

CITY OF NORTHFIELD, MN
NORTHFIELD TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE RESOLUTION 2024-003

RECOMMENDS THE TURNBACK OF TRUNK HIGHWAY 246 FROM COUNTY ROAD 1
TO TRUNK HIGHWAY 3 FROM MNDOT TO CITY OF NORTHFIELD

WHEREAS, the City of Northfield desires “to provide a safe, convenient, multi-modal, and environmentally responsible transportation system for Northfield and the surrounding region” as expressed in Chapter 7 Transportation Chapter of the City of Northfield Comprehensive Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Northfield City Council (Nov. 13, 2018) established the scope and focus area of the Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee to include “Highway 246 Turnback (including additional review of improvements to the road including, but not limited to, a pedestrian underpass or overpass crossing for Jefferson Parkway);” and

WHEREAS, the section of Highway 246 through Northfield has several urgent needs, including

1. pavement maintenance and improvement,
2. safety improvements for people traveling to Northfield schools,
3. safety improvements for people walking along and across Woodley Street; and

WHEREAS, the section of Highway 246 from Northfield Middle School to Highway 3 is critical for completing several parts of the City’s street network; and

WHEREAS, MnDOT has identified TH-246 as a low priority trunk highway that is eligible for a turnback; and

WHEREAS, the City of Northfield has completed a corridor study on TH-246 from County Road 1 to TH-3 to understand the improvements needed on the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the corridor study explored ways to improve safety and mobility in the TH-246 corridor and to ensure the proposed pedestrian and bicycle facilities meet the needs of the area, nearby schools, and regional network; and

WHEREAS, the corridor study integrated past planning efforts and planning for future growth along the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the corridor study explored multiple options for improvements and through engagement with the public and stakeholders arrived at a preferred improvement concept for the corridor; and

WHEREAS, the corridor study identified safety improvements along the corridor that would not be eligible to be built if under the MnDOT’s jurisdictional control.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee:

1. Urges the City to pursue immediate action to resolve the identified urgent needs in collaboration with MnDOT.
2. Recommends that the City work with MnDOT to pursue turnback of TH-246 from TH-3 to County Road 1 from MnDOT to the City.
3. Recommends that the segment of TH 246 south of CSAH 1/CR 81 remain under the jurisdiction of MnDOT.
4. Endorses the Preferred Concept in principle.
5. Asks the City to work with MnDOT to develop more information about the timing and financial implications of pursuing turnback.
6. Urges the City to plan for the ongoing maintenance and replacement costs of TH-246 as a local roadway.
7. Shares the additional context in Attachment A with the City Council.

Attachment A

Attachment A: Discussion from the Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee

Should the City of Northfield work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to pursue the 'turnback' of Trunk Highway 246?

The Northfield Transportation Advisory Committee was formed in 2018 to address regional transportation planning including whether the City of Northfield should pursue a turnback of Trunk Highway 246 to local jurisdictions.

To develop and inform possible responses, the City of Northfield initiated a 246 Corridor Study for the corridor from County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 1/County Road 81 to TH 3. The NTAC has reviewed this study several times, including in conversation with Bolton & Menk and MnDOT personnel. Bolton & Menk developed options that would respond to these deficiencies, and then evaluated them. The NTAC considered these options and reached the following positions or conclusions:

- **The NTAC endorses the Preferred Option in principle.** Several of the desired safety features would not be possible to install under MnDOT jurisdiction, which is a compelling reason to pursue turnback. However, not all NTAC members endorse all details of the design.
- **The NTAC agreed on the urgency of addressing some of the needs.** Because MnDOT does not currently have this section of 246 scheduled for maintenance or reconstruction, turnback may be a way to bring improvements sooner. However, improving the corridor does not necessarily have to wait for turnback. The City could work with MnDOT to install interim safety improvements in the short run. Interim safety improvements could lead to more people walking and biking to the three schools, reducing the vehicle traffic that now causes some of the problems identified in the report.

One of the goals of the NTAC is to ensure input into City decisions that affect regional transportation. With that in mind, the NTAC highlights the input in the report from Northfield Township, Bridgewater Township, the City of Dennison, and the City of Nerstrand. These jurisdictions shared concerns with roadway maintenance and snow plowing operations if TH 246 were transferred to county or city jurisdiction. In particular, they are concerned that turnback could mean MnDOT would transfer TH 246 south of CSAH 1 to Rice County/Goodhue County jurisdiction, and Rice and Goodhue Counties do not provide 24-hr snow plowing operations.

Rice County has indicated that they are not pursuing a turnback at this time due to other jurisdictional input. Rice County supports the City of Northfield pursuing the turnback of the segment from CSAH 1/CR 81 to TH 3.

In addition, jurisdictions shared concerns related to emergency services response and safety. Northfield Police, Northfield Area Fire and Rescue, and Goodhue Sherriff's Office do not see an impact on response times with a change in jurisdiction or the recommended design. In the segment from CSAH 1 to TH 3 Northfield Police and Northfield Area Fire and Rescue believe safety in this segment will be improved with the proposed corridor recommendations.

