

# **2003 AMENDED DRAFT SCOPING DECISION DOCUMENT**

## **ST. CROIX RIVER CROSSING**

**Trunk Highway 36, Washington County, Minnesota  
State Trunk Highway 64, St. Croix County, Wisconsin**

**Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration**

**November 2003**

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### **CERTIFICATION BY RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENTAL UNIT**

Approved: Mn/DOT  
Richard Elasky, Engineering Services Director

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Approved: Wis/DOT  
Eugene S. Johnson, Director  
Bureau of Equity and Environmental Services

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page No.</b>
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION .....	1
III. PROJECT COST, FUNDING SOURCE AND SCHEDULE .....	4
IV. RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENTAL UNIT AND PROJECT MANAGER.....	4
V. ALTERNATIVES TO BE STUDIED IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL EIS.....	5
A. No Build Alternative .....	8
B. Alternative A.....	8
C. TH 36 Partnership Study Area (Included in Alternatives B, C, D and E) .....	10
D. Alternative B.....	12
E. Alternative C.....	13
F. Alternative D.....	15
G. Alternative E.....	17
VI. ALTERNATIVES NOT TO BE STUDIED IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL EIS .....	19
VII. ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL EIS .....	19
A. Issues Requiring a Special Study in the SEIS.....	20
B. Issues Requiring Detailed Analysis in the SEIS.....	23
C. Issues Requiring Less Detailed Analysis .....	29
VIII. ISSUES NOT TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL EIS.....	31
IX. PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT .....	31

**TABLE OF CONTENTS continued**

**Page No.**

X. PERMITS AND APPROVALS..... 31

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1 – Agency Permits and Approvals That May be Required..... 31

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 1 – Project Location..... 2  
Figure 2 – General Project Area..... 3  
Figure 3A– Scoping Alternatives: Alternative A – Major Transportation Elements ..... 6  
Figure 3B– Scoping Alternatives B, C, D, and E..... 7  
Figure 4 – Alternative B..... 11  
Figure 5 – Alternative C..... 14  
Figure 6 – Alternative D..... 16  
Figure 7 – Alternative E..... 18  
Figure 8 – Known Natural Resources..... 21  
Figure 9 – Known Historic Properties..... 22  
Figure 10 – Known Parks and Recreation Areas ..... 24

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## **2003 AMENDED DRAFT SCOPING DECISION DOCUMENT ST. CROIX RIVER CROSSING**

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

This 2003 Draft Amended Scoping Decision Document (2003 ADSDD) was prepared in accordance to Minnesota Statute Chapter 4410.2100 and identifies the alternatives as well as social, economic, need and environmental issues proposed to be addressed in a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) for the project. A Notice of Availability will be published in the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Monitor as required. The Scoping Document will be distributed to the Environmental Quality Board distribution list and interested parties for comment. A 30-day comment period will follow the Notice of Availability. Following the comment period, which includes a public scoping meeting, a Final Scoping Decision Document will be prepared documenting the final decisions made by the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) (under Minnesota statutes, Mn/DOT, in cooperation with Wis/DOT and FHWA) regarding the contents of the SEIS.

The 2003 Amended Scoping Document (2003 ASD) describes the purpose of and need for the proposed project, the process followed in the development and evaluation of alignment alternatives, and the social, economic, and environmental (SEE) issues that will affect the continuing development of the proposed project. The 2003 ASD contains supporting information for this document and will be made available with the 2003 ADSDD.

### **II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Lift Bridge over the St. Croix River between Stillwater, Minnesota, and St. Joseph Township, Wisconsin, is part of a larger transportation system connecting the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area and west central Wisconsin. The Lift Bridge and its approach highways, Trunk Highways (TH) 36 and 95 in Minnesota and State Trunk Highways (STH) 64 in Wisconsin, serve the interregional movements of people and goods over long distances between the two states as well as short- to medium-distance trips between local communities. The interstate and interregional connection facilitated by this crossing of the St. Croix River serves to support the economic interdependencies that exist between Minnesota and Wisconsin and the sub-regions within the states (Figure 1). The project area, anticipating the potential limits of a transportation improvement project,<sup>1</sup> extends from the TH 36/TH 5 interchange in Stillwater, Minnesota on the west to approximately 150th Avenue on STH 35/64 southwest, Wisconsin, on the east, and may also include a section of STH 65 in central St. Croix county (as shown on Figure 2).

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<sup>1</sup> Project area here is not intended to define the geographic study area addressed in specific EIS analyses, but rather, the maximum extent of currently anticipated transportation improvements. Geographic areas for analyses purposes will be defined in the SEIS.

Figure1 - Project Location

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Figure 2 - General Project Area

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The importance of TH 36 in this area within Minnesota's transportation system was recognized in 1999 by its designation by Mn/DOT as an Interregional Corridor. Interregional Corridors are defined as roadways connecting major regional and economic centers within and around the state. As more of Minnesota's population and economic activities are locating in and around regional centers, the corridors connecting them become ever more important by providing safe, timely, and efficient movement of people and goods and by ensuring economic vitality. Further reinforcing the role of TH 36 as a key transportation corridor is its designation on the National Highway System (NHS). The NHS was established by the United States Congress to designate major highways important for interstate travel, national defense, intermodal connections, and international commerce. Wisconsin has recognized the role STH 64 plays in its state transportation system by designating STH 64 as a Multilane Connector in their *Corridors 2020* plan, a long-range highway and economic development plan.

This proposed project is to provide improved traffic operations to relieve existing and future congestion in downtown Stillwater and on the roadways approaching the bridge potentially by increasing roadway capacity; to address concerns related to interrupted service provided by the Lift Bridge due to daily operations, seasonal flooding, and repairs as well as maintenance, operations, and repair costs; to improve the safety of the approach roadways and to improve pedestrian safety in downtown Stillwater; and to improve operations on a corridor that has been identified as an interregional corridor connecting Minnesota and Wisconsin.

### III. PROJECT COST, FUNDING SOURCE AND SCHEDULE

Preliminary cost estimates and funding sources for the project have not been prepared for all alternatives.

The following is the anticipated schedule for completion of project activities:

2003 Amended Scoping Document/2003 Amended Draft Scoping Decision Document	Fall 2003
Public Scoping Meetings in Minnesota and Wisconsin	Fall 2003
2003 Amended Scoping Decision Document	Fall 2003
Supplemental Draft EIS	Winter 2003 - Spring 2004
SEIS Public Hearings in Minnesota and Wisconsin	Summer 2004
Supplemental Final EIS	Winter 2003 - 2004
Record of Decision/Adequacy Determination	Spring 2005
Final Design	2005-2006
Right-of-Way Acquisition	2006-2007
Construction	2007-2009
Project Completion	2010

### IV. RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENTAL UNIT AND PROJECT MANAGER

Mn/DOT is the designated Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU), in cooperation with Wis/DOT and FHWA, for the purposes of the 2003 ASD/ADSDD and for the SEIS.

The contact persons for each agency follow.

The contact person for Mn/DOT (the RGU) is:

Contact Person: Todd Clarkowski  
Title: Area Engineer  
Agency: Minnesota Department of Transportation  
Address: 1500 West County Road B2, MS 050  
Roseville, MN 55113  
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The project manager for Wis/DOT is:

Contact Person: Terry Pederson  
Title: District Planning Projects Engineer  
Agency: Wisconsin Department of Transportation  
Address: 718 West Clairemont Avenue  
Eau Claire, WI 54701  
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The contact person for FHWA (the federal responsible agency under NEPA in cooperation with Mn/DOT and Wis/DOT) is:

Contact Person: Cheryl Martin  
Title: Environmental Engineer  
Agency: Federal Highway Administration  
Galtier Plaza  
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St. Paul, MN 55101  
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## V. ALTERNATIVES TO BE STUDIED IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL EIS

In addition to the No Build Alternative, five alternatives are proposed to be studied in the Supplemental EIS. A final decision regarding the number of alternatives will be made based on input received from the public and agencies during the Scoping Period, and additional studies to be completed on the impacts of the alternatives, including traffic analyses (forecasts and modeling) and impacts analyses. The alternatives currently proposed to be studied in the Supplemental EIS are described in the following section and illustrated in Figures 3A and 3B:

Figure 3A - Scoping Alternatives: Alternative A - Major Transportation Elements

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Figure 3B - Scoping Alternatives B, C, D and E

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## A. NO BUILD ALTERNATIVE

The No Build Alternative is a “no action” alternative and does not include a new river crossing or improvements to the existing transportation system. The existing congestion and safety problems would continue. The Lift Bridge would remain in place for vehicular travel and continue to be maintained on the Minnesota and Wisconsin trunk highway systems. Navigation would not be impacted any different than by the existing Lift Bridge schedule.

## B. ALTERNATIVE A

Alternative A entails the permanent rehabilitation and continued vehicle use of the Lift Bridge. Needed mobility will be provided through a combination of transit and emergency vehicle advantages, new transit travel options, use of advanced technologies to enhance mobility, and regional policy changes.

### **Mn/DOT AND Wis/DOT STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

A number of the measures listed in the following bullets and shown on Figure 3A are beyond the statutory authority of the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation and would require enabling legislation and, when necessary, appropriations from the legislature. The transit and emergency vehicle advantages and advanced technology options (listed first) are within the statutory authority of the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation.

**TRANSIT AND EMERGENCY VEHICLE ADVANTAGES:** The following transit and emergency vehicle advantages are proposed as part of Alternative A to address safety and mobility issues, and to encourage transit use in this travel corridor.

- Exclusive transit and emergency vehicle lanes will be provided on the Minnesota and Wisconsin approaches to the Lift Bridge to bypass traffic queues. To provide a greater transit advantage, these lanes will be available to carpools and vanpools.
- Additional and expanded park-and-ride facilities will be provided in Wisconsin in the cities of Houlton and Hudson.

**ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY OPTIONS:** The use of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) to provide enhanced mobility in this corridor for transit and emergency vehicles is proposed as a critical component of Alternative A.

- Opticon emitters (devices that communicate between vehicles and receivers at other fixed points) will be used by emergency vehicles to ensure immediate access onto the Lift Bridge, thereby avoiding any queued traffic. Providing a transit and emergency vehicle preferential access lane (as discussed under the “Transit and Emergency Vehicle Advantages” heading presented previously) is required for this element to be practicable.
- This same device may communicate with gate arm devices (limiting Lift Bridge entry) as well as to the Lift Bridge operator. In this way, the Lift Bridge operator may judge the

ability of lowering the Lift Bridge to provide access to an emergency vehicle, should such access be necessary.

**NEW TRANSIT TRAVEL OPTIONS:** The options described below are assumed as part of Alternative A, in addition to transit service options currently available and/or planned for in the region.

- Water transit service will be provided on the St. Croix River using passenger-only water shuttles. This service will primarily serve a major employer in Bayport (Anderson Windows). Water transit stops will be provided at Houlton (with connections to a park-and-ride facility), Stillwater and Bayport.
- Express bus service will be extended into St. Croix County, Wisconsin.
  - One route will operate between New Richmond, Wisconsin through Somerset, Houlton and Stillwater along STH 64 to I-694, where service can connect to busways to St. Paul and Minneapolis or be through-routed. This express bus will use the transit-advantage lane at the Lift Bridge as discussed above.
  - A second route will operate along I-94 between Hudson and St. Paul providing connections to other services.
    - Park-and-ride lots to support these services are suggested at New Richmond, Somerset, and Roberts, Wisconsin.
- North-south bus transit will be added on TH 95 between Taylors Falls and Hastings, and along STH 35 between St. Croix Falls and Prescott. Stops at cities along the way including Stillwater, Bayport, Afton, Hastings, Prescott, River Falls, Hudson and Houlton.
- A circulator shuttle will run between Stillwater and Bayport, Minnesota.
- Two commuter rail lines will serve St. Croix County and the Twin Cities.
  - One line will operate from Hammond, Wisconsin to downtown St. Paul, with stops at Roberts, Hudson, and the suburbs of St. Paul and downtown St. Paul. Park-and-ride lots to support this service will be provided at Hammond, Roberts (shared with the St. Croix Express Bus), and Hudson. The lot at Hudson will be a separate lot from the one described under the heading “Transit and Emergency Vehicle Advantages”, as that lot would likely be located too far away from the commuter line to be serviceable.
  - A second line will operate between Houlton New Richmond and downtown St. Paul, along I-94 with stops at Somerset and the St. Paul suburbs. Park-and-ride lots to support this service will be located at New Richmond and Somerset (shared with the St. Croix Express Bus).

**WIDENING STH 65 FROM TWO LANES TO FOUR LANES:** This action would involve widening from two lanes to four lanes, an eleven-mile stretch of road from I-94 to New

Richmond in central St. Croix County, as shown on Figure 3A. This would require the expansion of the scope of the EIS to include this area and similar expansion of the Project Area. Little information is currently known about the impacts that this action would have, although all impacts resulting from this action would be addressed in the SEIS to the same level of detail as other actions if this action were to be included as part of Alternative A. Traffic studies are underway at this time to determine the benefits/impacts of including this action in Alternative A, and to measure the ability of this action to meet the objectives defined for this project.

**REGIONAL POLICY CHANGES:** Regional policy changes to support Alternative A would be necessary. These policy changes are summarized here and include:

- Designation of STH 65 as a “Corridor Commercial Growth Zone” between Houlton and I-94. This would include expanding STH 65 to a four-lane facility.
- Restrictive highway zoning of STH 35 between Houlton and North Hudson, including possible Scenic Byway designation.
- Full partner status for St. Croix County in the planning and research processes of the Metropolitan Council.
- Revised St. Croix County Comprehensive Plan ensuring adequate protection of the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway and its watershed.
- Implementation of a comprehensive bicycle system in St. Croix County.

**C. TH 36 PARTNERSHIP STUDY AREA (INCLUDED IN ALTERNATIVES B, C, D AND E)**

In Minnesota, TH 36 from TH 5 to the new bridge would be converted to a grade-separated facility. The following list describes the modifications to TH 36, local roads, and the frontage roads parallel to TH 36 that would be included with Alternatives B, C, D and E. The TH 36 Partnership Study was conducted in 2001 to explore design concepts for TH 36 between TH 5 and Osgood Avenue. This study was conducted by Mn/DOT, in partnership with the cities of Oak Park Heights and Stillwater and Washington County. A grade-separated concept with two buttonhook-type interchanges has been supported by the local communities. Refinement of the location of the buttonhooks, and frontage road connections and overpass is currently being considered by the partnership study group with the addition of the Chamber of Commerce. Figure 4 includes an illustration of the concept of frontage road alignments and interchange locations currently being explored.

- The at-grade crossings of TH 36 with Washington/Norell Avenues, Oakgreen/Greeley Avenues (CSAH 66), and Osgood Avenue (County Road 24) would be removed and replaced with overpasses and buttonhook interchanges.

Figure 4 - Alternative B

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- The at-grade crossing of TH 36 at Oakgreen/Greeley Avenues will be replaced with an overpass.
- The north and south frontage roads would be realigned and buttonhook-type interchanges would provide full access to TH 36 just east of Washington/Norell Avenue and west of Osgood Avenue;
- Local roads would be accessible from the realigned frontage roads;
- The Beach Road overpass would be realigned to the west, intersecting with the south frontage road at a T-intersection; and
- Lookout Trail would be reconstructed as a cul-de-sac north of the St. Croix Overlook.

The reconstruction of TH 36 between TH 5 and the Beach Road overpass would be the same for each alternative bridge crossing (Alternatives B, C, D, and E).

#### D. ALTERNATIVE B

Alternative B (Figure 4) consists of a new four-lane bridge (two through traffic lanes in each direction) with a bicycle/pedestrian trail on the north side of the bridge. The 5,500-foot long bridge (3,000 feet over water) would be located 6,500 feet south of the Lift Bridge.

On the Minnesota side, TH 36 would cross over TH 95 along the approach to the St. Croix River. Ramps would provide access to TH 36 in both directions from TH 95. TH 95 would be realigned as it crosses under TH 36 to allow for additional lanes and traffic signals associated with the ramps to TH 36. Access to the Sunnyside Marina would be from a realigned entrance along TH 95.

The river crossing would stretch from the Minnesota side, near the location of where TH 36 and TH 95 meet and extend diagonally over the river. Two locations for the Wisconsin bridge approach will be investigated. One site is located within a ravine based on the alignment from the 1995 Final EIS. The second site is located to the south of the 1995 Final EIS alignment. In Wisconsin, the approach roadway would travel under STH 35, north to a diamond-type interchange with the relocated CTH E. A bicycle/pedestrian trail would provide access to the bridge for pedestrians and bicyclists at the STH 35 crossing.

Access to and from STH 35 with the new STH 35/64 roadway would be possible from the interchange with the realigned CTH E. The new STH 35/64 roadway would continue north then east on the north side of the existing STH 35/64 alignment and join the recently reconstructed portion of STH 64 north of 20th Street. A portion of the existing STH 35/64 roadway would be removed and converted into two local roads where the new roadway crosses.

Several design elements are currently under study for Alternative B. If carried forward into the SEIS, discussions would be made at the start of the SEIS regarding inclusion of these potential design elements. These design elements include:

- the “South Ravine Option” alternative alignment (see Figure 4);
- the construction of a tunnel at the bridge abutment into the Wisconsin bluff. This tunnel would use a “cut and cover” method because of the soil conditions of bluff; i.e., the bluff would be excavated, a tunnel structure would be constructed, and fill would be placed over the tunnel and revegetated;
- the retention of the Lift Bridge as a limited vehicular facility for local traffic (i.e., no semi or large truck traffic);
- the conversion of the Lift Bridge to a pedestrian and bicycle facility; and
- the construction of park and ride facilities in Minnesota near the TH 36/95 interchange.

## E. ALTERNATIVE C

Alternative C (Figure 5) would include construction of a new four-lane bridge over the St. Croix River between TH 36 in Stillwater and Oak Park Heights, Minnesota and STH 64 in St. Joseph Township, Wisconsin. The alternative also consists of reconstruction of the Minnesota and Wisconsin approach roadways to the bridge, including a new interchange at Minnesota TH 36 and TH 95 and an interchange in Wisconsin at STH 35, or at relocated CTH E.

The new 3,300-foot long bridge (2,000 feet over water) would be located approximately 3,900 feet south of the Lift Bridge. The bridge would include two through-traffic lanes in each direction and a bicycle/pedestrian trail on the north side of the bridge.

Approach roadways to the bridge that would be reconstructed as part of the project include TH 36 and TH 95 in Minnesota, and STH 64, STH 35, and CTH E in Wisconsin. A modified folded-diamond-type interchange would be provided at TH 95 allowing full access to TH 36. The Minnesota approach would cross over TH 95 just north of the Sunnyside Marina. The bridge would continue northeast, crossing perpendicular to the river to the Wisconsin bluff. Access to the Sunnyside Marina and the Aiple Property would be possible through a local road intersecting with TH 95.

In Wisconsin, several alternatives for the alignment of the new STH 35/64 roadway, the roadway connections to STH 35 and CTH E, and the realignment of CTH E will be considered. The new STH 35/64 alignment would either curve north after crossing STH 35 then turn east to parallel the existing STH 35/64 roadway, or continue northeast after crossing STH 35 and join the recently reconstructed portion of STH 64 near 20th Street. Either a folded diamond-type interchange at STH 35 or a diamond-type interchange at the realigned CTH E would provide access to local roads. CTH E would either be realigned to the south, or remain at its current alignment. The options for the alignment of the new roadway, the roadway connections, and realignment of CTH E would result in five potential options for the new STH 35/64 roadway in Wisconsin.

Figure 5 - Alternative C

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Depending on the alignment selection of the new STH 35/64 roadway crossing the existing STH 35/64 roadway, several different scenarios are possible for other local roads. Cul-de-sacs would be constructed where the new roadway crosses the existing alignment. Short segments of new local roads would also be constructed to connect the existing roadway to other existing local roads. The alignment of Alternative C in Wisconsin and the proposed interchanges are shown in Figure 5.

Several design elements are currently under study for Alternative C. If carried forward into the SEIS, discussions would be made at the start of the SEIS regarding inclusion of these potential design elements. These design elements include:

- the construction of a tunnel at the bridge abutment into the Wisconsin bluff. This tunnel would use a “cut and cover” method because of the soil conditions of bluff. The bluff would be excavated, a tunnel structure would be constructed, and fill would be placed over the tunnel and revegetated;
- the retention of the Lift Bridge as a limited vehicular facility for local traffic (i.e., no semi or large truck traffic);
- the conversion of the Lift Bridge to a pedestrian and bicycle facility; and
- the construction of park and ride facilities in Minnesota near the TH 36/95 interchange.

## F. ALTERNATIVE D

Alternative D (Figure 6) consists of a new four-lane bridge south of the existing Lift Bridge, accommodating both eastbound and westbound traffic with two through traffic lanes in each direction. The approximately 2,925-foot long new bridge (approximately 2,530 feet over water) would cross northeasterly to Wisconsin from a point in Minnesota approximately 2,000 feet south of the Lift Bridge. The new bridge would meet the Wisconsin bluff approximately 200 feet south of the point where the Lift Bridge meets the Wisconsin bluff. The Lift Bridge would remain intact and would be used for limited vehicular traffic.

South of Stillwater, a full interchange would provide access in all directions to and from TH 36 and TH 95 with a “modified single-point” interchange at the southern junction of the roadways. Some driveway access would be altered and a north access to the Sunnyside Condominiums would be available. Access to the Sunnyside Marina would be available from a local road parallel to TH 95, which would continue north to access the Aiple Property. At the north junction, ramps would provide access from eastbound TH 36/95 to northbound TH 95 into Stillwater, and from southbound TH 95 to westbound TH 36/95 from Stillwater. Direct access from southbound TH 95 from Stillwater to eastbound TH 36 (new bridge crossing) would not be possible. To do this, traffic would have one of two options: take the Lift Bridge from Stillwater to Wisconsin, or take TH 95 southbound from Stillwater, making a U-turn at the intersection with the ramp providing access to eastbound TH 36/95 and the new bridge to Wisconsin. Access from westbound STH 64 to northbound TH 95 would also be provided by the Lift Bridge.

Figure 6 - Alternative D

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In Wisconsin, the new STH 64 roadway would climb the Wisconsin bluff along the existing corridor. A ramp would connect eastbound traffic from Stillwater using the Lift Bridge to eastbound traffic on STH 64. At the top of the Wisconsin bluff, the new STH 64 roadway would cross under existing STH 35, connecting to a relocated STH 35 with a diamond-type interchange.

This diamond-type interchange, located just outside of Houlton, would provide full access in all directions between STH 64 and a new north-south road for STH 35. This north-south road would be constructed between the existing STH 35/64 roadway north of Houlton and STH 35 to the south, providing a bypass for STH 35 around Houlton. This roadway would also join CTY E at an at-grade intersection and join existing STH 35 south of Houlton at a new T-intersection. The new STH 35/64 roadway would continue to the northeast, crossing the existing STH 35/64 roadway and paralleling it to the east to the recently reconstructed portion of STH 64. The alignment of Alternative D and the proposed interchanges are shown on Figure 6.

Several design elements are currently under study for Alternative D. If carried forward into the SEIS, discussions would be made at the start of the SEIS regarding inclusion of these potential design elements. These design elements include:

- the inclusion of an at-grade intersection between STH 64 and STH 35 in Houlton or an STH 64 overpass with no access to STH 35 in Houlton;
- the addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities on the new river crossing and access facilities in both Minnesota and Wisconsin; and
- the construction of park and ride facilities in Minnesota near the TH 36/95 interchange.

## G. ALTERNATIVE E

Alternative E (Figure 7) consists of utilizing the existing Lift Bridge as a two-lane one-way roadway for westbound traffic, and constructing a new one-way bridge south of the Lift Bridge for two lanes of eastbound traffic. The approximately 3,000-foot long new bridge (2,530 feet over water) would cross northeasterly to Wisconsin from a point in Minnesota approximately 2,000 feet south of the Lift Bridge. The new bridge would meet the Wisconsin bluff at approximately 200 feet south of the point where the Lift Bridge meets the Wisconsin bluff.

South of Stillwater, a full interchange would provide access in all directions to and from TH 36 and TH 95 with a “modified single-point” interchange at the southern junction of the roadways. Some driveway access would be altered and the north access to Sunnyside Condominiums would be closed. Access to the Sunnyside Condominiums would be available from a local road parallel to TH 95, which would continue north to access the Aiple Property.

The new eastbound bridge would cross the St. Croix River diagonally, heading northeast from the Minnesota side. Northbound TH 95 would be able to continue north into Stillwater via a left turn from TH 36/95, while eastbound traffic would continue east crossing the river. Southbound traffic on TH 95 from Stillwater would either continue south on TH 36/95 or turn left, crossing the river with eastbound traffic from TH 36/95.

Figure 7 - Alternative E

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On the Wisconsin side, the new bridge would approach the bluff immediately south of the existing Lift Bridge, and meet westbound traffic on STH 64 at the westernmost end of County Road E. County Road E will be terminated in cul-de-sac. The new STH 64 approach roadway would be a four-lane, divided highway providing access to STH 35 with either an at-grade intersection or an interchange.

The alignment of the new STH 35/64 roadway from STH 35 to the recently reconstructed portion of STH 64 to the east, the alignment of a new local road between the existing STH 35/64 roadway and CTH E, and the interchange between the local road and the new STH 35/64 would be the same as Alternative D. The alignment of Alternative E and the proposed interchanges are shown on Figure 7.

Several design elements are currently under study for Alternative E. If carried forward into the SEIS, discussions would be made at the start of the SEIS regarding inclusion of these potential design elements. These design elements include:

- the reconstruction of the TH 36/96 interchange in Oak Park Heights, Minnesota and the relocation of the Beach Road bridge over TH 36;
- the inclusion of an at-grade intersection between STH 64 and STH 35 in Houlton or an STH 64 overpass with no access to STH 35 in Houlton;
- the profile of the bridge and clearance over the St. Croix River;
- the addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities on the new river crossing and access facilities in both Minnesota and Wisconsin; and
- the construction of park and ride facilities in Minnesota near the TH 36/95 interchange.

## **VI. ALTERNATIVES NOT TO BE STUDIED IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL EIS**

A tunnel option underneath the St. Croix River was considered but will not be studied in the SEIS. Previous preliminary studies concluded that this option would be cost prohibitive and is not feasible from an engineering and geological standpoint. Studies indicated the sub-river soil conditions cannot support a structure of the size required. A tunnel option would also present numerous environmental concerns such as markedly greater impacts on natural resources in both Minnesota and Wisconsin, and within the river channel of the valley.

## **VII. ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL EIS**

Based on information obtained during the scoping study, the following areas of environmental concern will require special studies (separate reports) in the Supplemental EIS to better determine the extent of impacts related to the proposed alternatives. Figure 2 shows the general project area.

## A. ISSUES REQUIRING A SPECIAL STUDY IN THE SEIS

### **Wild and Scenic Rivers Act - Section 7(a) Evaluation (Wild and Scenic Rivers Act) and Section 4(f) Evaluation**

The St. Croix River within the project area is included in the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway (NSR), which was designated as a Wild and Scenic River in 1972. The Lower St. Croix NSR stretches from Taylors Falls, Minnesota to the confluence with the Mississippi River (Figure 8). Because this portion of the river is a federally-designated National Scenic Riverway, additional protection is afforded to the river. As part of the SEIS process, impacts to the Riverway and its outstandingly remarkable values (scenic, recreational and geologic – as guided by the Cooperative Management Plan for the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway) for which it was designated, will be carefully assessed for each alternative. A separate evaluation of the project under Section 7(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will be performed by the National Park Service. A separate Section 4(f) Evaluation will also be performed for the National Scenic Riverway.

### **Historic Properties - Section 106 Evaluation and Section 4(f) Evaluations**

Figure 9 shows known historic properties<sup>2</sup> in the project area. Several separate studies and surveys of the area have been completed for this ongoing project providing detailed information about the historical, archaeological and architectural properties in the project area, and additional studies will be necessary to clarify the extent of the impacts from the alternatives examined in the SEIS. Historic properties discussed in previous sections of this document have been identified as eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and several of the alternatives currently proposed would have either direct or indirect effects on these resources to varying degrees. An Area of Potential Effect (APE) will be defined, based on the alternatives identified in the final Scoping Decision Document and a detailed discussion of the resources and impacts from the alternatives will be included in the SEIS. A Memorandum of Agreement was previously signed for a new river crossing in 1994, however, a new Memorandum of Agreement is anticipated for the project. It is not anticipated that a this new Memorandum of Agreement (even in draft form) will be provided in the Supplemental Draft EIS, but a discussion of preliminary findings of effect as determined under 36 CFR 800 and the ability to mitigate the identified adverse effects will be provided. A new Memorandum of Agreement will be provided in the Final EIS.

A separate study (Section 4(f) Evaluation) of these resources protected by Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 will be completed as necessary. A map showing the known historic properties is provided as Figure 9.

The project will require review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470 et seq.) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800). The SEIS will also serve as the required documentation for this review as well as NEPA.

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<sup>2</sup> The term “historic properties” in this document includes architectural structures as well as archaeological sites that have been identified in previous cultural resource studies and determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

Figure 8 - Known Natural Resources

DRAFT

Figure 9 - Known Historic Properties

DRAFT

### **Parks and Recreational Areas - Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluations on recreational resources**

Numerous parks and recreation areas are located in and near the project area, including land near TH 36 in Stillwater (Cover Park) that may receive parkland status in the near future, as shown on Figure 10. Of these, several could be affected by the proposed alternatives. Potential impacts of the project on each of these facilities will be described in the SEIS. In addition, separate Section 4(f) Evaluations will be completed for each of the parks or recreation areas affected by the alternatives.

## **B. ISSUES REQUIRING DETAILED ANALYSIS IN THE SEIS**

The following issues are of concern for the project. The SEIS will provide detailed analysis of impacts for each of these environmental concerns, but no separate report will be generated.

### **Project Cost, Funding and Jurisdictional Changes**

The cost of the alternatives, cost participation, the funding sources and any jurisdictional changes that result from each of the alternatives will be explored in the SEIS. A benefit/cost analysis will be included.

### **Air Quality**

A large part of the study area is located within the Twin Cities metropolitan area, which was redesignated by the Environmental Protection Agency as a “maintenance area” for carbon monoxide (CO) in 1990. The attainment status is contingent upon implementation measures to assure that the CO concentration remains below standards. The contingency stipulates that future CO concentrations be modeled for proposed transportation projects.

The SEIS will discuss relative traffic operations projections in relation to air quality for No Build and Build Alternatives. It will also include air quality analysis in compliance with relevant requirements and standards. Minnesota Pollution Control Agency staff will be consulted during the development of the scope, methods and procedures to be used in performing the air quality analysis.

### **Visual Impacts**

Visual impacts will be assessed in the SEIS as they relate to users of the highway, users of the river corridor and users of the adjacent lands between the two project termini. The Mn/DOT Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) process will be used to identify visual resources, affected individuals and mitigation strategies. The Stakeholder Resolution Process will contribute to this process. In addition, bridge type and several aesthetic issues must be addressed relating to this project that potential crosses a Federally-designated Wild and Scenic Riverway and the National Register – eligible Stillwater Cultural Landscape District, including: location of the bridge structure; geometrics of the bridge approaches; height of the bridge structures; integration of the structure with the native landscape; and the design of and material used for the bridge and its approaches. These issues will be addressed in the SEIS.

Figure 10 - Known Parks and Recreation Areas

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## **Construction Impacts**

Impacts on the physical and natural environment can be expected during the construction phase of the project. These include potential impacts related to water and air quality, erosion, steep slopes and slope stability, soils, sedimentation, noise, vibration, and traffic delays due to detours and construction operations. The SEIS will describe the relative construction phase impacts of alternatives being considered.

## **Vegetation/Cover Types**

The project area in Minnesota is generally urbanized and consists primarily of areas already used for transportation purposes (TH 36 and TH 95) or for other urban development, with little undisturbed natural area. The Wisconsin bluff and ravine area supports a young- to middle-aged forest of mixed hardwood trees. Impacts on the Wisconsin resources are therefore anticipated to be greater for most of the alternatives. The impacts on these resources will be examined for each of the proposed alternatives.

## **Farmlands**

The federal Farmland Protection Policy Act and Conservation Policy Act ensure that impacts on agricultural lands are integrated into the environmental decision-making process and that impacts are minimized to the extent feasible. The majority of agricultural properties in the project area are located on the Wisconsin side of the river and may be affected by changes in the STH 35/STH 64 interchange and related alignment and access changes. The conversion of farmland to roadway use will depend on the location of each alternative. The SEIS will calculate conversion of total farmland acres, prime and unique farmland acreage and examine impact on farm operations, assuming existing land use.

## **Fish and Wildlife/Threatened and Endangered Species/Risk of Exotic Species Introduction**

Most of the wildlife in the area consists of species that have adapted to a disturbed physical environment and would be tolerant of possible disturbances from the project. Figure 11 shows the known natural resources, including protected species in the project area. The project could remove and/or displace some kinds of habitat and could displace wildlife in certain areas, and potentially risk the introduction of exotic species into the area. Potential general effects of highway development on wildlife include habitat loss through its conversion into a paved highway surface, decreased attractiveness of habitat adjacent to the highway as a result of noise and activity, and an increase in wildlife-vehicle accidents as a result of increased traffic volumes. A new review of the Natural Heritage Inventory database maintained by the MnDNR and WisDNR will be performed to identify any state-endangered, threatened, or special concern species in the project area in addition to those species of concern previously identified in the area, including the bald eagle and pearly Higgin's eye mussel, and several other mussel species known to occur in other stretches of the St. Croix River. Special attention will be given to the

examination of impacts on species that utilize the Lift Bridge for nesting areas, the timing of construction to minimize impacts, and the relocating of mussel beds.

### **Groundwater and Geology**

Impacts on groundwater and geology will be examined in the SEIS, including impacts from infiltration of runoff from new impervious surfaces, impacts on existing wells, and impacts from excavation to the depth of the existing water table. Impacts on/resulting from unique geologic features are not anticipated, but will be examined in the SEIS.

### **Water Body Modification**

Impacts on water bodies will be addressed through examination of impacts on wetlands, surface water quality and quantity, floodplains, and protected waterways.

### **Floodplains**

Impacts on the floodplain of the St. Croix River will be examined in accordance with Executive Order 11988, Minnesota Statute 104.01, and Wisconsin Statute 87.30. Impacts to be examined include the flooding risk, floodplain values impacts, identification of any incompatible floodplain development, potential for interruption of a transportation facility, minimization measures, restoration measures and preservation measures.

### **Surface Water/Water Quantity and Quality Management/Stormwater Management**

Impacts on surface water quantity and quality will be examined in the SEIS. The primary potential for water quality impacts is related to surface and storm water runoff generated from new impervious surface areas of the alternatives and during construction. Storm water ponds and infiltration measures to minimize/decrease impacts will be required for alternatives.

### **Wetlands**

Potential wetland impacts related to the proposed project are regulated by federal and state wetland protection laws. Current wetland regulations require (in order of preference) avoidance, minimization and mitigation of impacts resulting from a proposed project. The study area of the proposed project includes numerous wetlands and protected waters.

The SEIS will provide discussion of potential wetland impacts of each of the proposed alternatives carried forward. Initial avoidance and minimization efforts for the alternatives will also be discussed in the SEIS.

Federal and state wetland regulatory agencies have been involved in project planning and will continue to provide input on the proposed project and wetland impacts throughout the SEIS process.

### **Land Use**

Land use impacts will vary greatly with the alternatives, dependent upon their location and configuration. The SEIS will examine the compatibility of the project alternatives with the existing land uses in the area and with future land use plans for affected properties. The SEIS will evaluate the direct land use impacts due to right of way acquisition and access changes and potential indirect land use impacts that may occur as a result of changes in traffic volumes and traffic patterns on area roadways following construction of the proposed project. Potential land use changes that will be examined in detail include those arising from the new interchanges in Minnesota and/or Wisconsin, and those related to the bridge location; potential redevelopment of land will also be considered. Induced or secondary land use impacts will also be considered in terms of location of development, and potential acceleration of planned development due to improved access.

### **Noise**

Construction noise impacts are of a limited concern in comparison to the long-term operational noise of a highway, and therefore the SEIS will focus on traffic noise impacts. Noise standards have been established in Minnesota by the MPCA for daytime and nighttime hours, while Wisconsin has adopted the Federal noise abatement criteria. Residences comprise most of the receptors and are considered the most sensitive receptors of traffic noise along the project corridor and therefore will be the subject of most of the noise discussion in the SEIS. However, impacts on school and park locations will also be considered. In addition, a special section will be included for the alternatives that include a new river bridge to assess the future noise impacts on the river surface resulting from vehicles traveling on the proposed bridge and if necessary, the Lift Bridge.

### **Right-of-Way Acquisition and Relocation**

All alternatives will require a significant amount of acquisition of land within the study area for right of way. Acquisitions may require relocation of residents or businesses. The SEIS will analyze relative right of way acquisition impacts of each alternative based on total land area to be acquired and subdivided in categories including residential, commercial/industrial, public (including local, state and federal lands), and open space. This analysis will be based upon existing land uses.

### **Traffic**

Impacts on the transportation systems/facilities in the project area will be addressed. Previous comprehensive data collection efforts will be used and updated to document the past, existing, and future traffic conditions. Topics of study will include impacts on average daily traffic, traffic capacity, and turning movements/intersection operations at key locations. Issues to be

considered in these studies include variations in daily traffic, hourly distribution of traffic, truck traffic and the Lift Bridge weight limits (and subsequent effects of changing travel patterns for these vehicles).

### **Transit**

The alternatives may include provision for transit services. The SEIS will study the potential impacts of the alternatives on the ability of transit services to be provided or impeded.

### **Bicycle and Pedestrian Movement/Handicapped Accessibility**

The SEIS will evaluate the opportunities and constraints associated with providing for non-motorized travel within the project corridor, including but not limited to the effect of the proposed project on current trail plans. The SEIS will also assess impacts on any planned handicapped facilities and will identify if special consideration needs to be made for handicapped facilities in the project design in conjunction with the analysis of impacts on pedestrian/bicycle facilities as described above.

### **Navigation**

The SEIS will study the effect of the alternatives to allow continued navigation on this segment of the St. Croix River.

### **Social (Neighborhood and Community Facilities Impacts)**

The SEIS will compare alternatives with respect to impacts on community facilities, access to residential areas and community facilities and services, neighborhood and community cohesiveness, and provision of emergency services, based primarily on existing land uses. In Minnesota, the focus will be on the impacts to the two main communities with the potential for social impacts: Stillwater and Oak Park Heights. Impacts on the City of Bayport will also be considered. In Wisconsin, the area with potential for social impacts is the northwestern quadrant of St. Joseph Township, which includes the unincorporated community of Houlton. Most residences and businesses in Houlton are concentrated in the downtown area, but impacts on the other residences and farms in the township will be included in the analysis. Representatives of the Houlton community have expressed a strong concern for the potential impacts on community cohesion; these potential impacts will be studied.

### **Recreational Experience**

Recreation is one of the three outstandingly remarkable values that caused the riverway to be designated as a Wild and Scenic Riverway. Potential impacts to the recreational experience are auditory, visual, and physical. Impacts on the recreational aspects of the river will be examined as a separate resource.

## **Economic Impacts**

Economic impacts will vary greatly depending on the alternative being considered. Alternative location will affect right of way acquisition, access, land use and other items related to the economic functioning of the area. The countervailing beneficial and adverse effects of a roadway on the values of the affected properties are generally not quantifiable with any level of reliability. Therefore, the SEIS will address economic impacts of the project using relative/qualitative analysis rather than quantitative analysis. The economic impacts will be examined with respect to relationship of the project to area development plans and the potential effect on local taxes.

## **Environmental Justice**

Executive Order 12898 requires that the evaluation of environmental impacts resulting from a proposed project include assessment of the extent of these impacts on minority and low-income populations. Several locations within the study area have been identified as having potential sensitivity to environmental justice issues. The SEIS will identify any concentrations of minority and/or low-income persons in the project area (based on current conditions) and assess the impact of the project alternatives on any such groups identified.

## **Cumulative Impacts**

Cumulative impacts are defined as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions.” (40 CFR 1508.7)

Cumulative impacts are not causally linked in their entirety to the project, but are the total effects of actions with similar impacts in a broader geographic area. The purpose of a cumulative impacts analysis is to look for impacts that may be minimal and therefore neither significant nor adverse when examined within the context of the proposed action, but that may accumulate and become significant and adverse over a large number of actions. The cumulative impacts analysis will address all resources affected by the project.

The SEIS will compare the relative incremental impacts among the proposed alternatives compared to past, present and other foreseeable future actions. Foreseeable future actions include planned development and related infrastructure over the next 20 years.

## **C. ISSUES REQUIRING LESS DETAILED ANALYSIS**

The following issues are of moderate concern for the project. The SEIS will identify impacts, including analysis in accordance with federal and state requirements where appropriate, for each of these areas of environmental concern; however, major impacts are not anticipated.

## **Excess Materials**

Construction of any alternative except the No Build alternative could require the disposal of excess material outside of the project construction limits. Excess materials would be predominantly soil materials, which pose little environmental hazard, but may also include demolition of existing highway pavement and/or building materials. All demolition and construction material removed from the construction area will be recycled and/or disposed of in compliance with federal and state solid waste management regulations. The SEIS will provide general discussion of appropriate handling of excess materials if appropriate, as this will have a limited influence on the identification of a Preferred Alternative.

## **Hazardous Materials, Contaminated Properties, Spills Management**

Several operations or properties in the project area may be potential sources of contamination. The SEIS will summarize the results of state and local agency file searches to determine the relative potential for each alternative considered to impact contaminated property. Analysis will be based on a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment to be conducted for determining any potential contamination source impacts to be avoided or minimized. The previously completed Phase I ESA information will be used in the Scoping process to the extent possible, and supplemented with additional studies to be performed in the SEIS, if necessary.

## **Soils**

The previously completed soils information will be used in the Scoping process to the extent possible, and supplemented with additional studies to be performed in the SEIS, if necessary, to identify soils or areas of concern.

## **Utility Locations**

Previous studies have identified known utilities in the project area, including power transmission lines, gas lines, electric substations, and sewer trunk lines. The SEIS will address utility locations and any substantive differences among alternatives that could affect selection of the preferred alternative.

## **Relationship of Local Short-Term Uses Versus Long-Term Productivity**

The SEIS will address the short-term adverse impacts and use of resources and their relationship to the long-term gains in productivity resulting from each alternative being considered.

## **Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resource**

For each alternative considered, the SEIS will discuss the commitment of resources, including as appropriate, natural, physical, human and fiscal resources, that would be permanently dedicated to public use, and not able to be reversed or retrieved.

## VIII. ISSUES NOT TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE SUPPLEMENTAL EIS

The following areas of environmental concern are not relevant to this study area and will not be discussed in the Supplemental EIS:

### Coastal Zones

No coastal zones exist in the project area, and therefore this issue will not be addressed in the SEIS.

### Federal and/or State-Designated Critical Areas (i.e., legislatively-defined areas)

No federal and/or state-designated (legislatively defined) critical areas currently exist in the project area, and therefore, this issue will not be addressed in the SEIS. While the Lower St. Croix was designated a “critical area” under the Minnesota Critical Areas Act (Minn. Stat. 116G.01-116G.14), that designation expired in the 1970s. No state-designated critical areas now exist in the project area, and therefore this issue will not be addressed in the SEIS.

## IX. PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The 2003 ASD describes the agency and public involvement activities during the current scoping process, as well as during previously-conducted studies. These activities included meetings and correspondence with public, government and regulatory agencies to obtain input on any potentially significant issues within the study corridor.

## X. PERMITS AND APPROVALS

Permits and approvals that may be required for the proposed project are listed in Table 1.

**TABLE 1  
AGENCY PERMITS AND APPROVALS THAT MAY BE REQUIRED**

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PERMIT/APPROVAL</b>
FEDERAL:	
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	▪ Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement
Federal Highway Administration	▪ SEIS (Draft and Final) ▪ Section 4(f) Evaluation (Draft and Final) ▪ Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement ▪ SEIS Record of Decision
National Park Service	▪ Section 7(a) Evaluation (Draft and Final)
U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers	▪ Section 10 Permit (navigable waters) ▪ Section 404 Permit (fill in U.S. waters)
U.S. Coast Guard	▪ Section 9 Permit (navigable waters)
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	▪ Biological Opinion

<b>AGENCY</b>	<b>PERMIT/APPROVAL</b>
STATE:	
MN Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Amended Scoping Decision Document</li> <li>▪ SEIS (Draft and Final)</li> <li>▪ Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)</li> </ul>
WIS Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Amended Scoping Decision Document</li> <li>▪ SEIS (Draft and Final)</li> <li>▪ SEIS Adequacy Determination</li> </ul>
MN Department of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Protected Waters Permit</li> <li>▪ Mussel Relocation Permit</li> </ul>
MN Pollution Control Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Indirect Source Permit (ISP)</li> <li>▪ Section 401 Water Quality Certification</li> <li>▪ National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit (NPDES)</li> </ul>
WIS Department of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Indirect Source Air Permit</li> <li>▪ Concurrence Letter and Section 401 Water Quality Certification to Wis/DOT (as co-lead agency) in lieu of water regulation, stormwater, wastewater and other permits per 30.12(4), Wis. Stats. and per And DNR/DOT Cooperative Agreement</li> <li>▪ Scientific Collector Permits (surveys)</li> <li>▪ Endangered/Threatened Species Permit</li> <li>▪ Authorization for Taking E/T Species (requires jeopardy determination)</li> </ul>
MN State Historic Preservation Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement</li> </ul>
<i>WIS State Historic Preservation Office</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement</li> </ul>
REGIONAL:	
Metropolitan Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Controlled Access Approval</li> </ul>
LOCAL:	
City of Oak Park Heights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Municipal Consent on Project</li> </ul>
City of Stillwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Municipal Consent on Project</li> </ul>
Local Watershed Districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordination of Grading and Drainage Plans</li> </ul>