

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

09-0001R

RESOLUTION ORDERING THE REMOVAL OF THE EXISTING TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF EKLUND AVENUE AT SWAN LAKE ROAD AND DENYING THE PERMANENT CLOSURE OF THE SOUTHBOUND LANE OF EKLUND AVENUE, IDEAL STREET WEST OF FOSTER STREET AND EASTBOUND MAPLE GROVE ROAD EAST OF JOSHUA AVENUE.

CITY PROPOSAL:

RESOLVED, that the city council of the city of Duluth hereby directs that the public works and utilities department remove the existing closure at Eklund Avenue and Swan Lake Road. Further, the city council denies the permanent closure of the following streets: the southbound lane of Eklund Avenue at Swan Lake Road, Ideal Street west of Foster Street and eastbound Maple Grove Road east of Joshua Avenue.

Approved:

Approved for presentation to council:

Department Director

Chief Administrative Officer

Approved as to form:

Approved:

Attorney

Auditor

ENG CJV: jh 12/15/2008

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: This resolution orders the removal of the existing temporary half closure of Eklund Avenue at Swan Lake Road, and denies the permanent closure thereof. In addition, it denies the permanent closure of two other streets that are currently open. Those streets include Ideal Street west of Foster Street and the eastbound lane of Maple Grove Road east of Joshua Avenue.

In late 2005, the metropolitan interstate council (MIC) was asked to study the problem of cut-through traffic in the Duluth Heights neighborhood, and to identify solutions to lessen the impact on the neighborhood. Their final report (Duluth Heights traffic circulation study) was published in August 2006 with several recommendations. The long-term recommendation was construction of the Duluth Heights Connector (Joshua Avenue Extension) between Maple Grove Road and Arrowhead Road, with an estimated implementation schedule of 2011 to 2016.

Until Joshua Avenue is extended, interim short-term traffic calming solutions are an option to prevent cut-through traffic. These options include a half closure at Eklund Avenue, a closure of eastbound Maple Grove Road east of Joshua Avenue, and a full closure at Ideal Street west of Foster Avenue. The temporary closure at Eklund Avenue was approved by previous city council Resolution 07-0214, and was installed during the spring of 2007. The concept was to install a temporary half closure at Eklund Avenue and to monitor its effectiveness prior to making permanent changes.

After new traffic patterns were established, traffic counts were taken and a resident survey was mailed in order to determine the effectiveness of the closure at Eklund. It was found that the traffic decreased at Eklund Avenue from 2,250 ADT (average daily traffic) to 1,320 ADT and increased on Maple Grove Road after the closure. Traffic on the minor streets showed only minor changes. Shortly after Joshua Avenue was extended to Maple Grove Road this fall, additional traffic counts were taken. Although there has not been enough time to reestablish traffic patterns, the traffic counts show a slight increase in vehicles using Maple Grove Road. If the closure at Maple Grove Road is not made, it is logical to assume that more drivers will use Maple Grove Road now that the Joshua Avenue connection to Highway 53 has been completed.

The resident survey had a 32 percent response rate and showed almost an evenly split opinion on the question "Are you in favor of keeping the half closure in place until the Duluth Heights Connector (an extension of Joshua Avenue from Central Entrance to Arrowhead Road) is built?" 45 percent said NO, and 46 percent indicated YES. This is a shift from the initial survey that was completed during the study, where 69 percent indicated they supported the use of traffic calming measures to alleviate cut-through traffic. Based on the survey results it appears that some residents believe the closure is a hindrance to their normal routes, while others enjoy the decrease in traffic volume. The survey was mailed to 875 residents in the surrounding neighborhoods. The households all received both surveys.

Below are some advantages and disadvantages of the closures:

ADVANTAGES

- Driver's who don't live in the area are required to take alternate routes and therefore reduce the volume of traffic to the neighborhood.
- Less volume gives the pedestrians and bicyclists who use the road an impression of feeling more "safe" with less traffic.

DISADVANTAGES

- Drivers are prevented from using the "public" streets.
- Local residents are required to take longer alternate routes to reach their homes or destinations because a portion of the most direct route has been blocked.
- Construction costs for closures will be larger if DTA Route 14 needs to be maintained. The DTA has indicated that additional closures may force them to discontinue that route. In any case, it is money that could be used for other needs.
- There will be ongoing additional maintenance costs and snow removal costs, particularly if mechanical gates for buses are required.
- There will be ongoing additional staff costs, especially by the police department for enforcement.
- Although the intention is to remove the closures upon completion of the Joshua Avenue extension, the actual removal of these traffic calming devices could be met with opposition in the future
- Closures will have no effect on reducing speed, a common concern of residents.