

Rethinking I-94: Which alternative is best for the environment?

The I-94 freeway between Minneapolis and St. Paul causes environmental harm and forces people to drive more. MnDOT's goal is to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 20% by 2050.¹ According to a May 2023 MnDOT study,² the at-grade alternative is the only option that reduces driving trips to help meet climate goals.

Here is what MnDOT's data says about the Rethinking I-94 alternatives.



The At-Grade alternative is best for the environment:

- ✓ Decreases greenhouse gas emissions from transportation by reducing VMT³
- ✓ Increases MetroTransit ridership significantly⁴
- ✓ Improves pedestrian and bicycle connectivity
- ✓ Reconnects neighborhoods and improves air quality



Rebuilding the highway does environmental harm:

- ✗ Increases greenhouse gas emissions from transportation by increasing VMT³
- ✗ Has minimal or negative transit ridership impact⁴
- ✗ Continues injustices of our past

¹ Minnesota Climate Action Framework (2022) and MnDOT Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (2022).

² Minnesota Department of Transportation (2023). Technical Memorandum Rethinking I-94 Transit Scoping and Idea Exploration. Prepared by The Goodman Corporation.

³ MnDOT (2023). Technical Memorandum, page 113, table 78, "Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled."

⁴ MnDOT (2023). Technical Memorandum, page 82, table 23, "Percent, Net Change to System-wide Ridership."

MnDOT's report studied General Maintenance (No Build), Express Bus on Shoulder (A.1 and A.2; General Maintenance B), Express Bus on Managed Lane (TPP; Expanded Freeway), BRT on Managed Lane (B.1, B.2, and B.3; Reduced Freeway / Reconfigure Freeway), and At-Grade (C.1). Since Local/Regional Roadway was not in the study, I did not include it here.

Screenshot of MnDOT (2023). Technical Memorandum, page 113, table 78, "Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled."

Table 78. Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled

Criteria	NB	A.1	A.2	TPP	B.1	B.2	B.3	C.1
Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled Ranking	Neutral	OO	O					OOO
Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled Percentage Change	Neutral	0.005	0.004	0.138	.0171	.0173	0.174	-0.351

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NB – Express Bus on Partial Shoulder	B.1 – BRT on Managed Lane, One Station
A.1 – Express Bus on 100% Shoulder, Five Stations	B.2 – BRT on Managed Lane, Three Station
A.2 – Express Bus on 100% Shoulder, One Station	B.3 – BRT on Managed Lane, Five Station
TPP – Express Bus on Managed Lane	C.1 – BRT on Dedicated Lane, At-Grade Roadway



Screenshot of MnDOT (2023). Technical Memorandum, page 82, table 23, "Percent, Net Change to System-wide Ridership."

Table 23. Percent, Net Change to System-wide Ridership

Criteria	NB	A.1	A.2	TPP	B.1	B.2	B.3	C.1
	Percentage Change							
Percent, Net Change to System-wide Ridership	Neutral	-0.43	-0.31	-0.14	-0.02	-0.20	-0.26	1.66

