

Trunk Highway **41**  
over Minnesota River

*A Future US 169/US 212 Regional Freeway Connection*



## Future TH 41 Minnesota River Crossing:

Identifying a Corridor.  
Committing to a Sustainable Decision.

February 2010



The Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) is responsible for the development and maintenance of a safe and efficient state highway system that meets the transportation needs of the public. It is Mn/DOT's job to alleviate traffic congestion on state roads and ensure adequate access and mobility in support of a strong regional economy.

# Why is Mn/DOT proposing this bridge project?

# EIS

## Provide Regional Connection

**Trunk highway (TH) 169 and new TH 212 are U.S. highways that serve regional traffic** in the southwest portion of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, as well as connecting with Greater Minnesota.

**There is a need for an effective north-south regional highway connection between these two important regional highways.**



## Reduce Traffic Congestion

**The existing TH 41 river crossing is one of the most heavily traveled two-lane roads in Minnesota (18,000 vehicles per day).** The result: traffic congestion, noise, and vibration that pose quality-of-life concerns for downtown Chaska, and delays for regional commuters and goods.

**Traffic congestion is projected to increase as the area develops.**



## Protect Floodplain

**Flooding is a frequent problem for river crossings in this area.** For example, TH 41 was closed 46 days, and Hwy 101 was closed 74 days from 1993-2001.

Commuters, residents, businesses, and planners have recognized for decades, **the need for a high volume, reliable Minnesota River Crossing** that connects TH 169 and new TH212.



## Where would this new river crossing be built?

After seven years of collaboration, study, and stakeholder involvement, Mn/DOT and FHWA announced in December 2008 **a corridor shown as C-2 in the Draft EIS as the preferred alternative.**

*(see map on next page for reference)*

## When would this new river crossing be built?

**The project is still many years away.**

Construction funding is not currently included in Mn/DOT's 20-year fiscally-constrained transportation plans. Right-of-way preservation funding is included, however, and can be used in the meantime to acquire property in the corridor from willing sellers.

## If funding is not in Mn/DOT's 20-year plan, why select a corridor now?

While construction may be many years away, it is important to decide where the future river crossing would be located **to plan for development, regional and local transportation systems, preserve the right-of-way, and minimize future negative impacts.**

## What is an EIS?

An **Environmental Impact Statement** or *EIS* is prepared to meet federal and state requirements to study project impacts on the social, economic, and environmental resources in the affected area.

## What does it mean to do a "Tier I" EIS?

Federal environmental guidelines allow for a tiered, two-step, EIS process.

**The Tier I EIS** identifies the corridor to preserve the right-of-way, and to minimize future impacts.

**The Tier II EIS** will review the project impacts about 5 years before construction to identify the exact bridge and roadway alignment and prepare design plans for construction. The Tier II EIS will also identify mitigation opportunities to offset those project impacts that can not be avoided.

## Where can I find the EIS documents?

On the Mn/DOT website at: [www.projects.dot.state.mn.us/srf/041/index.html](http://www.projects.dot.state.mn.us/srf/041/index.html)

# Identifying the C-2 Corridor

## 2002-2004 | Scoping Study

The **Scoping Study** identified the study area and resources that the project might affect, developed 21 potential corridor alternatives, and then identified 6 feasible corridor alternatives to study in detail.

Specifically, the Scoping Study mapped the resources in the area that could be affected by the project. These included established neighborhoods and planned community growth areas, businesses, historic sites, parks, wildlife habitat, wetlands including a rare calcareous fen, and the Minnesota River.

The 21 potential alternatives were identified through an iterative process with stakeholders, based on different possibilities for connecting the two east-west highways. At this step, the potential alternatives were conceptual, just “lines on a map.”

## 2004-2007 | EIS Engineering Study

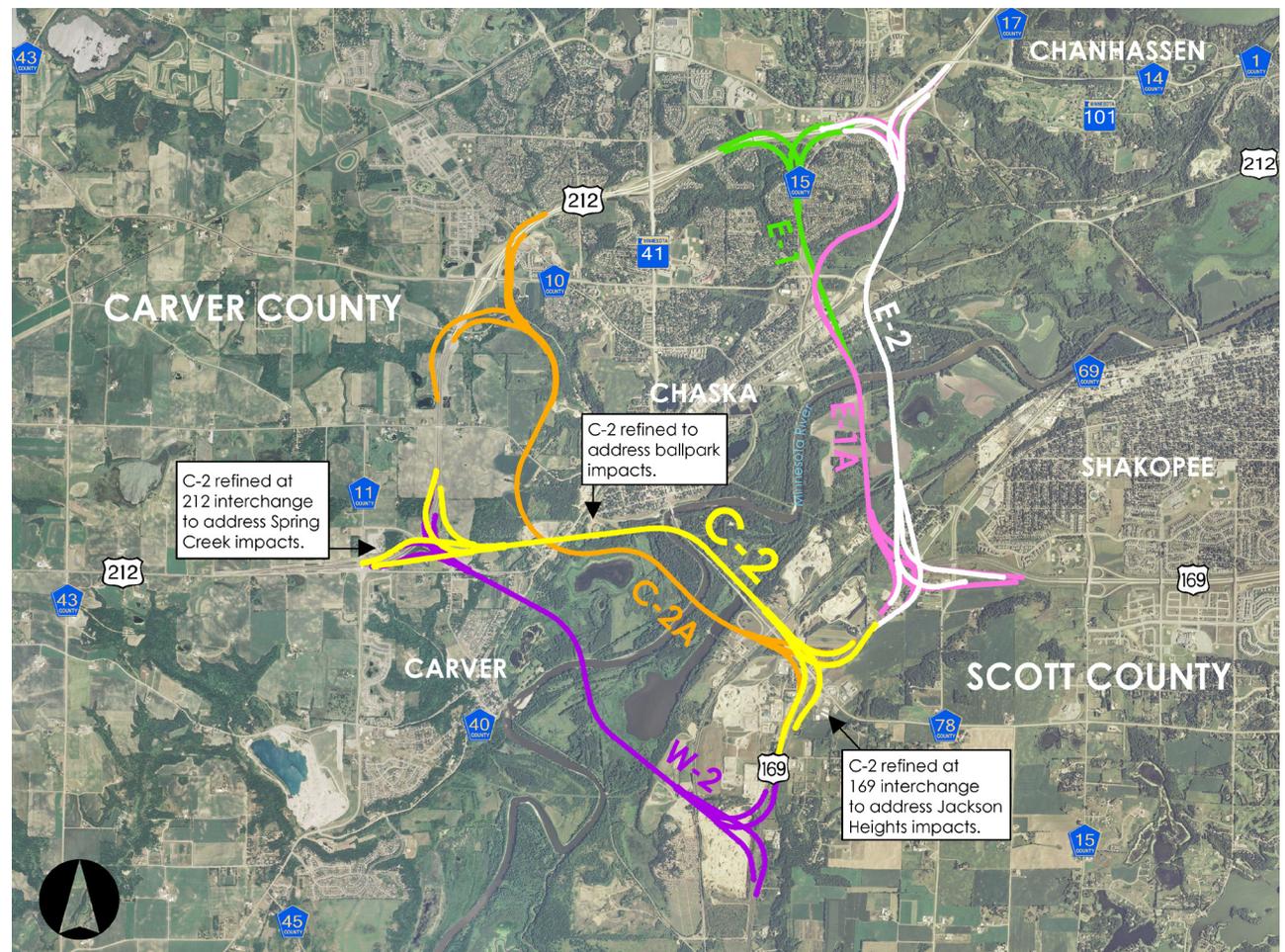
The **draft EIS engineering study** researched six alignments developed from the broad corridors identified in the scoping study.

It compared the social, economic, and environmental resources affected by each alternative.

*Please see page 6 for more information about corridor alternatives.*

## 2007-Present | Preferred Alternative

**Preferred alternative C-2** was informed by the technical information in the Draft EIS and through stakeholder consultation and public comment.



**The 21 scoping alternatives included:** No-build | Transportation System Management: more transit use and minor road improvements | 4 bridge alternatives in the western area | 9 bridge alternatives in the central area | 6 bridge alternatives in the eastern area

Comments on the Draft EIS and follow-up consultation found no first choice alternatives among stakeholders. Compared to the other alternatives, C-2 offered the best potential to avoid or minimize impacts to the most state and federally protected resources, while minimizing impacts on people, wildlife, and habitat and meeting transportation needs.

## Problems with other alternatives



*Sterile sedge (rare plant in Seminary Fen)*

**W-2 posed the greatest harm to state and federally protected lands**, specifically the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Minnesota State Recreation land.

**C-2A had the highest impacts on sensitive vegetation.** C-2A also had more impacts to state and federally protected lands, and would require acquisition of more homes than C-2.

**E-1 had large impacts to low income/minority neighborhoods**, and would require acquisition of the largest number of homes.

**E-1A and E-2 also had large environmental justice\* impacts and would threaten the state and federally protected Seminary Fen**, which is home to state-listed rare plants and a globally rare ecosystem.



*Bonneville Terrace*

\*Environmental Justice: This refers to a project affecting a disproportionate number of low-income and/or minority populations either by direct impacts (acquiring property) or indirect impacts (additional noise, visual changes, etc.). The project team is committed to proactively working with these stakeholders to understand and responsibly address potential impacts to their homes and communities.

## What will be done about the negative impacts of C-2?

By refining the design of C-2, project planners intend to avoid or minimize negative permanent and temporary (construction) impacts on all stakeholders, and support mitigation as part of a comprehensive solution.

## Won't things change by the time construction is ready?

The natural environment that will be affected by the project will be largely the same. Additional development is planned within the travelshed of the selected corridor. The Tier I EIS will assist Mn/DOT and public agencies to more effectively plan for the facility. Decisions on the preferred alternative are made with what is known now.

## Common goals have been developed to inform decisions

**Framework:** In addition to supporting the TH 41 C2 route, actively support improvements that meet current and future transportation needs across the Minnesota River between I-35 and CR 9.

Avoid or minimize negative permanent and temporary/ construction impacts on all stakeholders, and support mitigation as part of a comprehensive solution.

**Noise and visual impacts on neighborhoods:** Address noise and visual impacts on adjacent neighborhoods

**Noise and visual impacts on historic properties:** Avoid negative visual, atmospheric, auditory, and use effects on historic properties/districts in all communities

**Impacts on historic ballpark:** Ensure ability of Chaska ballpark to operate; preserve the overall ballpark experience and its character as a small-town ballpark eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places

**Safety issues in downtown Chaska:** Resolve safety issues along existing Highway 41 in downtown Chaska

**Environmental justice:** Proactively work with stakeholders to understand and responsibly address environmental justice impacts

**Local access:** Provide appropriate access to local and county roadways that will facilitate land use developments guided by counties and cities

**Ecosystem impacts:** Minimize impacts on aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems including animals and plants

**Public access:** Ensure reasonable and usable public access to the outdoor recreational opportunities in the river valley (Refuge, state trail, and other public lands)

**User impacts:** Minimize impacts, including noise and visual, to people using the Refuge, state trail, and other public lands

**Land management capabilities:** Maintain natural resource management capability on public lands

## Goals

# How do I stay informed?



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Diane Langenbach, P.E.

ph: 651-234-7721

email: [diane.langenbach@state.mn.us](mailto:diane.langenbach@state.mn.us)

## More information online at:

<http://www.projects.dot.state.mn.us/srf/041/index.html>

## Who else is involved?

The TH 41 Tier 1 EIS was completed with involvement from stakeholders on the local, state, and federal levels. Project advisory groups helped Mn/DOT and FHWA lead the effort and they included representatives from cities, counties, natural resource agencies, historic preservation groups and community/special interest groups. The general public also participated in several open houses where they received project information and provided input. The overall process worked through many controversial issues to identify a preferred corridor. With the support of the active participants below, we are confident that we can continue working together to make the C-2 preferred corridor a sustainable decision.

Carver County

Carver Heritage Preservation Commission

Chaska Heritage Preservation Commission

City of Carver

City of Chanhassen

City of Chaska

City of Shakopee

MN Department of Natural Resources

State Historic Preservation Office

Jackson Township

Louisville Township

Lower Minnesota Watershed District

Metropolitan Council

Scott County

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Federal Highway Administration