2004 SUPPLEMENTAL DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation (Mn/DOT and WisDOT) released an environmental study/decision-making document on August 16, 2004 regarding the traffic congestion problems in Stillwater, Oak Park Heights and the Town of St. Joseph. The Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS) for the St. Croix River Crossing Project addresses the project’s purpose and need and potential impacts on natural and cultural resources and communities in the Stillwater, Oak Park Heights and Town of St. Joseph area. Four build alternatives were identified and refined through the “Stakeholder Resolution Process,” a mediated process developed to facilitate decision-making for this project. The alternatives were further refined through the Stakeholder Process, and are presented in the SDEIS, along with the No-Build Alternative, for consideration and comment by the public.

Copies of the SDEIS are available for review at local libraries and offices (listed on the back page of this newsletter), and at the project website. Public comments received during this 45-day comment period (August 16, 2004 to October 6, 2004) will be used to inform the Stakeholder Group, FHWA, Mn/DOT and WisDOT in their evaluations of the No-Build and four Build alternatives. Substantive comments received will be addressed and summarized in the Supplemental Final EIS to be released following FHWA, Mn/DOT and WisDOT’s selection of the Preferred Alternative later this year.

PUBLIC HEARINGS TO BE HELD SEPTEMBER 21 & 22, 2004

Specific information that will be presented at the September meetings includes:
- Description of the alternatives (including proposed improvements to Highways 96 and 95 in Minnesota and Highways 35 and 64 in Wisconsin), and potential river crossing locations;
- Information on the impacts of the alternatives;
- Information on relocation and property acquisition policies and construction schedules;
- Information on how to comment (in writing or verbally) on the SDEIS;
- Previously completed documents, including the 2003 Amended Scoping Document and 2004 Final Amended Scoping Decision Document;
- Information on the Stakeholder problem-solving process; and
- Schedule for the project.

Comments will be accepted through October 6, 2004 in several ways:

- WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS may be mailed to:
  Mn/DOT St. Croix River Crossing Project
  1500 County Road B2
  Roseville, MN 55113

- PUBLIC HEARINGS will be held beginning at 5:00-9:00pm on:
  TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

- PUBLIC HEARINGS will be held beginning at 5:00-9:00pm on:
  WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Metropolitan Council

Section 106 actions and comments on the SDEIS are especially encouraged to attend either of the meetings and seek out the Section 106 Station at the meeting to share their comments and questions.

Mn/DOT, WisDOT and FHWA will hold two public hearings for the St. Croix River Crossing Project in September to gather public input on the SDEIS and present information on the alternatives being considered in the SDEIS.

The purpose of these meetings is to solicit comments on the SDEIS. Comments may be submitted in writing or verbally (to court reporters during the meetings). The transportation agencies recognize the need for exchange of ideas with the public, and offer the public the opportunity to present comments on the SDEIS, learn about the alternatives and discuss questions with project staff and stakeholders.

Each meeting will include a pre-recorded presentation summarizing the history, status and alternatives currently-considered regarding the project. Information about the alternatives being considered, and large- and small-scale layouts of the alternatives will be displayed.

VISIT Mn/DOT WEBSITE:
www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/stcroix

 EMAIL PROJECT STAFF:
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The St. Croix Crossing provides a critical link for regional travel between Minnesota and Wisconsin. Highway 356 is designated an Interstate Corridor in Minnesota, and Highway 64 is designated a Multi-Lane Connector on WisDOT’s Corridors 2020 System. The approaches and the Lift Bridge are on the National Highway System in both states.

The project purpose is to provide a safe, reliable, and efficient transportation corridor by reducing congestion, improving roadway safety, and providing an adequate level of service for forecasted 2030 traffic volumes. The project goal is to manage congestion and improve mobility in a reliable, safe and cost-efficient manner as part of a broader program of regional transportation improvements while avoiding (and when unavoidable, minimizing and mitigating) impacts to the areas’ social, economic, cultural, and environmental needs and objectives.

Departments of Transportation are responsible for providing mobility in a safe, reliable and cost-efficient manner and for integrating social, economic, cultural and environmental considerations into transportation solutions. While this integration is always a necessary part of the DOT’s work, it is of particular importance and sensitivity as the DOTs in Wisconsin and Minnesota contemplate improving mobility and safety between the two states in the area of the existing crossing between Washington County, Minnesota and St. Croix County, Wisconsin.

The need to avoid, or if unavoidable, minimize or mitigate impacts on national scenic riverways, parklands, cultural resources, wetlands, threatened and endangered species as well as other social, economic and environmental resources has been recognized through state and federal laws, regulations, and policies established to govern roadway design and construction. These laws, regulations and policies as well as the existing conditions and potential impacts of project alternatives are thus considered in the Supplemental Draft EIS released for public comment on August 16, 2004.

No-Build & Four Build Alternatives being Considered in the SDEIS

The No-Build Alternative assumes continued operation of the Lift Bridge and approach roadways, social, environmental, and economic impacts of the No-Build Alternative are analyzed where relevant and compared to the impacts of the Build Alternatives in the Supplemental Draft EIS.

Four Build Alternatives

The proposed project improvements would extend from approximately 700 feet east of the Highway 356/Interchange on Highway 356 in Minnesota to a point approximately 100 feet southeast of 150th Avenue on Highway 35/64 in Wisconsin. The total distance for all build alternatives is approximately 6.7 miles.

In Minnesota, all build alternatives include Highway 36 conversion to a grade-separated facility with frontage road realignment, buttonhook interchanges, and two overpass locations. Realignment and widening of the existing north and south frontage roads would occur between Highway 5 and Osgood Avenue. The at-grade crossings of Highway 36 with Washington/Norell Avenues and Osgood Avenue (County Road 24) would be removed and replaced with overpasses and buttonhook interchanges. The at-grade crossing of Highway 36 at Oakgreen/Greeley would be replaced with an overpass. The Beach Road access from Highway 36 would be closed and converted to an overpass.

In Wisconsin, each build alternative separately dictates the specific interchanges and overpass configurations east of the new river crossing before joining the existing Highway 35/64 alignment to 150th Street. Alternative B-1 includes a diamond interchange at a new State Highway 35 roadway and realigned County Highway E. Alternative C Option 1 in Wisconsin would relocate County Highway E to the south with a diamond interchange at the new State Highway 64 roadway and relocation of State Highway 35. Alternative C Option 2 in Wisconsin includes a folded diamond interchange at existing State Highway 35 and an overpass at existing County Highway E. Alternatives D and E both include a diamond interchange at realigned State Highway 35 northeast of Houlton.