

ST. CROIX RIVER CROSSING PROJECT SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT EIS
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT EIS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document is a supplement to the 1995 Final EIS and Section 4(f) Evaluations for the Trunk Highway (TH) 36/State Trunk Highway (STH) 64 St. Croix River Crossing Project between the cities of Stillwater and Oak Park Heights in Washington County, Minnesota, and the Town of St. Joseph in St. Croix County, Wisconsin, and associated roadways in both states. This chapter describes the purpose of the document and summarizes the project's history and context. It also describes the project schedule and lists the project managers.

1.1 PURPOSE OF SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT EIS

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires that social, economic, and environmental considerations be included in the planning of projects that receive federal funding and involve other federal actions. Similarly, the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA) and the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) requires review of potential environmental impacts for proposed projects that exceed state regulatory thresholds. This 2004 *Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement* (SDEIS) was prepared as part of the federal NEPA process and state environmental review processes to fulfill requirements of 42 USC 4321 et. seq., s 1.11 Wisconsin Statutes, Chapter Trans 400, and Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.2000. This SDEIS was prepared by the project proposers: the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (Wis/DOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The purpose of this 2004 SDEIS and Section 4(f) Evaluations is to evaluate and document potential social, economic and environmental impacts of the alternatives now being considered for a new St. Croix River crossing, compare them to those impacts anticipated if the project were not constructed (the No-Build Alternative), and to identify potential mitigation methods (i.e., ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts). The document also describes efforts that will be taken to avoid and minimize potential impacts, and the measures that will be employed to mitigate those impacts that are unavoidable.

This SDEIS considers four Build Alternatives as well as the No-Build Alternative. The Build Alternatives were identified through the Stakeholder Resolution Process, involving federal, state and local interests described in Section 1.2. The four Build Alternatives were developed to represent a reasonable range of the alternatives for this project. These four Alternatives were presented in the 2003 *Amended Scoping Document* and 2004 *Amended Final Scoping Decision Document*. No Preferred Alternative has been selected for this project. Selection of a Preferred Alternative for the project is the responsibility of the project proposers (the two DOTs and FHWA) and will not be made until all project impacts and public and agency comments on the Supplemental Draft EIS have been evaluated. The decision regarding a Preferred Alternative

will include consideration of the four Build Alternatives, as well as the No-Build alternative. In addition, the decision regarding a Preferred Alternative will include decisions regarding the future of the Lift Bridge, a mitigation package (as discussed in Chapter 14) and the bridge type.

This SDEIS is supplemental to several previously completed documents for the project, which are incorporated by reference into this Supplemental Draft EIS. These documents include the *1985 Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Outline*, *1987 Scoping Decision Document/Final Study Outline*, the *1990 Draft EIS* and related special studies, the *1995 Final EIS*, a *1995 Record of Decision*, the *1999 Amended Scoping Decision Document*, the *2003 Scoping Document/Amended Draft Scoping Decision Document* and *2004 Amended Final Scoping Decision Document*. A complete list of project documents is provided in Appendix A.

The function of the environmental review process is to avoid and minimize damage to the natural and human environments caused by public and private actions, and to describe potential mitigation measures where indicated. The EIS process is a thorough study of a project's environmental impacts and a comparative analysis of its potential economic and sociological effects. It considers reasonable alternatives to a proposed action, including the No-Build Alternative. When completed, the review provides governmental units detailed information about the extent of environmental impacts and how these impacts may be avoided or minimized.

In addition, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended) requires federal agencies or their designees to assess the effects of their actions by identifying properties listed on, or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); determining effects of the project on those properties; and consulting with interested parties to determine ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate effects caused by an undertaking. For this document, the proposing agencies are also the three lead agencies for addressing Section 106 requirements under the NEPA. It is the intent of the proposing agencies that this document serve as the coordination of NEPA and Section 106 processes.

FHWA is also serving as the lead federal agency in assisting the National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard), U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (U.S. FWS), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in meeting their Section 106 requirements under federal law. FHWA, Mn/DOT and Wis/DOT are responsible for all decision-making in the NEPA and Section 106 process and have guided activities conducted as part of this SDEIS. Details of the Section 106 process (coordination and consultation) are included in Chapter 11.

1.2 PROJECT SUMMARY AND CONTEXT

1.2.1 Project Summary

The project includes a crossing of the St. Croix River between TH 36 in the cities of Stillwater and Oak Park Heights, Minnesota, and STH 64 in the Town of St. Joseph, Wisconsin, reconstruction/construction of the Minnesota and Wisconsin approach roadways to the bridge (including interchanges at Minnesota TH 36 and TH 95, and at Wisconsin STH 64 and STH 35 or County Trunk Highway (CTH) E), and conversion of a portion of Minnesota TH 36 to a grade-separated facility (see Figures 1-1a, 1-1b, 1-2, and 1-3). The project would extend from

a point 700 feet east of the TH 5/TH 36 interchange in Minnesota to a point 100 feet southwest of the 150th Avenue overpass on STH 35/64 in Wisconsin.

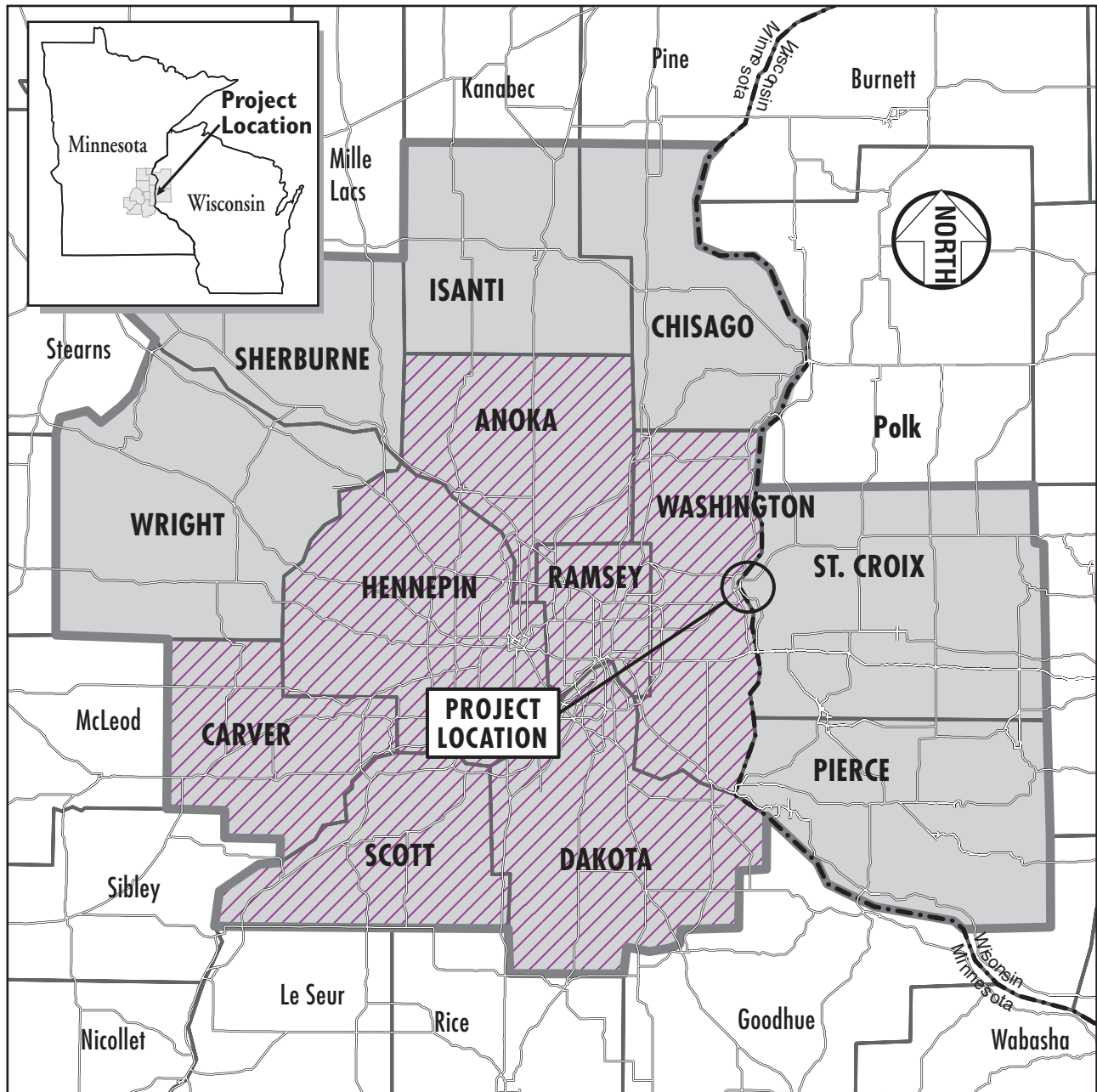
The No-Build Alternative would include no changes to the existing transportation system, and continue the use of the existing Lift Bridge in Stillwater (the Lift Bridge) on TH 36/STH 64 between Stillwater and the Town of St. Joseph.



The four Build Alternatives developed for consideration in this SDEIS each include a new bridge with either four lanes or two lanes.

- Alternative B-1 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 bridge would be located approximately 6,500 feet south of the Lift Bridge.
- Alternative C includes 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 bridge would be located approximately 3,900 feet south of the Lift Bridge.
- Alternative D includes a new four-lane bridge south of the Lift Bridge, accommodating both eastbound and westbound traffic with two through-lanes in each direction. The new bridge would cross northeasterly to Wisconsin from a point in Minnesota approximately 1,900 feet south of the Lift Bridge. The new bridge would meet the Wisconsin bluff approximately 160 feet south of the point where the Lift Bridge meets the Wisconsin bluff.
- Alternative E includes a new one-way bridge south of the Lift Bridge for two lanes of eastbound traffic, and use of the Lift Bridge as a two-lane one-way roadway for westbound traffic. The new bridge would cross northeasterly to Wisconsin for 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.

With these four Build Alternatives, the existing river crossing (the Lift Bridge) may either remain a trunk highway facility (Alternatives E and the No-Build Alternative), be converted to a local roadway (Alternatives B-1 and C), or be converted to a pedestrian/bicycle facility (Alternatives B-1, C and D). Chapter 3 provides full descriptions of the Alternatives, including the No-Build Alternative to which each alternative is being compared.

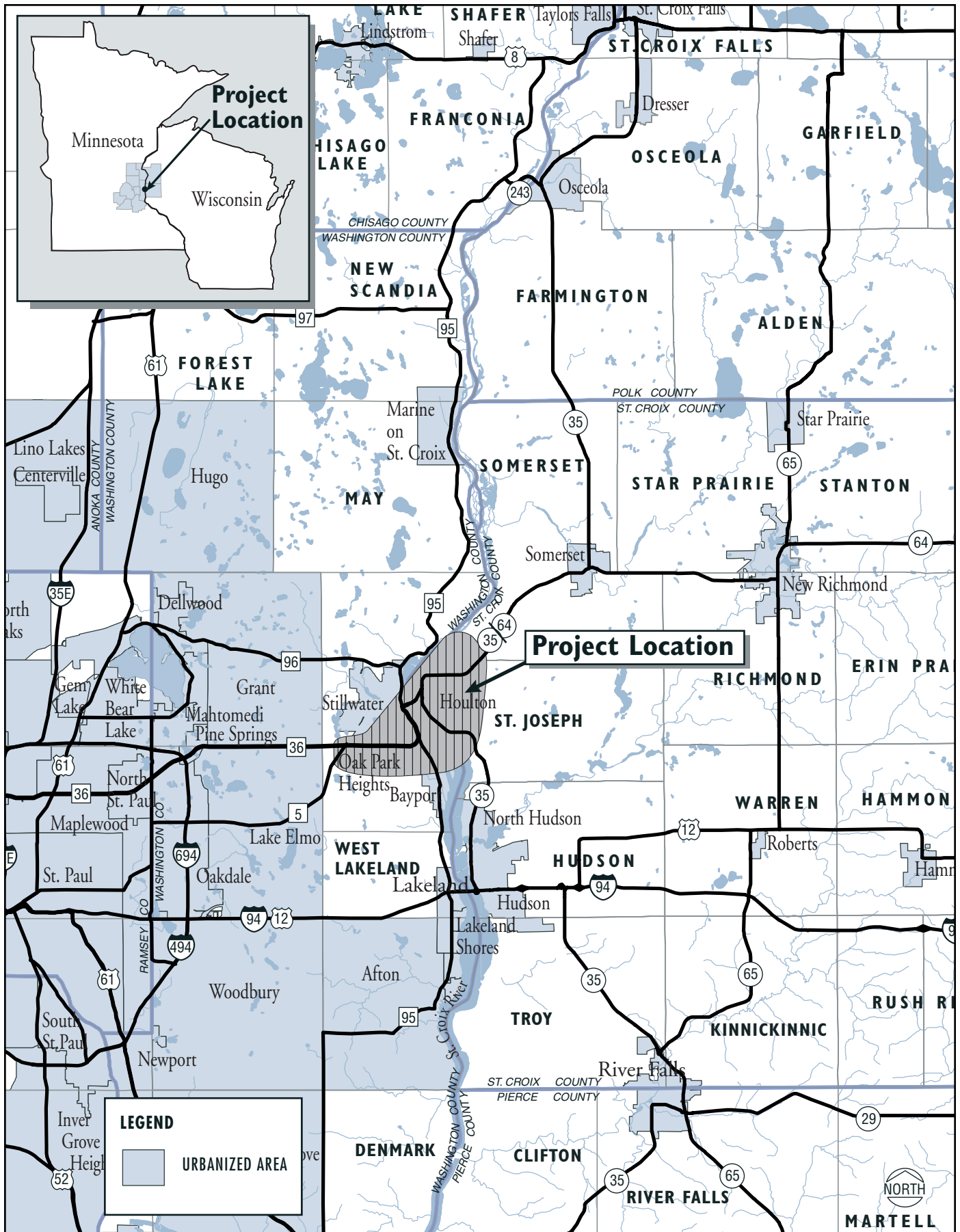
Subsequent chapters of this document identify possible unavoidable impacts of the project, and where appropriate, proposed mitigation of those impacts. In addition, a number of items have been identified that may minimize and mitigate the project's possible impacts on the St. Croix River (a federally-designated Wild and Scenic River) and the river valley (see Chapter 14). A final mitigation package will be identified following receipt of comments on the SDEIS and identification of a Preferred Alternative.



-  13-County Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Statistical Area (U.S. Census Bureau)
-  7-County Metropolitan Council Area

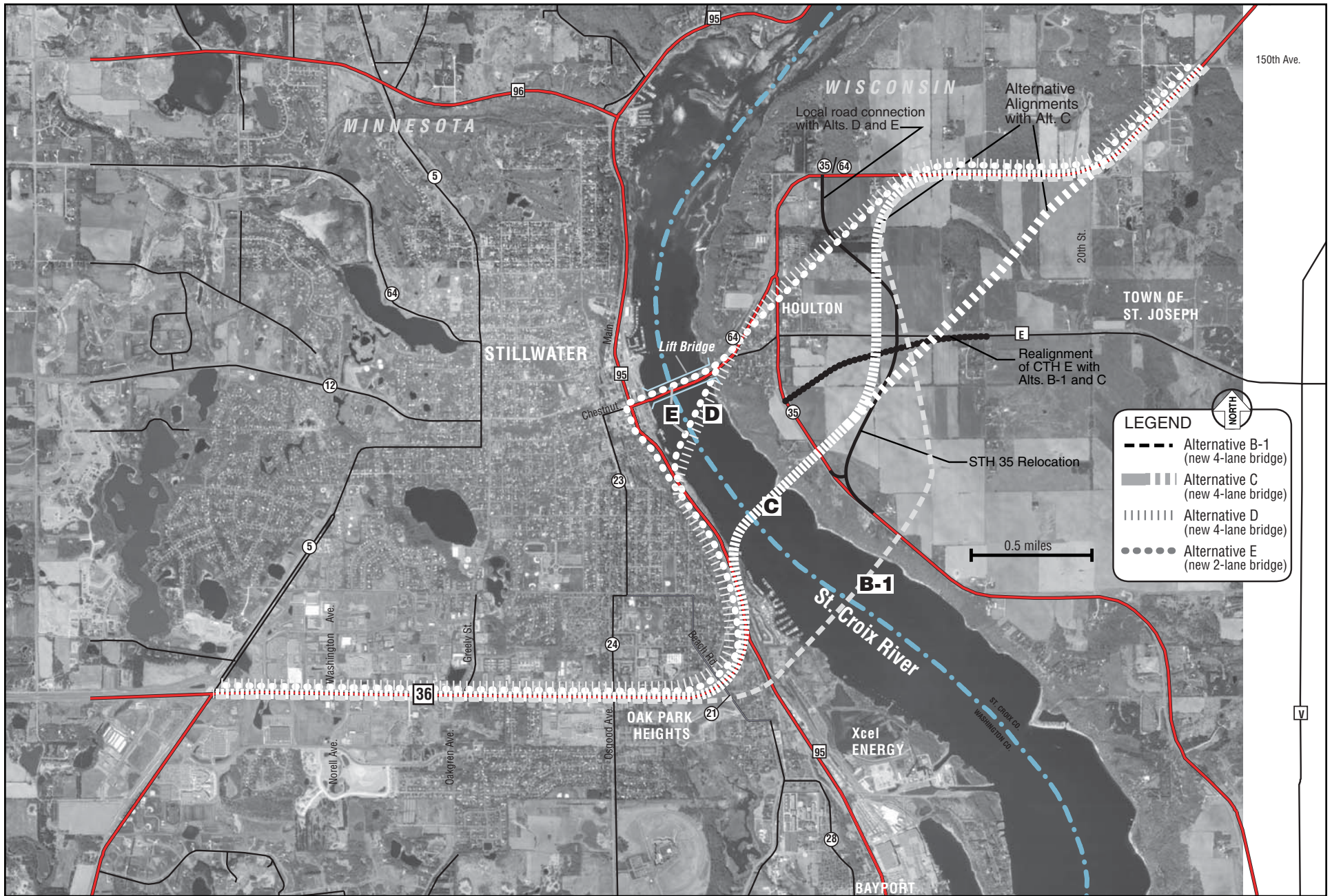
Project Location - Regional Setting

Figure 1-1a



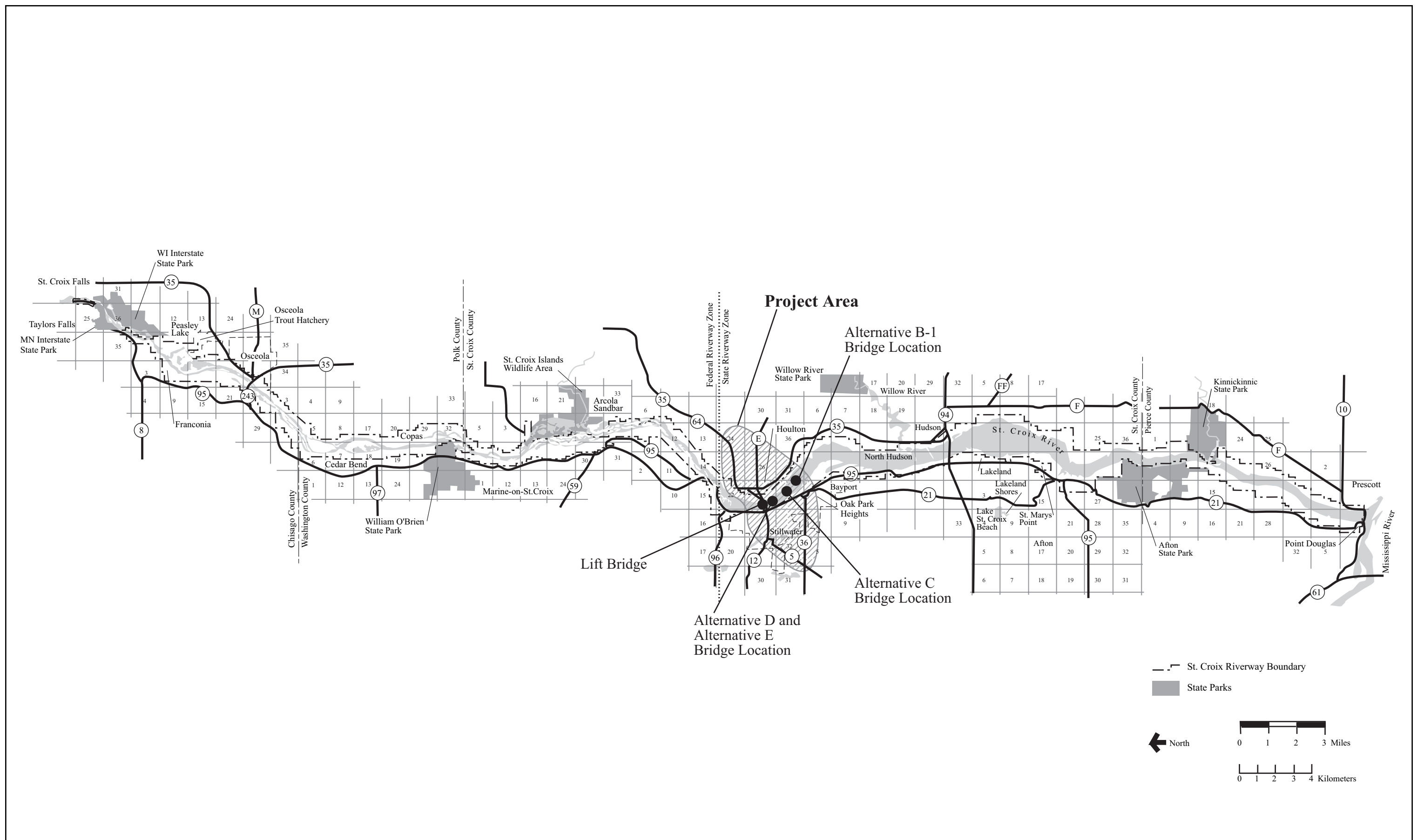
Project Location - Local Setting

Figure 1-1b



Project Area and Supplemental Draft EIS Alternatives B-1, C, D and E

Figure 1-2



Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway Boundary

Figure 1-3

1.2.2 Regional Context and Other Area Projects

The project includes a bridge over the St. Croix River between eastern Washington County, Minnesota, and western St. Croix County, Wisconsin. As such, it would provide additional river crossing capacity between the urbanized Twin Cities area and less developed western Wisconsin. The four Twin Cities Regional St. Croix River Crossings occur at I-94 in Hudson, WI; at TH 36/STH 64 in Stillwater, MN/Town of St. Joseph, WI (the Lift Bridge); at State Trunk Highway STH 243 in Osceola, WI; and at U.S. Highway (USH) 8 in Taylors Falls, MN/St. Croix Falls, WI. The nearest bridges to the Lift Bridge are Osceola (20 miles to the north) and Hudson/ I-94 (7 miles to the south) shown on Figure 1-1b.

Washington County is the eastern-most county of the seven-county planning area of the Metropolitan Council, the regional planning agency for the Twin Cities area. Historically, Washington County has defined the eastern edge of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. However, both St. Croix and Pierce Counties in Wisconsin are included in the thirteen-county Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (see Figure 1-1a). The MSA is a functional definition, based on the degree of economic, social, and transportation (commuting) relationships of outlying counties within an urbanized area.

The following list of roadway and transportation projects or studies are planned or underway in the vicinity of the St. Croix River Crossing Project. These projects are independent of the St. Croix River Crossing Project; that is, the projects are not needed to support each other and each has independent utility. The social, economic, and environmental impacts of each of the projects has been or will be evaluated in independent environmental review processes as required by law. Chapter 13 presents a comprehensive list of the regional infrastructure and development projects taken into consideration in this study.

Minnesota

- USH 8 from I-35W to TH 95; improvements and capacity study.
- TH 36: CSAH 24 (Osgood Avenue) reconstruction/improvements north and south of TH 36 and an adjacent trail; and CR 66 (Greeley Avenue) improvements and Oakgreen Avenue jurisdiction changes (from city to county).
- CSAH 13 from CR 74 to CSAH 20 four-lane construction on new alignment, 2004.
- CSAH 18, Anoka CSAH 14 between I-35 and TH 61: Four-lane divided roadway construction (with intermodal trail), 2005.
- CSAH 16 (Valley Creek Road) CSAH 25 (Century Avenue) to I-494 and new interchange: Interchange construction dependent on third lane construction on I-94, expected in 2006.
- CSAH 2, Broadway Avenue I-35 to TH 61: I-35 to TH 61 and interchange reconstruction expected in 2007.

- CSAH 18 from I-94 to CSAH 21 Road resurfacing, turn lane additions, access consolidation; Bridge replacement over Valley Branch Creek North of downtown Afton.
- CSAH 15 from TH 35 to CSAH 12 (75th Street N): Reconstruction to a four-lane roadway from TH 36 to 1/2 mi north of CSAH 12.
- CR 66 (Greeley Avenue), CSAH 24 (Osgood Avenue), CSAH 14: Interchange reconstruction tied to TH 36 Reconstruction/ River Crossing project.

Wisconsin

- Reconstruction of I-94 from STH 35 South to E. of USH 12: Added one eastbound and one westbound lane between STH 35 and USH 12 in 2002.
- STH 35/64 Expansion: Wis/DOT is reconstructing this two-lane highway as a four-lane expressway, with bypasses of the Somerset and New Richmond central business districts, from west of Somerset to New Richmond (about 15 miles). The project, which began at the eastern terminus of the St. Croix River Crossing Project, will be completed in 2006.
- STH 35 Expansion (River Falls to I-94): Wis/DOT reconstructed STH 35 as a four-lane expressway (was formerly two lanes) between River Falls and I-94 in 2002, including the reconstruction and relocation to the west of the STH 35/I-94 interchange.
- STH 65 Reconstruction: Wis/DOT reconstructed STH 65 (from two lanes to four lanes) in New Richmond in 2002, from 0.75 mile south of Paperjack Drive to 6th Street.

Wis/DOT is currently studying future access and capacity needs on USH 8 between STH 35 north of St. Croix Falls (Polk County) to USH 53 near the City of Barron (Barron County). Wis/DOT currently has no capacity expansion projects for USH 8 in their Six-Year Program, but is planning for construction of passing lanes on USH 8 from Almena to Barron in Barron County in about 10 years. Wis/DOT also anticipates additional passing lane construction on other sections of USH 8 between 2015 and 2025.

- USH 63 between I-94 and STH 64: Expansion from two-lane to four-lane, bypass of cities/villages (currently not programmed).
- I-94: Wis/DOT as the lead agency, with Mn/DOT, is adding an auxiliary lane on westbound I-94 bridge over the St. Croix River (2005).
- USH 12/CTH U: Wis/DOT and St. Croix County are currently reconstructing the existing two-lane USH 12/CTH U as a four-lane expressway from north of I-94 to CTH A, including the relocation of USH 12 east of USH 12 and CTH U.
- CTH "I", STH 35/64, and Village of Somerset Improvement Project(s) (Village of Somerset area). Apple River Flume area and Flume Bridge (2004 project—bridge replacement) CTH "I" from Somerset south to 53rd Avenue (2004 project currently underway—expansion. CTH "I" from STH 35 south to Village of Somerset (in planning stage). Expansion is likely.

Other

- Power line in Chisago County, MN and Polk County, WI: Xcel Energy in Minnesota and Dairyland Power Cooperative in Wisconsin are seeking approval for the construction of a new power transmission line over the St. Croix River between Chisago County, Minnesota and Polk County, Wisconsin.

1.2.3 Geographic Setting and Context

The project is located in Oak Park Heights and Stillwater in Washington County, Minnesota, and in the Town of St. Joseph in St. Croix County, Wisconsin. The project extends from TH 5 in Oak Park Heights to approximately 150th Avenue on STH 35/64 in Wisconsin, and includes a bridge crossing over the St. Croix River, a federally-protected natural resource (the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, which is part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System). The St. Croix River and river valley influence the natural character of the project setting. The Lift Bridge over the St. Croix River 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, TH 36 and TH 95 in Minnesota and STH 64 in Wisconsin, are on the National Highway System, and 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 Lift Bridge and other buildings near the Lift Bridge are on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as part of the Stillwater Commercial Historic District and/or are individually eligible for listing on the NRHP.

1.2.3.1 Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway

The Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway extends for 52 miles along the boundary of Minnesota and Wisconsin from Taylors Falls, MN/St. Croix Falls, WI, to the confluence with the Mississippi River at Point Douglas, MN/Prescott, WI. The Riverway includes the river itself and adjacent lands (see Figure 1-3).

In 1972, the Lower St. Croix River was added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by the U. S. Congress. The resulting Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is managed by the Lower St. Croix Management Commission (LSCMC), which consists of the National Park Service (NPS), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR). The Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway is split into two management zones (shown on Figure 1-3). The State zone, administered by the NPS, MnDNR and WisDNR through the LSCMC, extends 25 miles from approximately two miles north of Stillwater downstream to the Mississippi River confluence. The Federal zone, administered by the NPS, extends 27 miles from approximately two miles north of Stillwater upstream to the dam at Taylor's Falls/St. Croix Falls. The NPS has review authority over water resources projects under Section 7(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (Public Law 90-542 or 16 USC 1271-1287) in both the state and federal zones.

As stated in the Lower St. Croix Management Commission's *Final Cooperative Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement (2003)*, the Riverway's scenery, plentiful fish and wildlife, largely unpolluted and free flowing character, many access points, and proximity to the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area attract many visitors and users in the spring, summer,

and fall. Although the Lower St. Croix River has a natural appearance for long stretches, much of it is adjacent to the rapidly growing Twin Cities area. Of the communities along the river, those near the project include the cities of Stillwater, Oak Park Heights, and Bayport in Minnesota, and the unincorporated area of Houlton, the Town of St. Joseph, the Village of North Hudson, and the City of Hudson in Wisconsin.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act established a method for protecting certain free-flowing rivers in the United States and preserving them and their immediate environments for the benefit of present and future generations. Section 1(b) of the Act introduces the concept of “outstandingly remarkable values” to describe the reasons for which a river is designated:

“It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Congress declares that the established national policy of dam and other construction at appropriate sections of the rivers of the United States needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve other selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition to protect the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.”

By virtue of its inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway was designated to preserve its free-flowing condition and its outstandingly remarkable values, as provided in Section 1(b) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Congressional designation of the upper 27 miles of the Lower St. Croix Riverway occurred in 1972. The lower 25 miles of the Lower St. Croix Riverway were designated in 1976. The Riverway’s (both the upper and lower) outstandingly remarkable values were further identified in a scenic river study prepared by the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation in 1973 as *scenic*, *recreational*, and *geologic*.

1.2.3.2 Historic Stillwater Area

The City of Stillwater is situated on the western shore of the St. Croix River and overlooks the river and the Lift Bridge. It is one of the oldest European settlements in Minnesota and is known as the “Birthplace of Minnesota.” The downtown area is dominated by late 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture using native stone, brick, and iron materials. The city and surrounding communities have become a tourist attraction because of the historic significance of the area and the proximity to the river. During the summer, recreational and entertainment attractions in this area of the St. Croix River valley draw large numbers of people.

The historic character of Stillwater has been recognized through the official designation of two special districts in Stillwater. The “Stillwater Commercial Historic District” encompasses most of the older portion of the downtown commercial area. It includes some 11 blocks in the central business district and contains 57 contributing buildings. The “Stillwater Cultural Landscape

District” includes both cultural and natural resources, associated with an historic event, activity or person. Chapter 11 provides details on these designated districts.

The first Stillwater bridge over the St. Croix River opened in 1876. This bridge burned down in 1904 and was replaced by a timber and pontoon swing bridge that lasted until 1928. The Lift Bridge (see Figure 1-4) was opened to traffic in 1931 and remains operational today. The bridge was placed on the National Register of Historic Places (the National Register) in 1989 because it is one of the few remaining original examples in the Upper Midwest of a tower-and-cable highway lift bridge. The Lift Bridge is considered by many to be an icon for the city. Due to its National Register status, any proposed federal action affecting the Lift Bridge must be reviewed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and Section 4(f) of the Federal Transportation Act.

1.2.4 Project History

A replacement bridge crossing the St. Croix River near Stillwater, Minnesota, and the Town of St. Joseph, Wisconsin, has been discussed for many years in response to traffic congestion in downtown Stillwater, delays caused by the Lift Bridge, and safety and geometric design concerns regarding vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists on the approach roadways. More recently, the condition and maintenance costs of the Lift Bridge has become a growing concern.

The project has been controversial because of concerns about impacts on the river environment, downtown Stillwater, and on existing neighborhoods and businesses; concerns about regional growth and development; disagreements about the location and size of a replacement river crossing; and concerns about the future of the Lift Bridge, and the concerns of special interest groups in this corridor. In addition, the reach of the St. Croix River within the project area includes territory governed by several entities, including local, county, regional, and state agencies in two states and by multiple agencies of the federal government.

The first serious consideration of a replacement bridge crossing occurred in the early 1970s, but a project was not pursued because of a lack of funding. Current environmental documentation and analysis of a replacement bridge crossing began in 1985.

1.2.4.1 1985 Draft Study Outline and Scoping Document

In the 1980s Mn/DOT, Wis/DOT, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) began working with the communities of Stillwater and Oak Park Heights in Minnesota, and the Town of St. Joseph in Wisconsin to identify possible solutions for a replacement crossing.

1.2.4.2 1987 Scoping Decision Document / Final Study Outline for the Stillwater-Houlton Bridge Study

The 1987 *Scoping Decision Document/Final Study Outline for the Stillwater-Houlton Bridge Study* identified four broad corridors for a new river crossing both north and south of downtown Stillwater as well as two corridors in or near the downtown area.



Lift Bridge

St. Croix River Crossing Project

Figure 1-4

2004 Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement

1.2.4.3 1990 Draft EIS

The 1990 DEIS) analyzed three of the four corridors identified in the 1987 study, along with a "No Action" Alternative and a Transportation System Management (TSM) Alternative, which examined various options to maximize use of the existing transportation system.

1.2.4.4 1994 Memorandum of Agreement

In 1994, a Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was prepared to identify measures to mitigate impacts on historic properties and the future of the Lift Bridge (see Chapter 11). The 1994 MOA was signed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), FHWA, MnSHPO, the WisSHPO, Mn/DOT, and Wis/DOT.

1.2.4.5 1995 Final EIS

In April 1995, Mn/DOT and Wis/DOT approved a Final EIS and Section 4(f) Evaluation for a replacement St. Croix River crossing about 6,300 feet south of the Lift Bridge. A Record of Decision (ROD) was issued by FHWA in July 1995, concluding an environmental review process that had begun in 1985. Following the ROD, work began on final design of the river crossing and the approach roadways, right-of-way was acquired, and site preparation work was initiated.

In 1996, the National Park Service (NPS) evaluated the project under Section 7(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The NPS determined that the proposed new bridge project analyzed in the 1990 Draft EIS and 1995 Final EIS was a "water resources project". The Section 7(a) Evaluation, completed in December 1996, found that the project, as proposed, would have a direct and adverse effect on the outstandingly remarkable values for which the Lower St. Croix River was included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. As a result of the finding, federal permits from the Corps and the Coast Guard could not be issued for the project, and it was not allowed to proceed. In April 1998, the U.S. District Court upheld the NPS determination.

1.2.4.6 Braun Facilitation Process and Supplemental DEIS (1996 – 2001)

In June 1998, after discussions with legislators and other interested parties, and after obtaining the concurrence of Wis/DOT and the NPS, Mn/DOT decided to revisit the issue of a river crossing near Stillwater. Richard P. Braun, a retired Mn/DOT Commissioner, was asked to facilitate this process. Braun's charge was to determine whether present and future traffic could be accommodated on the Lift Bridge, determine whether a replacement crossing was needed, and investigate potential bridge alignment alternatives between the 1995 Final EIS Preferred Alternative on the south and the Lift Bridge on the north. Braun was asked to recommend an alignment and type of bridge structure that would be both feasible to construct and acceptable to the key interested parties. Over several months, Braun performed an independent review of the project, conducted extensive discussions and meetings with the key individuals and organizations involved, and facilitated public meetings with the 21-member St. Croix River

Crossing Advisory Group that included representatives from federal and state regulatory agencies, local and regional units of government, environmental groups, historic preservation groups, and chambers of commerce.

The Braun facilitation process concluded that a new four-lane bridge would be required to satisfy present and future traffic demand and recommended further study of a bridge alignment 3,600 feet south of the Lift Bridge (The process is documented in the *St. Croix River Crossing: A Graceful Solution for a Magnificent River*, Richard Braun, September 1998 listed in Appendix A). The proposed bridge was shorter and more perpendicular to the river than the 1995 Final EIS Preferred Alternative and took advantage of an existing ravine on the Wisconsin bluff, thereby reducing potential impacts on the Wild and Scenic River. A deck-tied arch bridge design constructed of weathering steel was recommended. Following the Braun process, NPS, FHWA, Wis/DOT, and Mn/DOT executed a Memorandum of Understanding specifying the intention to use the Braun recommendations as a basis for a supplemental environmental review process, and agreeing that the NPS Section 7(a) review would be completed concurrently with the Supplemental EIS and that resolution of the Lift Bridge future must still be addressed.

In February 1999, an Amended Scoping Decision Document was completed for the Braun Process proposed location. Work began on an SDEIS in 1999, which collectively referred to the Braun Facilitation Process recommendations as the “Consensus Alternative”.

The preliminary work on a Section 7(a) review for the project included three options for the future of the Lift Bridge: removal, conversion to a pier, or retention as a lift bridge. These three options were discussed in the context of three proposed mitigation packages, which included a conservation fund to compensate for the adverse visual effect to the Riverway not mitigated by the removal of the Lift Bridge in some options, as well as over \$8 million in additional mitigation measures. During this time, disagreement concerning the future of the Lift Bridge was brought to a federal level.

Work on the project was suspended by the DOTs in January 2001 due to the inability to reach a consensus on the future of the Lift Bridge, insufficient federal funding for the conservation fund, and anticipated failure to obtain municipal consent on the project. Due to project suspension, the 2000 SDEIS addressing the Consensus Alternative was not published.

1.2.4.7 2003/2004 SDEIS and Stakeholder Resolution Process

In the fall of 2001, while work on the project was suspended, FHWA requested the assistance of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (IECR) to review the project. The IECR met with the adjacent communities, potential permitting agencies and other interested parties, and prepared a report that concluded that a consensus decision regarding the project was possible. In January 2002, the Mn/DOT Commissioner requested the regulatory agencies to indicate support for the IECR’s report; in June 2002, the FHWA Administrator stated that federal partners were willing to proceed, and gave support to the IECR conclusions. Non-federal partners also demonstrated willingness to participate in a resolution process. On June 21, 2002, Mn/DOT and Wis/DOT held a press conference re-initiating the project.

In September 2002, President Bush issued Executive Order 13274 to enhance environmental stewardship and streamline review of transportation infrastructure projects, focusing on seven nationwide projects, including the St. Croix River Crossing Project. This elevated the St. Croix project's visibility both locally and nationally, and provided a federal level mechanism to resolve issues if an effort focused on local representatives should fail.

In September 2002, the facilitation firm RESOLVE was selected by a multi-agency and stakeholder panel to proceed with the project through mediation. RESOLVE developed a dispute resolution process that centered on a "Stakeholders Group", composed of representatives of the diverse interests in the project area that would inform the decision-making process of the project proposers, while still retaining the actual decision-making authority with the proposing agencies. This process, the "Stakeholder Resolution Process," responded to the need for a new start to the project, and a new approach to address the environmental, historical and transportation concerns surrounding the project. Formal facilitated Stakeholder meetings began in June 2003.

The Stakeholder Group includes: National Park Service, FHWA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mn/DOT, Wis/DOT, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR), Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (MnSHPO), Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (WisSHPO), St. Croix County Transportation Committee, City of Stillwater, City of Oak Park Heights, Town of St. Joseph, Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, Stillwater Heritage Preservation Commission, Friends of the St. Croix, New St. Croix Bridge Coalition, Stillwater Area Chamber of Commerce, Sierra Club, St. Croix Alliance for an Interstate Bridge, St. Croix River Association, Stillwater Lift Bridge Association, Western Wisconsin Realtors Association, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Chapter 15 of this SDEIS provides a detailed description of the Stakeholder Resolution Process.

An Operating Agreement for the St. Croix River Crossing Stakeholder Resolution Process was developed by RESOLVE, and presented and accepted by the Stakeholders Group. This Operating Agreement, included as Appendix B, guides the manner in which meetings are to be conducted, establishes procedures, and sets milestones for deciding on a Preferred Alternative and project mitigation.

The Stakeholder Resolution Process will continue through selection of a Preferred Alternative for the project and agreement to a mitigation package for project impacts, which will be documented in the Supplemental Final EIS for this project.

1.2.4.8 \$5 Million Lift Bridge Repair Project

In fall of 2002, the 106th United States Congress provided \$4,989,000 in funding from the Labor, Health, and Human Services bill for the repair of the Lift Bridge (referred to herein as the "\$5 Million Lift Bridge Repair Project"), to be completed as a separate project. A series of meetings was held to prioritize the need with the groups, agencies, historic preservation groups including U.S. FWS, the Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, NPS, FHWA, ACHP, Wis/DOT, Mn/DOT,

WisDNR, MnDNR, MnSHPO, WisSHPO, Washington County, Town of St. Joseph, Stillwater, Rivertown Restoration, Stillwater Lift Bridge Association, Friends of the St. Croix, Stillwater Heritage Preservation Commission, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Sierra Club. Prioritization included identifying repairs that could be completed with available funds

A separate environmental document (Mn/DOT Project Memorandum, *Lift Bridge Repair*, Bridge #4654, March 2004) resulted in a federal categorical exclusion under NEPA, meaning that the project would result in no significant environmental impacts. These repairs are scheduled to occur in spring 2005 through spring 2006.

1.3 PROJECT SCHEDULE

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

| | |
|---|-----------------------|
| Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Decision Document | November 2003 |
| Scoping Meetings | December 2003 |
| Final Scoping Decision Document | March 2004 |
| Public Information Meetings | June 2004 |
| Supplemental Draft EIS - Release to Public | August/September 2004 |
| SDEIS Public Hearings in Minnesota and Wisconsin | Fall 2004 |
| Supplemental Final EIS | Spring 2005 |
| Record of Decision/Adequacy Determination (anticipated outcome) | Spring 2005 |
| Final Design | 2005-2006 |
| Right-of-Way Acquisition | 2005-2007 |
| Construction | 2007-2011 |
| Project Completion | 2011 |

1.4 RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENTAL UNIT AND PROJECT MANAGERS

Mn/DOT is the designated Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) under Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.0500 for the purposes of the 2003 ASD/ADSDD, the 2004 FSDD and for the SEIS. The FHWA is the responsible federal agency under NEPA in cooperation with Mn/DOT and Wis/DOT. The contact persons for each agency follow.

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

Contact Person: Todd J. Clarkowski, P.E.
Title: Area Engineer
Agency: Minnesota Department of Transportation
Address: 1500 West County Road B2, MS 050
Roseville, MN 55113
Phone: (651) 582-1169
Fax: (651) 582-1308
Email: todd.clarkowski@dot.state.mn.us

The project manager for Wis/DOT is:

Contact Person: Terry C. Pederson, P.E.
Title: District Planning Projects Engineer
Agency: Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Address: 718 West Clairemont Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54701
Phone: (800) 991-5285 or (715) 836-2857
Fax: (715) 836-2807
Email: terry.pederson@dot.state.wi.us

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
Address: 380 Jackson Street, Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55101
Phone: (651) 291-6120
Fax: (651) 291-6000
Email: cheryl.martin@fhwa.dot.gov