City must identify a circulation path to and through the downtown area with signage and streetscaping.

And a question regarding Arcadia Ave. will need to be answered: Will Arcadia Ave. stop at Colorado St. or continue through to Pleasant St.? Expect a neighborhood meeting and more Council time on this question in 2012.

But wait, improvements to Arcadia Ave. are still just the start in the Baseline Option plan (story continues below).

### What's Ahead?

As discussed earlier, the Baseline Option – and its \$8.7 million price tag – calls for a raised median and widening of County Rd. 21 downtown with a right turn in/right turn out only for Main Ave. with features allowing for safer pedestrian crossing (in orange).

This project will also include the Pleasant St. access to downtown from northbound Hwy. 13. When this will happen is not certain, as neither the County nor State have the money programmed.

Scheduled for 2013, almost \$2 million is needed for the Main Ave. and Ridgemont Ave. intersection improvement to the north on Hwy. 13 (in purple). Scott County and the State of Minnesota will tentatively pitch in \$200,000 for these improvements, with the city covering the remaining \$1.7 million.

**What Can You Expect?**

City Council and staff know this project is far from over. There will be plenty of questions to ask, data to analyze, ideas to ponder and decisions to make along the way. That will mean periodic meetings on various roadway improvement phases. Please stay involved and help us make the best possible decision for the entire community's future growth and vibrancy.

For additional information, call the Prior Lake Engineering Department at (952) 447-9830.

**Sincerely,  
Mayor Mike Myser**