



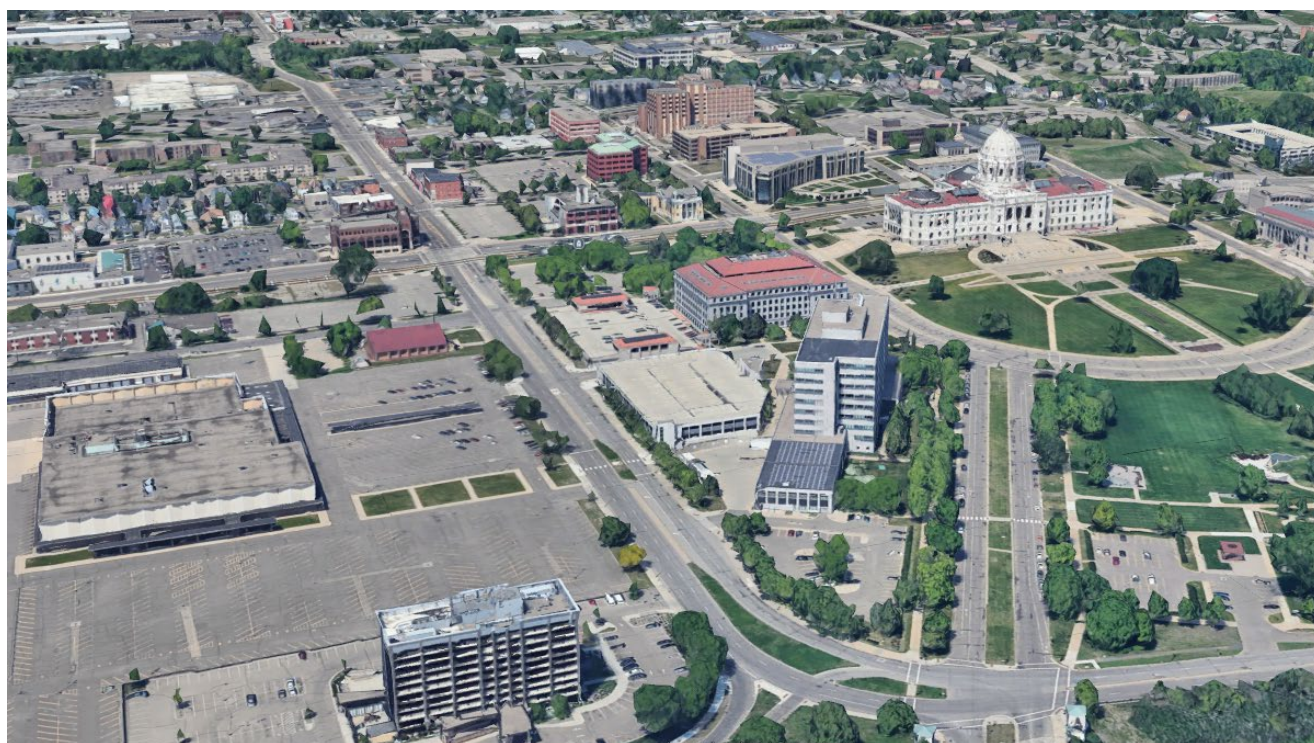
Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board

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Date: October 3, 2025
To: Members of the Capitol Area Architectural and Planning Board (CAAPB)
From: Peter Musty, Principal Planner & Zoning Administrator, CAAPB

RE: AGENDA ITEM #8 - Rice Street Redesign: Overview and Engagement Plan



Memo and Board Meeting Preview

This memo summarizes the community process to date leading to a midpoint design for reconstruction of Rice Street. Please see attachments below for early design, layout, community engagement, and alternatives considered.

At the October 3rd Board Meeting, we will also see a short presentation by Haila Maze, project manager for lead consultant Bolton & Menk. Both the attached information and the presentation will focus on the following:

- **summary of community engagement** activities in 2025
- **alternative designs** considered in 2025

Background

A major initiative of the 2040 *Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area*, ([profiled in Chapter \(Principle\) 4](#)) was to transform the “Capitol Rice Corridor” (includes portion of Como, Rice, 12th Street across interstate to St. Peter).



The project was enabled by a \$25 million provision from the 2023 MN State Legislature, appropriated to Department of Transportation (but just for Rice Street itself – **the length shown in green above**) to include collaborative work with City of Saint Paul, Ramsey County, Metropolitan Council, State of Minnesota, and the CAAPB. The project must include implementation of a multi-modal (mobility) hub at University and Rice. (Legislation details can be found in [June 2023 Board Memo](#).) Appropriation is available until June of 2029.

Public Works and Planning staff from Ramsey County, MnDOT, City of Saint Paul, and CAAPB are partnering to conduct design and implementation. There have been regular meetings of the Project Management team over the course of 2025. CAAPB Staff (Musty) is

attending all meetings twice a month and is providing interdisciplinary team policy, studies, and community surveys, and is summarizing recent studies that embody CAAPB priorities in our Comp Plan, stormwater management, urban design, public realm safety, CMDF, mobility, and integration with the Sears site.



Project webpage: <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/roads-transportation/future-road-projects/future-road-construction-projects/rice-street-capitol-area-reconstruction>

During spring and summer 2025, staff began vetting alternatives, with an alternative developed based on open house feedback, surveys and street and traffic engineering studies. Project leads and designers, including the interagency staff team (County, City, and CAAPB), are now seeking to initiate review of the 30% design.

Emerging Design

As shown in the attached design summary, the new design for Rice Street features several best practices supported by the County, City public works, and also follows policy of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol as outlined in the attached Staff Evaluation:

- “One lane of traffic in each direction with a two-way left turn lane in the center
- Two-way bikeway with a separate sidewalk from John Ireland Boulevard to University Avenue
- Shared use path from University Avenue to Pennsylvania Avenue, Two-way bikeway with a separate sidewalk from University Avenue to John Ireland Boulevard
- Medians at Charles Avenue to provide pedestrians with a refuge island to only cross one direction of traffic at a time, and south of Fuller Avenue to keep drivers from driving around stopped buses
- Boulevard spaces to allow for trees and greening”

Additionally,

- safer intersections to cross Rice Street and slower ‘design speed’ on Rice
- increased tree canopy
- stormwater best practices
- space for parking north of University Avenue
- better snow storage
- accessible design best practices
- improved lighting and safety features
- four-lane to three-lane conversion (narrower curb to curb dimensions and narrower crossings, while retaining traffic and increasing transit volumes)



North of University: Shared Use Path



South of University: Two-Way Cycle Track

Engagement Activity: 2024, 2025 and Upcoming

Full documentation of input of engagement activities, takeaways and concepts considered are available via:

- October 3, 2025, Board Meeting **Presentation** – summary of continuing engagement activities will be presented.
- Attachment C: **Concept Screening Report with Community Engagement Takeaways**
https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Item%208%2C%20Att.%20C%20-%20Concept%20Screening%20Report%20with%20Community%20Engagement%20Takeaways_tcm1087-706996.pdf
- **Project Webpage** - <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/roads-transportation/future-road-projects/future-road-construction-projects/rice-street-capitol-area-reconstruction>

Phase 1 Engagement snapshot (August – December 2024):

- 100 door hanger invitations distributed
- In-person open house: 18 attendees
- Project website
- Community stakeholder group newsletters
- Open house postcard
- Email and text subscription list
- Social media posts, CAAPB webpage and GovDelivery Notices

Phase 2 Engagement Snapshot (January – August 2025):

- The purpose of this phase of engagement was to gather feedback on three design concepts for Rice Street:
 - Concept 1: Two-way bicycle track on west side, sidewalk on east side
 - Concept 2: Shared-use path on west side, sidewalk on east side
 - Concept 3: Hybrid option – two-way bicycle track south of University Ave, shared-use path north of Univ.
- Survey (open from June 3 to July 13): 72 responses
- Online comment map: 30 comments
- Virtual open house: 11 attendees
- In-person open house: 20 attendees
- Nine community pop ups: 303 attendees
- Meetings with Good Neighbor Group, Capitol Heights Block Club

Ongoing/Upcoming Engagement: 30% Corridor Design Review and University & Rice Design

Design Presentations/Reviews State of Minnesota w Leadership (Executive Secretary will convene)

- CAAPB Members
- Legislators
- Mayor (offered, w City Staff)
- Commissioners' Offices (Transportation, Administration, Public Safety, Veterans)

CAAPB Staff and Partner Reviews

- Advisory Committee Special Meetings (w Minnesota Historical Society)
Topical Reviews with Partners:
- Capitol Region Watershed District
- Minnesota Council on Disability

- Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, Deaf Blind, and Hard of Hearing
- Capitol Security
- Department of Administration Consultations (RECS, Events, Grounds, OES, SHPO)
- Good Neighbor Group/Rice Street Businesses and Capitol Heights Block Club
- Adjacent Major Private Properties (University and Rice) – Former Sears, League of MN Cities, Saint Paul City School, Good Neighbor Center, (411 Rice), Capitol Ridge, apartment buildings, others

Design Team Community Open Houses (x2)

- Virtual and In-person options

Advisory Committee (Advisors) Reviews

Advisor Joe Favour has been present at several project management team meetings. Haila Maze visited the Advisors in early 2025. Then on September 10, 2025, project team lead street designer Cody Christiansen presented the 30% design to the full Advisory Committee. Several of the issues flagged by staff and advisors that CAAPB has asked to be addressed include:

- ✓ full intersection to former Sears site at the new Central
- ✓ review must be conducted with Good Neighbor Center for new street design (narrowing of street and improved crossing, site access) at Aurora and Rice
- ✓ continued collaboration between Administration CAAPB and Rice Street team on design of mobility hub amenities and green spaces at University and Rice
- ✓ Collaborate with other important stakeholders.

CAAPB Advisory Committee Member Joe Favour shared the following:

“The design alternative recommended by the Rice Street design team will be a significant improvement for the Rice Street corridor within the Capitol Area. The improvements planned for pedestrian, bicycle, and multimodal transit connectivity will pay dividends far beyond the monetary investment in the physical upgrades. The design emerging from the engagement to date integrates meaningful improvements without disrupting the traffic flow or expanding the right of way. Overall the architectural/design advisors see this proposed alternative as an important investment in positive change.” – CAAPB Advisor Joe Favour

The Design and Location of Three BRT Stations Have Not Changed

Three new Metro G-Line BRT Stations remain in the locations the Board previously approved, and the design of those stations remains as proposed and approved previously by the Board. They are located at Como and Rice, University and Rice, and New Central and Rice serving future redevelopment at former Sears (by Transportation Building where Central used to connect to Rice). Please see attached 30% design.

The Design of More Elements Will Be Coming Before the Board in Near Future

Three focus areas will come forward at a future meeting for consideration, including detail of the intersection of Rice and John Ireland, the open space design at University and Rice including mobility and welcoming amenities, and concepts for the triangle at Pennsylvania, Rice, and Como.

For Project Timeline and Updated Construction Start Date, see [Project Webpage](#)

Currently, the project is scheduled to move through final design stages, bidding and then construction by 2028.

CAAPB Staff Evaluation

Compliance With Statute 15B

Does the design process and design comply with requirements in MN Statute 15B CAPITOL AREA PLANNING AND PRESERVATION?

Yes. The street design and reconstruction project, located entirely within the Capitol Area boundary, triggers the need for compliance with several statutory requirements:

MN Statute 15B.08 CONSTRUCTION PROCESS, (Subd. 3) states that *“No substantial change or improvement may be made to public lands or public buildings in the Capitol Area without the written approval of the board.”* Consideration for the 30% design helps to ensure the project is tracking toward final acceptance by the Board.

MN Statute 15B.10 COMPETITIONS, (Subd.1, (b)) states *“A competition also may be used for plans for a proposed ...(3) street plan; ...(5) change to a public building, landscaping scheme, or street plan.”* The project satisfies the requirement by selection of Bolton & Menk team through a public competitive RFP process conducted by Ramsey County that included vetting and selecting applicants for their capacity, experience, means, and proposed scope. CAAPB staff participated in the selection committee with staff from other agencies.

MN Statute 15B.11 ADVISORY COMMITTEE, (Subd. 1. *Advisory committee review*) states...*“The board must not approve a plan for a new public building under section 15B.10 or 15B.13 unless it first receives the comments and criticism of the advisory committee...”* As documented in the staff memo, three Advisors have reviewed and recommend that the Board support forwarding the 30% design proposed as the preferred alternative.

MN Statute 15B.17 CAPITOL AREA PROPOSALS, (Subd. 1. *Proposals*) states...*“(a) Before a state agency or other public body develops a budget proposal or plans for capital improvements within the Capitol Area to submit to the legislature and the governor, it must consult with the board.”* The legislative provision passed in 2023 legislative session creating the \$25 million project was developed in consultation with CAAPB staff prior to legislative approval, and it was considered by staff as satisfying implementation of a key policy of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan adopted by the Board in 2021 (See analysis below, in particular Chapters/Principles 4, 5 and 7).

Compliance With 2040 Comprehensive Plan



Does the design align with policy in the [2040 Comprehensive Plan for the Minnesota State Capitol Area](#)?

Yes. CAAPB Staff can confirm that several major and supporting policies of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan will be implemented with this design. The policies addressed in the design are listed below - or a link is provided where policies are too numerous to list:

Chapter/Principle 1:

As Minnesota’s seat of government and destination for thousands each year, the Capitol Area offers the highest quality experience to visitors.

1.16. Explore the establishment of a self-serve visitor station and/or kiosk(s) that could provide educational, historical, and directional information for visitors. The station/kiosk(s) should be sited as strategically as possible for visibility and accessibility, and should be designed to maximize the comfort, safety, and efficiency of nonmotorized travel.

- ✓ 1.28. Provide for multiple modes of transportation options, including transit, automobile, bicycle, personal scooter and walking.
- ✓ 1.30. Explore means of access to visitors unable to pay for transportation or parking to visit the Capitol Area.

Chapter/Principle 2:

The Capitol Building and Mall are central to the identity of Saint Paul and are a unifying focal point for the city, as Cass Gilbert once envisioned.

2.8. Provide connections to major State buildings, plazas and parking, for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.

2.11. Focus attention on smaller connections and approaches to the west, north, and east in neighborhoods - as specified in Chapters 4 and 5, and the Development Frameworks referenced in Chapter 7 of this plan.

- ✓ 2.17. To the extent feasible, encourage elements (such as bus shelters, plazas, and seating) to be designed in a manner that enhances views and connections to the Capitol Campus.
- ✓ 2.37. Design connecting streets and pathways as extensions of open spaces, reflecting a quality appropriate to the public realm at the State Capitol.
 - b. Extend the natural and historic landscape established by Saint Paul's extensive parkways and boulevards to and through the Capitol Area.

e. Delineate paths between pedestrians, and those on bikes, scooters, and other alternative modes of transportation.

- ✓ 2.38. Utilize sustainable, human-scale plantings to enhance the landscape.
 - d. Promote tree diversity as a risk management technique for limiting the impact of diseases, pests, and other problems associated with climate change.
 - e. Encourage dense tree planting and continuous tree canopy along sidewalks to visually define approaches and to shade pedestrians.

Chapter/Principle 3:

The Capitol Area is a model for Minnesota, where best practices are expected in the planning, design, and development of public and private projects.

- ✓ **Best practices should be considered during the earliest stages of design.** 3.1. Public and private projects in the Capitol Area should consider the five holistic lenses—healthy living, communities & families, placemaking & identity, economic vitality, and energy & environment—in the earliest stages of planning and design.



The following designs implement or align with a significant proportion of principles and elements in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and would be too numerous to list in this analysis. Please follow the links to review.

Chapter/Principle 4

The entire Capitol Area provides an integrated, high quality, human scale public realm experience

https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Principle%204_tcm1087-484512.pdf

Chapter/Principle 5

The Capitol Area is an urban multi-modal district, seamlessly connected to destinations

https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Principle%205_tcm1087-484513.pdf

Chapter/Principle 6

Land use diversity is encouraged throughout the Capitol Area

https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Principle%206_tcm1087-484514.pdf

Chapter/Principle 7

In all parts of the Capitol Area, new development respects community, assets and context

https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Principle%207_tcm1087-484515.pdf

Chapter/Principle 7A: The Capitol Rice Development Framework

The Capitol Rice District is an Urban Village with Leif Erickson Park at its center

https://mn.gov/caapb/assets/Principle%207A_tcm1087-484516.pdf

Next Steps

- 1) No formal Board action is necessary at this stage.
- 2) Now that the Board Members have received and reviewed the 30% schematic design and received and reviewed the community and engagement activities conducted by Ramsey County, the City of Saint Paul, and CAAPB, the Rice Street design team will continue engagement, technical reviews and continue development of the design. Additional updates will be brought to the Board.
- 3) To ensure continued alignment with the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, CAAPB's Statutory approval requirements in MN Statute 15B, and specific Rules in MN Rules 2400, the final design will be brought back before the Board during or after design development for approval prior to developing final construction documents.

Attachments

Attachment A: Staff Recommended Design (two-page PDF Flyer)

Attachment B: 30% Layout of Entire Corridor (one large PDF drawing)

Attachment C: Concept Screening Report w/Community Engagement Takeaways (27 pages, shows previously considered concepts)