Case Study #1 – Interstate 94 in the Twin Cities

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Background

- A freeway between St. Paul and Minneapolis was considered and planned as far back as the 20’s.
- The Federal Highway Act of 1956 made a freeway between the downtowns a forgone conclusion.
The St. Anthony Ave Route

- Between and parallel to University Ave and Marshall Ave
- Plotted to Minneapolis
- Ran directly south of the U of M and the Midway Industrial District
- Hooked up nicely with an optimum river crossing point
Interstate 94 through St. Paul
Alternate Route

- Northern Route, through a rail right of way, almost an exclusive industrial corridor.
- 1 mile North of the St. Anthony route.
- Proposed by George Herrold, old school city planner.
George Herrold and David Loeks

• Herrold was concerned about splitting the city, splitting neighborhoods and cutting off retailers from consumers.
• Did not have the funds or the support to do a proper study on the route.
• David Loeks, the new city planner had a different style.
Other Public Reaction to Intercity Freeway

- Groups/neighborhoods opposed to the freeway
  - St. Paul African-American neighborhood
  - Prospect park neighborhood
  - Western St. Paul neighborhood
  - St. Paul downtown businesses
Rondo St. Anthony Association

- St. Paul African-American neighborhood
  - Proposed freeway was to run through 1.5 miles of the neighborhood
  - Freeway would split the African-American neighborhood and force one-seventh of its residents out
- Rondo-St. Anthony association formed in 1956
- Association decided not to oppose freeway but put forward some demands
- Strategy of pleading
Rondo St. Anthony Association

- Key demands of Association
  - Relocation of homeowners affected by the freeway
  - Passing of open city ordinance
  - Prevent harmful effects of freeway on other neighborhoods

- Association was able to win only some of their demands
Prospect Park Neighborhood

- An “integrated” neighborhood
- Proposed freeway cut through the neighborhood causing fear that the neighborhood composition would be affected
- Residents wanted the proposed freeway to be placed over an existing railroad spur
- Highway Dept refused to accept the change due to the proposal being uneconomical
Western St. Paul Neighborhood

- A middle-upper class neighborhood
- Proposed plan was to
  - Create 2 freeway interchanges between Snelling Ave & city line
  - Convert 2 local streets into major arterials
- Residents opposed freeway on the basis of
  - Increase traffic, street widenings and associated dislocation of property
  - Safety of school children using the streets
- Highway Dept refused to consider change in alignment stating traffic needs
Initially in favor of freeway expecting freeways to provide much needed downtown access

Started opposing freeway when retail sales dropped due to urban sprawl

Sears Roebuck construction – major point of contention

Gave up opposition once it was clear that Highway Dept plans weren’t going to be altered
Summary

- Many groups/neighborhoods affected by the proposed freeway
- Each group was concerned with only their section of the freeway
- No coordination among groups
- Image of Highway department didn’t help formation of alliances among groups
Good source of information:

- [http://www.mnhs.org/library/tips/history_topics/12rondo.html](http://www.mnhs.org/library/tips/history_topics/12rondo.html)
- [http://www.mplib.org/history/tr3.asp](http://www.mplib.org/history/tr3.asp)
So in the end....

- The Interstate followed the St. Anthony Route straight through St. Paul.
- The Highway Department smoothly handled all the dissenting parties but kept a united, strong front.
- Certain powerful interested parties wanted the freeway built ASAP.
Future of Central Corridor

- Baseline?
- Bus Rapid Transit?
- Light Rail?
Questions to think about

- Would this highway be constructed today in the same way?
- Social concerns?
- Economic concerns?
- Environmental concerns?
- Political concerns?
- Planning – Engineering balance?
- Public involvement?
- Modes other than automobiles?