

Project Update - Lac qui Parle Bridge

August 2015



Lac Qui Parle bridge on Highway 40 (built in 1938)

Background: The Lac qui Parle Bridge was built in 1938 as part of the Works Progress Administration, or WPA. The WPA was part of the American New Deal agencies, employing millions of unemployed people to carry out public works projects, including the construction of public buildings and roads.

Situation: The Lac qui Parle Bridge was originally identified by MnDOT as a replacement project. The Federal Highway Administration expressed concern in the replacement of a historic bridge. MnDOT agreed to rehabilitate the bridge in order to help preserve historical bridges in Minnesota.

Community members expressed concern regarding the rehabilitation of the Lac qui Parle Bridge. After listening to feedback, MnDOT agreed to delay the bidding of the bridge project initially planned for May of 2015.

After re-examination of the process and project, the decision has been made to delay the project decision (rehabilitate or replace) further, to the spring of 2016. A new timeline, based on the final decision, will also be established.

MnDOT will be working with residents from the Milan area to gain input on the project. An update of the community input process, as well as a final decision (rehabilitate or replace), will be communicated to residents no later than spring of 2016.

Project Update: Since July of 2015, MnDOT has received eleven resolutions and/or letters of support for a new bridge. As part of the citizen engagement process, MnDOT has hired a third party consultant to work with both representatives from the community and MnDOT staff to work toward consensus on the project outcome. The consultant will begin work in September.

In addition to the work that the consultant will do, MnDOT staff have met with or scheduled several meetings with various stakeholders regarding specific issues they have with the current bridge. Stakeholders include local farmers, Lac qui Parle Valley school representatives, local units of government and supporters of rehabilitating the bridge.

After meeting with stakeholder groups and gathering new information, MnDOT staff will begin reviewing the “purpose and need statement” for the project. The project’s purpose and need statement is an important element of the required project documentation in defining the scope or the outcome of the project.

If the outcome of the citizen engagement process leads to a determination that MnDOT will pursue a bridge replacement, the process for the project development and timeline will likely change. In order to replace the bridge, MnDOT will need to secure an Army Corps of Engineer’s permit for the project.

One of the elements required for a Corps permit is the review and agreement from the State Historic Preservation Office that rehabilitation would not meet the purpose and need of the project and that replacement is the only viable option.

To rehabilitate the bridge an Army Corps of Engineer’s permit is not needed.

MnDOT is also calculating a new cost estimate for a replacement project, but the cost estimate is not complete at this time.

Routine annual inspection of the bridge will take place on August 18th. This annual inspection was not initiated as part of the process to determine rehabilitation or replacement of the bridge.

For More Information

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