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Slide 1: Michigan Avenue, Times Square, Oxford Street. Every city has a boulevard infused with rich history and diverse culture. Today, the world’s greatest boulevards serve as main arteries for thousands of automobiles, in addition to pedestrians, bicycles, and public transportation.

Slide 2: In Rochester, Minnesota, Broadway Avenue (formerly US Highway 63) divides the city into north, south, east, and west quadrants. The downtown portion of the boulevard, referred by locals as “Broadway,” features four lanes for automobile traffic. Thus, the street allows little space for pedestrians and bicycles.

Slide 3: Broadway’s current condition is dismal. According to the 2010 Downtown Rochester Master Plan, Broadway is a “major barrier” to meeting the City’s goals of creating an economically affluent, vibrant, and livable downtown community.

Slide 4: Although Broadway’s current design serves as a bypass for thousands of commuters, the boulevard was built with integrity as two steers pulled a log to flatten the land with the sole purpose of creating a main street. As displayed in the History Center of Olmsted County, David Granahan’s WPA project, “Making Broadway,” commemorates the construction.

Slide 5: By the early 1900s, Broadway became a central hub for Southeastern Minnesota. As depicted in this 1907 photograph, the boulevard consisted of wide sidewalks and generous space for horse-drawn carriages. In addition, storefront awnings provided protection for pedestrians.

Slide 6: By the 1950s, the healthcare driven community of Rochester became a regional focal point for services. As Southeastern Minnesota’s economy emphasized agriculture, Rochester became a crown jewel as the Mayo Clinic prepared for a large expansion. During this time, Broadway became the City’s entertainment district and featured large-scale department stores such as Dayton’s.

Slide 7: In the 1980s, downtown Rochester began its transformation from a quaint Midwestern town to the cosmopolitan healthcare hub it is known for today. Centerplace, the 1989 mixed-use project, ultimately redeveloped Broadway. The 11-floor Doubletree hotel and the Shops at University Square (formerly known as the Galleria Mall) offer key activity generators for downtown.

Slide 8: In addition to Centerplace’s construction in 1989, Broadway Avenue was fully rebuilt with a functional life of 40 years. Broadway’s most recent large-scale development is Broadway Plaza. Completed in 2004, the skyscraper's 29 floors include an extended stay hotel.

Slide 9: Today, Broadway’s urban fabric consists of historic properties, high rise hotels and shopping centers. Broadway’s amenities cater to the 2.7 million visitors who visit the
Mayo Clinic each year. Although, the boulevard’s infrastructure fails to meet the high-quality standard of living the downtown portrays.

Slide 10: According to the Downtown Rochester Master Plan, “residents, downtown business owners, and developers identify Broadway as a ‘barrier’ to walkability and is a factor discouraging development on the east side of downtown.” Furthermore, the “intersections of Broadway and 2nd Street South and 4th Street South are among the most dangerous in the City.”

Slide 11: For pedestrians, “the relatively high volumes of traffic, signal progressions designed to move traffic rapidly through downtown at 30 mph, and a lack of any pedestrian buffer zones make Broadway an uncomfortable street to walk along or cross.” Sidewalks can be as narrow as five feet wide.

Slide 12: In addition to the boulevard's lack of pedestrian amenities, the expansion of Rochester’s pedestrian subways and skyways has led to several of Broadway’s street-level retail businesses to close. The majority of downtown retail is located on the second floor of downtown buildings or in the pedestrian subway (lower level).

Slide 13: After identifying Broadway’s issues, the Downtown Mobility Team analyzed three scenarios. The first consists of the “classic road diet.” The 4 to 3 lane conversion plus on street parking and bike lanes would fail to impact traffic and transit operations. In addition, it would negatively impact the pedestrian safety and quality of Broadway at certain intersections.

Slide 14: The second scenario consists of a transit focus. The 4 to 3 conversion plus adding transit lanes and a place for on-street parking, would improve speed and reliability. As a result, it significantly benefits transit operations. Transit lanes could be shared with bike lanes, thus having a moderate impact on bicycle quality.

Slide 15: The third scenario consists of a 4 lane complete street. The design eliminates left turn movements and adds on-street parking. Eliminating the left turn movements would add traffic volume on perpendicular corridors. The crossing safety, distance, and comfort would improve as median refuges and parking buffers would be added.

Slide 16: In order to proceed with the necessary reconstruction, Broadway’s jurisdiction has transferred from the Minnesota Department of Transportation to the City of Rochester. As depicted the Downtown Rochester Master Plan, 1st Avenue and Broadway lie in the “Main Street” mixed use district.

Slide 17: In the fall of 2013, a traffic light was installed at the intersection of Broadway and 3rd Street. Most importantly, the traffic light slows down traffic and allows pedestrians to cross Broadway and access the forgotten east side of the boulevard. The traffic light also bridges a gap between 1st Avenue and Broadway.
Slide 18: Although Broadway’s long-term plan includes the reconstruction of its current infrastructure and the addition of light rail lanes, could Broadway offer more? Could Broadway become the next “third place” for individuals and become a “front porch” for the community to connect, enjoy, and prosper?

Slide 19: Like many of the world’s greatest boulevards, Broadway is infused with rich history. Perhaps Broadway is evolving 360 degrees. Its original function served the community’s best interests as a main street. After Rochester’s largest indoor shopping mall opened in the 1950s, the boulevard became a bypass through downtown.

Slide 20: In the spring of 2013, Mayo Clinic announced plans to create the world’s premier Destination Medical Center. With $6 billion of economic development poised for the City, now is the opportune moment to reclaim Broadway. Instead of utilizing the boulevard as a bypass, the community must embrace the unique small businesses who call Broadway home. With community visioning and urban planning, Broadway can become a restored asset and a premier destination.