

Loop Trail, walks and trails of the St. Croix River Crossing Project 12/12/11

The St. Croix River Crossing Project has accommodated bicycle and pedestrian users while considering the social, economic and environmental issues. The [2004 Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement](#) provides some context for these trail issues, while the [2006 Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement](#) identifies the need for construction of a Loop Trail connecting the existing Lift Bridge to the new river crossing bridge. The [2007 Visual Quality Manual](#) provides aesthetic design guidance for the Loop Trail and other trails planned with the project. The attached Trail Graphic shows the Loop Trail, trails and walks existing and planned to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians in the area.

The trail components and supporting infrastructure of the St. Croix River Crossing project should realize high volumes of utilization from users both locally and regionally, as well as intrastate and interstate bicycle travelers. This conclusion is based on the unique historical, natural, cultural, recreational and community based resources of the St. Croix River Valley area and the surrounding communities in Minnesota and Wisconsin that will serve to draw trail users of varied interests and origins.

The following provide additional reasons to support this conclusion:

- The surrounding communities have a large population base that local use alone will be significant as this loop facility will provide a unique opportunity for residents to recreate and enjoy the river and its amenities. The trail will be an attractive distance for many to utilize and afford many different user interests in multiple ways to experience the trail.
- Stillwater and the surrounding communities are already a destination for travelers, as is the St. Croix National Scenic Riverway. It is expected that trail users will view the loop trail as an attractive amenity. The Loop Trail gives visitors an option to take a short hike or bike ride or to make a longer trip by connecting to the local trail systems of Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, Bayport, Town of St. Joseph, St. Croix and Washington Counties.
- Trails can be generators of economic activity. A [2009 study by the University of Minnesota Tourism Center](#) estimated that trail users (including residents and visitors) contributed to \$2.4 billion in spending statewide.
- The historic lift bridge will become a significant destination and draw increased use. Much like the Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis, users will be able to travel to and experience the bridge and the riverway in a very different way than they do today.
- The proximity to the Twin Cities Metro Area provides access to around 2 million people that are potential users of this facility.
 - The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources manages the Gateway State Trail that currently terminates on the west end at the edge of downtown St. Paul

(with plans to extend it further west) and on the east end at Pine Point Park, just north of Stillwater.

- Current annual counts from the Minnesota DNR are approximately 189,000 to 272,000 users.
- The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources is in the planning stage of developing the Browns Creek State Trail which will intersect with the Gateway State Trail west of Manning Avenue and terminate in Stillwater at the northwest corner of the Loop Trail.
 - Projected annual counts from the Minnesota DNR are approximately 62,000 – 89,000 users.
- These two state trail facilities will provide continuous off-road trails from the heart of St. Paul to Stillwater and the St Croix River Valley.
- Wisconsin’s County Road E, currently accommodates bicycles and pedestrians and connects to the regional trail system in Wisconsin.
- The loop trail will tie together existing and emerging trail systems in both Minnesota and Wisconsin allowing trail crossing opportunities across borders. This will more safely and efficiently provide users a clear and comfortable way for traveling between the two states.
- The new Hwy 36 bridge and the lift bridge will serve as the confluence point for several United States Bicycle Routes that come into Minnesota from Wisconsin and then distribute users across the state and on to further destinations across the country.
- Usage: Considering the existing high usage of the Gateway State Trail and the development of the Browns Creek State Trail, the Cities of Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, Bayport with the Town of St. Joseph and this proposed loop trail facility will create a more desirable and logical destination than Pine Point Park for current and future trail users and it should be anticipated that use of these two trails will increase.

For questions about the bicycle or pedestrian opportunities created by the St. Croix River Crossing Project’s Loop Trail, walks and other project trails, please contact:

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