

Engstrom to Trunk Connector Project Background & Status Document

Prepared by: North Lakes Community Council

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2017 - MSB APPROVES 2035 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

The Borough has long recognized the need for a connector from Engstrom Road to Trunk Road. This new connection would be located south of Wolf Lake and north of Bogard Road. This connector would significantly ease the traffic volume near the dangerous Bogard / Engstrom intersection. The concept has been part of long range transportation planning for years and was referenced in the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan that was approved in 2017. In the LRTP, the Engstrom connector road was recommended as a short term (2016-2019) priority project. Unfortunately, it was not prioritized and advanced to the voters until the 2021 Transportation Infrastructure Program (TIP 21).

Also included in the 2017 LRTP was a recommendation that Bogard Road from Trunk to Seldon be widened to a 4-lane highway!

2018 - SUB-AREA SOLUTIONS STUDY

The NLCC reviewed and commented on a newly published SASS for our area. Included in the list of projects was a project to connect Engstrom to Trunk Road to the east off the end of Settlement Avenue. The NLCC suggested that the project be considered a priority.

JULY 2021 - VOTERS APPROVE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM (TIP21) BASED ON SOUTHERN ROUTE

- In July of 2021, MSB Planning staff prepared an Information Memo (IM 21-155) recommending the MSB Assembly approve a suite of projects for investment. The entire package recommended was \$61,135,000 to finance the cost in whole or in part of 20 specifically identified projects. Included was \$2,500,000 for the Engstrom to Trunk Connector Project.
- In August of 2021, the MSB Assembly, based on rationale described in IM 21-155, adopted an Ordinance (OR 21-076) authorizing issuance of areawide general obligation bonds to fund the projects described in IM 21-155.
- The bond package was ratified by the voters in November of 2021.
- The specific project description, included in IM 21-155, read as follows:
 - *“Engstrom Road to Trunk Road Corridor: Project would provide connection from Engstrom Road to Trunk Road connecting to a segment of Homestead Road north of the Trunk-Bogard roundabout reducing heavy traffic on Engstrom Road.”*

2022 TO 2024 - ENGINEERING ANALYSIS - RECONNAISSANCE ENGINEERING AND EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES EXPANDS TO INCLUDE NORTHERN ROUTE

- Jan 2022 - Borough issues RFP for Engineering Services
- Aug 2022 - Borough Contracts with HDL Engineering. Included in the contract are expectations to evaluate alternative routes.
- September 2022 - An updated TIP21 consolidates the North and South route options into a single project. The project data sheet can be accessed at ([this link](#)). Cost estimates for the completed project are updated to just over \$19,000,000.
- October 2022 - Assembly directs staff to begin preparations for a new TIP23 in support of transportation needs. To be advanced for voters as a bond package.
- October 2022 - TIP21 Presentation by staff to Assembly identifies the Engstrom Trunk Connector project for construction in 2025.
- November 2022 - Official Streets & Highways Plan (OSHP) is approved. It shows the original southern route and a northern route. ***Importantly, the OSHP does not reference the two unconstructed collectors (Northern and Southern) as project alternatives. The plan contemplates a need for both projects to address the traffic needs of the future.*** This level of detail is not apparent in the OSHP summary information posted on the Engstrom to Trunk Corridor project website. The only way to fully understand the OSHP is to spend some time reviewing the OSHP interactive map and add the OSHP layer. That map can be accessed at [this link](#).
- July 2023 - HDL completes Reconnaissance Engineering Report. Based on the report, MSB Public Works recommends proceeding with the Northern Route.
- October 2023 - Presentation of report and recommendation to Assembly / Planning Commission. Presentation shows both Northern and Southern route options. Recommendation is to focus on a new Northern Alignment, which is now directly off the east end of the east-west section of Engstrom through newly acquired ROW as part of the recent approval of Stone Creek Phase 7 subdivision.
- December 2024 - HDL submits a cost proposal to do additional alternatives analysis and public involvement services for the project. A key assumption in the cost proposal is that the *“Alternatives analysis will include up to five (5) distinct routes, including the North and South Alignments identified”* The cost proposal is approved by the Assembly.

2024-2025 - NLCC ADVOCATES FOR SOUTHERN ROUTE CONNECTION

- July 2024 - The Lohmann - Olson Family is contacted by the Borough requesting access to their property for purposes of planning and ROW procurement for the Northern Route option of the Engstrom to Trunk corridor project.
- July 2024 - The Lohmann - Olson family writes a letter to the Borough Planning Commission objecting to the proposed route and pointing out that IM 24-133 erroneously stated that “the North Alignment has been previously approved and funded through the Transportation Improvement Program in 2021” The voter approved package referenced only the southern alignment, tying in to Trunk Road at Old Homestead.
- September 2024 - NLCC becomes aware of the Conditional Use Permit application for Central Gravel Products to operate a gravel extraction business in the property to the Northeast of the Engstrom/Bogard intersection. Topic is added to agenda and discussed at the September NLCC Meeting. Central Gravel Products representatives attended and provided information to our members.
- October 2024 - The NLCC meets with the Lohmann - Olson family to understand their concerns.
- October 2024 - NLCC discusses the proposed CUP with area residents and submits preliminary information and recommendations for public review and shares with the Borough.
- October 2024 - NLCC holds another public meeting, including participation from Central Gravel Products.
- October 2024 - NLCC submits a Resolution (RS 24-002) outlining several facts and recommendations specific to construction of the Southern Route option for the Engstrom to Trunk Road Connector. To see the entire resolution ([click here](#)).
- October 2024 - The Lohmann - Olson family also submits a letter to the Borough objecting to the Northern Route (which would cut through their undeveloped property) and recommending the Southern Route.
- November 2024 - NLCC continues engagement with Borough staff and Assembly advocating for the Southern Route option to be considered as a condition of approval for the Central Gravel permit.
- January 2025 - It becomes apparent that the Borough is heading for approval of the Central Gravel Products permit, and that they will not be deciding on routing for the Engstrom to Trunk Connector in time to incorporate it into the permit.
- January 2025 - The NLCC recommends approval of the CUP for Central Gravel, and recommends a “Condition of Approval” that would require them to use the Southern Route Engstrom to Trunk Connector for primary access, if and when that road were to be constructed.

- January 2025 - The NLCC receives an email from Cole Branham, the Project Manager for the Engstrom to Trunk connector project. He asserts that the Southern Route has already been evaluated as part of the process, and that the change order intended to explore alternatives to the northern alignment. He indicates that the northern route option better serves the project objectives. The NLCC responds and points out that the cost proposal approved by the Borough, specifically referenced inclusion of the North and South alignments.
- February 2025 - The permit for the Central Gravel operation is approved, without our recommended condition of approval.
- The Engstrom to Trunk project summary page, presented to the Planning Commission by Borough Staff confirms that both the North and South options are still under consideration.
- February 2025 - NLCC Monthly Meeting includes a project update presentation from the Borough Public Works Director and a representative from HDL engineering on the Engstrom to Trunk project. A representative from Central Gravel attended our meeting to confirm his support as well. The following text is an excerpt from the meeting minutes:

Tom Adams, MSB Public Works Director, and Kelsey Means, HDL Public Involvement Coordinator, conducted a presentation on the Engstrom to Trunk Road Connector project. Key topics covered in the Q&A included:

- Clarification on route proposals.
- Questions were asked about timelines and project status.

At the end of the presentation, Rod Hanson shared NLCC perspectives and indicated that we will continue to push for transparency and involvement in the project scoping and decision making process. Some of the key points were:

- When the voters approved the TIP 21 ballot initiative, the ballot initiative described the Southern Route.
- Final decision criteria should include:
 - Overall improvements to current and forecast traffic congestion relief
 - Schedule: The timing of various alternatives
 - ROW Acquisition expectations and costs
 - Overall costs to Borough taxpayers (bang for the buck)
- Looking forward, both Northern and Southern options should be constructed.
- The Northern Route will require ROW acquisition through eminent domain.
- The Southern Route involves ROW that property owners are willing to sell.
- The Southern Route cuts through Central Gravel Products development. They have indicated a willingness to construct the road base at little to no cost to the Borough.

Rod thanked Tom Adams and Kelsey Means for their informative presentation and assured them that we intended to continue our professional engagement as the project is further defined and as a final decision is made on route selection. We encourage the Borough to engage with the property owners and with Central Gravel to confirm willingness and opportunity for significant cost savings.