



April 22, 2026

Minnesota Department of Transportation
Attn: Michael Ginnaty, District 3 Engineer
7694 Industrial Park Road
Baxter, MN 56425

Dear Mr. Ginnaty:

Re: S.P. 1809-98 (MN 210/MN 371)
Fairview Road/Forest Drive Extension from TH 210 to Excelsior Road

Background and Summary of Previous Correspondence

The City of Baxter has been actively coordinating with MnDOT regarding access configuration and local roadway connectivity impacts associated with the proposed TH 371 and TH 210 interchange improvements.

On July 9, 2025, the City submitted a memorandum requesting consideration of modifications to the proposed layout, including:

- Maintaining and relocating a right-in/right-out (RIRO) access at TH 210 and Fairview Road, and
- Preserving the ability to extend Fairview Road north to connect with Forest Drive and Excelsior Road to maintain local system connectivity.

In MnDOT's September 9, 2025 response, MnDOT indicated:

- A RIRO access at the existing location may be allowed,
- Relocation of the RIRO further west is not supported due to geometric, sight distance, and operational concerns, and
- A future connection between Fairview Road and Excelsior Road may require additional evaluation and could impact the viability of the RIRO access, as MnDOT does not support an additional direct connection between TH 210 and Excelsior Road.

On October 17, 2025, City staff summarized MnDOT's responses to the City Council, identifying key considerations, including:

- The importance of maintaining access to existing businesses north of TH 210,
- Potential traffic impacts to Inglewood Drive and surrounding residential streets if access is restricted, and
- The need to further evaluate how a Fairview Road extension could be configured to balance local connectivity with MnDOT access management objectives.

On January 14, 2026, City staff prepared a cost summary related to potential improvements associated with the interchange project, including evaluation of roadway and utility infrastructure needs associated with extending Forest Drive and Fairview Road.

Key Considerations

The City continues to emphasize the importance of the following:

Maintaining Access to Existing Development

Businesses and institutions north of TH 210—including First Baptist Church, Lake Region Christian School, Baymont Hotel, Stepping Stones Childcare, and others—rely on direct and convenient access to and from TH 210. Removal or restriction of access would shift traffic to Inglewood Drive, increasing congestion and travel time.

Need for a Local Connection between Fairview Road and Excelsior Road

The intent of the proposed Forest Drive/Fairview Road Extension to connect to Excelsior Road is to provide a local connection between the existing land uses along Fairview Road and Excelsior Road. The local connection was originally planned to connect into the south leg of the Excelsior Road/Edgewood Drive roundabout, which is no longer possible due to the design of the proposed TH 371 and TH 210 interchange. Under current conditions, the City has received many complaints about cut-through traffic from the businesses on Fairview Road using either Flintwood Drive, a residential street, or the First Baptist Church parking lot. The proposed Forest Drive/Fairview Road Extension would alleviate that cut-through traffic.

The Forest Drive/Fairview Road Extension is not intended to be a direct connection between TH 210 and Excelsior Road and is not intended to serve additional traffic that currently goes to/from the businesses and homes on Fairview Road. The City's design of the extension was specifically designed to make the connection between TH 210 and Excelsior Road less attractive while still maintaining access for the nearby businesses. As the City's concept drawings show, any vehicle making the TH 210 to/from Excelsior Road connection would need to make multiple turns. It is expected that traffic travelling between TH 210 and Excelsior Road will prefer the new connections created as part of the buttonhook interchange design, which is a more direct route between the two roadways.

Long-Range Transportation Planning

The extension of Forest Drive/Fairview Road from TH 210 to Excelsior Road has been identified for many years in the City of Baxter's long-range transportation plan. This corridor is intended to function as a local, parallel alternative to TH 371 – similar to Golf Course Drive – providing a continuous north-south route and acting as a backage roadway to the commercial land uses along the west side of TH 371. The corridor would generally follow Forest Drive and Wildflower Drive and extend north to Lake Forest Road, creating a connected local roadway that reduces reliance on TH 371 and Edgewood Drive while supporting access to adjacent commercial areas. This backage road system is expected to become more important as other intersection improvements are constructed along TH 371 north of the TH 371/TH 210 interchange, many of which would limit access and/or disrupt the connectivity of Edgewood Drive and the existing TH 371 frontage road system.

Utility and Infrastructure Needs

In addition to transportation benefits, the roadway connection is necessary to support critical utility infrastructure. A new 12-inch watermain loop is needed to replace the existing 12-inch watermain crossing of TH 371 that will be removed as part of the interchange project. Maintaining adequate fire flow capacity in this area is a primary concern, as the loss of this connection would significantly reduce available fire flow to adjacent properties. Without this connection, the system would also experience reduced redundancy and potential water quality

concerns associated with dead-end mains, further impacting overall system reliability and emergency response capabilities.

Request for MnDOT Review and Direction

Based on previous discussions and MnDOT's feedback, the City has refined its approach and is seeking MnDOT's guidance on how to proceed.

The City respectfully requests that MnDOT:

Review Two Potential Access and Connectivity Options, which generally include:

- Option 1: Maintains the RIRO access at TH 210 and Fairview Road with a direct connection to Excelsior Road (see Attached Option 1).The City of Baxter believe this option is exactly what MnDOT does not want because it is promoting a direct access, but the City of Baxter wanted to show all options.
- Option 2: Modifies the alignment and/or configuration of the Fairview Road-Forest Drive connection to address MnDOT's concerns regarding direct connectivity between TH 210 and Excelsior Road (see Attached Option 2).

Provide Direction on Acceptable Configuration Parameters, specifically:

- Conditions under which the RIRO access can be maintained long-term,
- Whether and how a connection between TH 210, Fairview Road, Forest Drive, and Excelsior Road can be implemented without requiring closure of the TH 210 access, and
- Any required traffic analysis, geometric constraints, spacing considerations, or design criteria the City should incorporate into further development of these options.

The City of Baxter appreciates MnDOT's continued coordination and collaboration on this very important project to both MnDOT and the City of Baxter. The City remains committed to working with MnDOT to develop a solution that balances regional mobility with local access needs, while supporting long-term transportation planning, infrastructure reliability, and public safety.

We look forward to MnDOT's guidance on how best to proceed.

Sincerely,

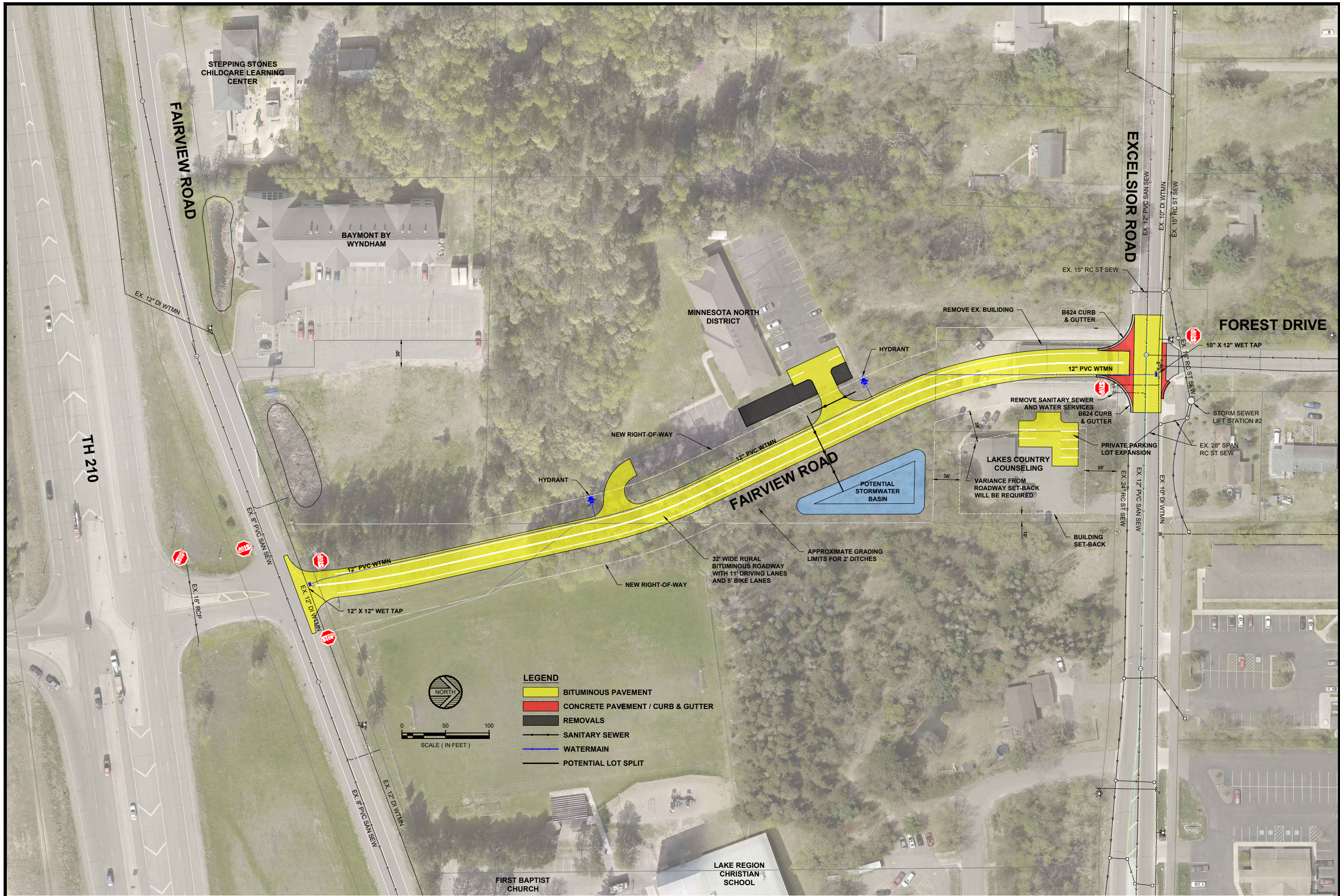


Trevor Walter, P.E.

Public Works Director

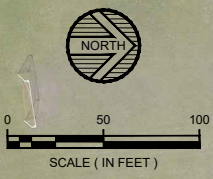
City Engineer

- C: Brad Chapulis, City Administrator
Darrel Olson, Mayor
Connie Lyscio, Council Member
Zach Tabatt, Council Member
Patrick Sundberg, Council Member
Marck Cross, Council Member



LEGEND

- BITUMINOUS PAVEMENT
- CONCRETE PAVEMENT / CURB & GUTTER
- REMOVALS
- SANITARY SEWER
- WATERMAIN
- POTENTIAL LOT SPLIT

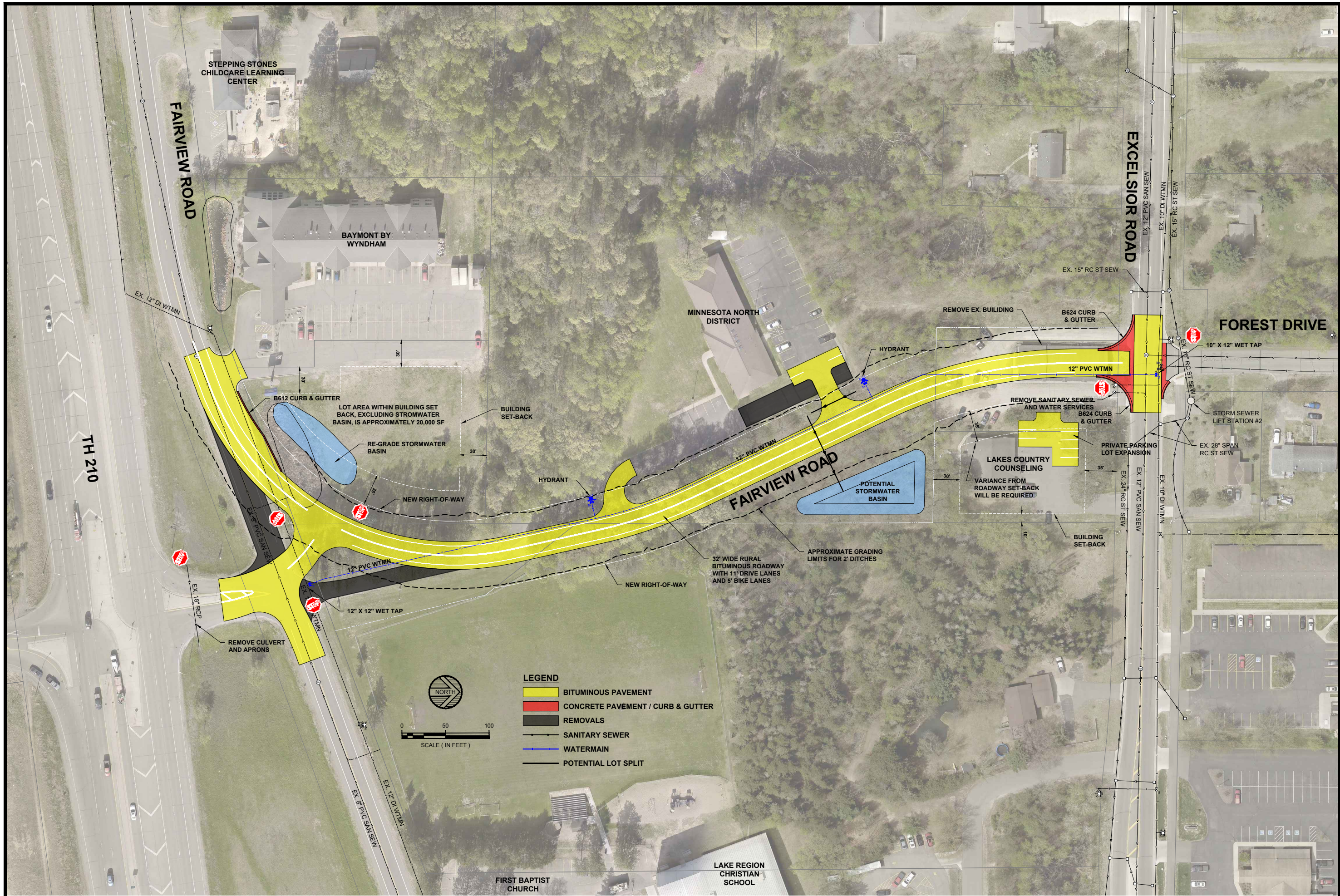


BY: ARIC WELCH
DATE: 2025-10-07
LIC. NO. 41883

DATE	REVISION DESCRIPTION

DATE: APRIL 2026
SCALE: AS SHOWN
DRAWN BY: A.L.W.
CHECKED BY: A.L.W.
JOB NUMBER: 2025-10575

FAIRVIEW ROAD EXTENSION TO EXCELSIOR ROAD
CITY OF BAXTER
BAXTER, MINNESOTA
OPTION 1



WIDSETH
ARCHITECTS • ENGINEERS • SCIENTISTS • SURVEYORS

DATE: APRIL 2026
SCALE: AS SHOWN
DRAWN BY: A.L.W.
CHECKED BY: A.L.W.
JOB NUMBER: 2025-10575

BY: [REDACTED]
REVISION DESCRIPTION: [REDACTED]
DATE: [REDACTED]
REV: [REDACTED]

PROJECT: FAIRVIEW ROAD EXTENSION TO EXCELSIOR ROAD
CITY OF BAXTER
BAXTER, MINNESOTA
OPTION 2

DATE: [REDACTED]
LIC. NO. 41883
A.R.C. WELCH

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