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## Plans to upgrade 35W/494 Interchange, add transit, subject of open house

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For almost a year, the Minnesota Department of Transportation has been looking at ways to make the interchange of I-494 and I-35W less congested, safer and public transit friendly.

On Thursday, MnDOT along with Metro Transit officials will present preliminary design concepts for a reconstruction project and the addition for a new Orange Line transit station and park-and-ride facility on American Blvd.

The 494/35W Interchange Project Open House will be held from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. at St. Richard's Catholic Church, 7540 Penn Av. S.

The busy interchange was constructed in the 1960s and now sees close to 500,000 vehicles a day and is congestion prone. On weekdays, I-35W experiences 3 to 5 hours of congestion and I-494 experiences more than 6 hours of congestion.

The interchange also experiences flooding on a regular basis, and it is dangerous. MnDOT says it ranks 8th on the list of crash costs in the state.

Transit also plays a big part in efforts to reduce congestion. Currently 30 percent of [MVTA](#) bus riders are routed along the 35W corridor. Metro Transit provides 125 weekday trips through the I-35W/494 interchange.

Plans are on the table for the new Orange Line, a Bus Rapid Transit line similar to the Red Line which operates on Cedar Avenue. The Orange Line would run along 35W from downtown Minneapolis to the Burnsville Transit Station.

There are two transit options are being explored. The first would keep Orange Line buses on 35W by building a two-story station in the median. The design would be similar to the BRT station at 46th Street in Minneapolis.

Another option is to bring Orange Line buses to two sidewalk-adjacent stations along Knox Avenue through the Southtown area, either via 82nd Street or a new center-running transit ramp to the American Boulevard bridge. This option would require connecting Knox Avenue across I-494, and would allow for stations in both Bloomington and Richfield.

The Orange Line is not scheduled to begin service until 2019.

[You can read more the Orange Line development here.](#)

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