

City of Minneapolis
Request for Committee Action

To: Transportation & Public Works
Date: 11/10/2015
Referral: Ways & Means
From: Public Works Department
Prepared by: Ellen Dosedall, Bob Friddle and Jon Wertjes
Presented by: Jon Wertjes, Director of Traffic & Parking Services
File type: Action
Subcategory: Staff Direction

Subject:

Impound Lot Improvement Project

Description:

- A. Approving the Attachment 5 Concept Plan as the preferred approach that reduces the Impound Lot size and shifts it easterly.
- B. Authorizing Public Works and Finance and Property Services Departments to proceed with project implementation for reducing/modifying the Impound Lot and the Impound Lot building improvements.

Previous Actions:

December 6, 2013 – City Council approval of Impound Lot and Development Strategy

Ward/Address:

Ward 7
51 Colfax Ave N (attachment 1, map of location)

Background/Analysis:

History

The “Relocation Study for Public Works Operations Linden Yards and the Impound Lot for the Bassett Creek Redevelopment Plan” dated August 2009 examined options for alternative sites of 12 or more acres to relocate the Impound Lot. The estimated cost was at least \$15 million depending on the selected site. Since then, staff focus has been to improve operational efficiency while shrinking the size of the Impound Lot at its current location.

A recent analysis of Impound Lot functions concluded that the operational footprint of the facility could be reduced significantly. According to the analysis, this was primarily due to:

- decrease in the day-to-day tow volume and associated storage needs,
- operational changes and efficiencies, and
- increased use of remote lots during high demand periods (e.g. street sweeps and snow emergencies).

In December 2013 CPED, Public Works, and Finance and Property Services received Council approval to pursue initiatives to:

- Develop plans to effectively reduce the Impound Lot footprint, improve or replace the existing impound buildings and infrastructure,
- Study the best way to assemble and market parcels along Van White Memorial Boulevard for private redevelopment,
- Coordinate a development strategy for City owned land adjacent to the Van White Memorial Boulevard, including the Impound Lot, and
- Study the feasibility of redeveloping Bassett Creek Valley, including the Impound Lot and the City's Linden Yards property that is adjacent to the Impound Lot with funds appropriated to CPED.

In 2014, a project team of Public Works and CPED staff members studied several different configurations of the Impound Lot and building area based on customer service and employee needs and more efficient use of lot space. In addition, a consultant contracted by Finance and Property Services assessed current building conditions and space use to develop options for future building layout and lot access by customers and tow trucks.

The project team identified three options for Impound Lot reconfiguration. All three options reduced the size of impound operations to fewer acres. In addition, all concepts included the following efficiencies and approaches for the future Impound Lot needs:

- Contract for auction services conducted outside of the Impound Lot to free up space currently used to store vehicles before auctions;
- Move police hold vehicles to a secure area of about three acres under Interstate 394 bridges east of Van White Boulevard, which currently is leased for impounding overflow needs.

The existing Impound lot site is comprised of approximately 25 acres of land separated by the Van White Memorial Bridge that runs from north to south over the lot area. Attachment 1 is an aerial view showing customer and tow truck access to the lot from Colfax Avenue North on the east side of the Bridge. This area encompasses customer parking and the Impound customer service building, Police Forensic Garage, and paved lot space for public auctions and general impound parking. The lot space on the west side of the Van White Bridge is used to store vehicles on Police hold and vehicles that are impounded during snow emergencies and street sweep operations. A major portion of the west side lot is not paved.

The Impound facility is open 24/7, 365 days a year for public towing operations, and for customers during working hours every day of the week with the exception of City holidays. On an annual basis, Impound staff perform the following activities:

- Intake approximately 39,000 towed vehicles,
- Release 32,500 vehicles to their owners,
- Auction 3,000 abandoned vehicles per year, and
- Assist Police in recovering about 1,000 stolen or missing vehicles.

The lot locations in each of the three options are illustrated in Attachments 2A-2C and are described below.

East of Van White Boulevard

The East Option involves shifting most impound operations eastward to a total of 16 acres. Approximately 10 acres west of Van White Boulevard would be immediately available for non-impound use, and 3 acres just west of Van White Boulevard would remain for use by the Impound Lot for peak snow emergency and sweeps.

West of Van White Boulevard

The West Option shifts impound operations westward on a total of approximately 20 acres. The customer buildings would remain in the current area near Colfax. This option provides for development on about 6 acres east of Van White Boulevard.

Split between West and East Side (Development)

The Split Option shows development adjacent to both sides of Van White Boulevard with the Impound Lot operating on the extreme western and eastern parts of the site on a total of 19 acres. This option would frame views and screen impound from Van White Boulevard but would split the impound operations.

Community Engagement

Public Works and CPED staff met with the Harrison and Bryn Mawr neighborhoods and the Bassett Creek Valley Oversight Committee (ROC) in March 2014 to describe their process for analyzing options to reduce the size of the Impound Lot. A joint meeting of all three groups was held on May 19, 2014 at the Harrison Community Center to introduce and obtain feedback on the three options described above. In addition, a survey of neighborhood association members and meeting attendees was conducted to identify which option was preferred by the respondents and collect comments.

The feedback from the meetings and survey responses varied, with some support for both the East and Split options. The West Option received the least support. Residents commented that if the Impound Lot stays, it should be made smaller and be a better neighbor. Bryn Mawr, Harrison, and the ROC neighborhood groups did not make formal recommendations on their preferred option.

Based on the input from the community, CPED, and other stakeholders, the project staff team focused their efforts on the East Option. This option is preferred because:

- The costs of acquiring or leasing new space and relocating the facility are avoided since Impound buildings, lot space, and street access are currently located on City property.
- The East Option will continue impound operations primarily in an area surrounded on three sides by the Minneapolis School District transportation/bus property, Xcel Energy substation, and BNSF railroad.
- Access and circulation can reasonably be provided between the existing main Impound facility and the site under Interstate 394 proposed for vehicles on police hold.
- Overflow space with limited use during the year for snow emergencies and street sweeps is provided on a portion west of Van White Boulevard.

Also, based on stakeholder input a revision was made to the proposed overflow space west of Van White Boulevard which is presented in Attachment 2D - Revised East Option. This revised location accounts for soil conditions, visual screening by existing trees, and potential future uses on this westerly parcel.

Attachment 3 is a chart that presents both existing and the approximate future sizes for the various Impound Lot functions.

In 2015, City staff focused efforts on determining a) feasibility and estimating initial costs of locating vehicles on police hold under the Interstate 394, and b) working with the affected neighborhood groups to identify how the Impound Lot can become a better neighbor.

- The City currently leases from MNDOT the space under Interstate 394 bridges east of Van White Boulevard. This current lease allows for Impound Lot overflow needs. MnDOT and City staff have met and visited the leased property and discussed the proposed changes. Initial review by MNDOT has indicated general support and willingness for such changes. City staff will need to accomplish further design efforts, lease negotiations, and other due diligence to appropriately gain future approvals for this property.

- Two meetings were held in August and September of 2015 with a small group of representatives from the Harrison and Bryn Mawr neighborhoods, the ROC, as well as City staff. The meeting purpose was to identify and prioritize values, goals, and potential actions for making the Impound Lot a better neighbor. This small group met again on November 3 to review and finalize their recommendations. City staff will use these prioritized “good neighbor” recommendations to explore and determine which recommendations can be included in the project improvements. City staff will continue to engage the community in the planning and preliminary design phases of the project. The prioritized good neighbor recommendations are detailed in Attachment 4.

2015 Concept Planning Efforts to date

Based upon these previous efforts, City staff began concept level planning to seek Council approvals for the appropriate next steps. The major elements of the proposed concept plan are described below. A map illustrating the proposed concept is included as Attachment 5 to this letter.

- Building improvements
 - Staff is exploring two construction options to either remodel/expand the existing building or build a new building. Key improvements include customer needs for lobby space, seating and restrooms plus proper space for employees, meeting/break rooms, and records.
- Police hold vehicles
 - Police holds are proposed to be relocated to space under Interstate 394 bridges. Before this move takes place, the area will be improved to provide a level of security required to maintain the vehicles for legal purposes. These vehicles are currently stored on the west side of Van White Boulevard.
- Auction area
 - Space currently used for storing vehicles before public auctions can be repurposed for general impound functions by contracting/relocating auctions outside of the Impound facility.
- Lot surface improvements
 - Storm water drainage and surface improvements are essential to making the Impound Lot more usable. In addition to this work, landscaping and screening applications were identified by neighborhood representatives as high priority improvements for the Impound facility to become a better neighbor.
- Security and fencing
 - The security and fencing systems will be completely replaced and upgraded for all areas.

Schedule and Funding

The key schedule and funding milestones are presented in the below table. Based on the current cost estimate, approximately 40 percent of the budget is planned for building improvements with the remaining split among all other elements.

Milestone	Date	Cost Estimate
Preliminary design	2015/2016	\$275,000
Final design	2016	\$275,000
Construction	2017	\$6.45 million
Total		\$7.00 million

Financial Review:

No additional appropriation required, amount included in current budget.

Future budget impact anticipated.

Preliminary design efforts can be accommodated in the existing 2015 and proposed 2016 operating budgets and have been included in the Mayor's 2016 budget proposal for the Parking Fund 7500-685-0800. A financial plan for further Design and Construction efforts will be developed for Council approval in 2016 and a Capital Budget Request will be submitted for the 2017 – 2021 Capital Budget Process.

Approved by the Permanent Review Committee.

Not applicable at this time. A Request for Proposals (RFP) for Design Services will be reviewed by the Permanent Review Committee in the first quarter of 2016.

Meets Small and Underutilized Business Program goals.

Not applicable at this time. All City contracting requirements will be implemented in future contracts.

Attachments:

1. Attachment 1: Existing Map of Impound location
2. Attachment 2: Maps showing 3 concepts for Impound Lot location
 - a. Map 2A: Impound Option East
 - b. Map 2B: Impound Option West
 - c. Map 2C: Impound Option Split (Development)
 - d. Map 2D: Revised Impound Option East
3. Attachment 3: Chart of Impound Lot uses and capacity for 3 alternative concepts
4. Attachment 4: Report of Neighborhood Small Group
5. Attachment 5: Concept map of Impound facility