

## CHAPTER 10

**NEXT STEPS/IMPLEMENTATION**

The production of the Visual Quality Manual (VQM) for the New St. Croix River Crossing is an important step in a continuing public input and decision-making process. To maximize the benefits of this public planning process and to provide continuity so the decisions made and the intent expressed are not lost as the project moves into the preliminary design, final design, and construction phases, continuing coordination with agencies and stakeholders is planned.

**10.1 VISUAL QUALITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

To maintain continuity and ensure that the guidance and intent provided during the planning process is conveyed to future project participants, a Visual Quality Advisory Committee will be formed. Advisory Committee members will be made up of a smaller group of VQRC and include communities on both sides of the river and National Park Service representatives. The Advisory Committee will work with the DOTs and designers to provide input, comment, and review as project design and construction phases develop.

Several specific issues related to visual quality were beyond the scope of this VQM and will need to be addressed by the Advisory Committee. Issues will continually be identified and addressed during detailed design and construction phases. Examples of anticipated details include: selection of colors, materials, and surface finishes; development of an interpretive plan; and loop trail amenities.

Some visual quality details will require local government efforts and decisions, and may require cooperative funding and maintenance issues. For example,

local community design input and a maintenance commitment will be needed to address details for gateway features or gateway signage.

Per the MOA, by March 1st of every year, annual report shall be submitted to the Visual Quality Advisory Committee detailing the VQM measures carried out. The annual report will describe all actions taken by FHWA, Mn/DOT, and WisDOT during the preceding year to implement this VQM, identify any problems or unexpected issues encountered during the year, any disputes and objections submitted or resolved, any changes recommended in implementation of the VQM, and any scheduling changes. The annual report will also include a timetable of VQM activities proposed for implementation within the following year or two.

**10.2 DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION**

Five major work categories are expected with the continued development of the project. The major categories are:

- Preliminary Bridge Design
- Final Bridge Design
- Final Roadway Design
- Construction - Grading, Paving, and Bridges
- Construction – Landscape

The number of separate design and construction stages has not been determined at this time, but there may be multiple packages. Landscape design and construction are traditionally accomplished after roadway and bridge construction contracts are completed.

### 10.3 AESTHETIC ENHANCEMENT BUDGET

The SFEIS Mitigation Package provides budget for the visual and aesthetic enhancements for the project. For cost estimating purposes the project is divided into four parts, and budgets for each part have been established. The four parts are:

- Part 1 – TH 36 from TH 5 to Osgood Avenue
- Part 2 – TH 36 from Osgood Avenue to River Bridge
- Part 3 – Wisconsin Approach
- Part 4 – River Bridge

Construction cost estimates are subject to continuing refinement and adjustment as the design progresses and more information becomes available, therefore, the aesthetic enhancement budget is based on a percentage of the base project cost. The aesthetic enhancement budget for most of the project is 7.5%, except where lump sum amounts have been established. The commitment for aesthetics on the River Bridge is different than for the other parts of the project and is capped at \$3 million, in recognition that selecting a bridge type different than the most economical structure type provided an enhancement already in excess of 7.5%.

- Parts 1, 2, and 3 - (7.5% of estimated construction cost)
- Part 4 - \$3,000,000 (Lump Sum)

Cost for aesthetic enhancements will be monitored at each level of design refinement, and the associated cost will be reconciled with the budgets. It is anticipated that the Visual Quality recommendations will fall within the planned budget, however, if the budget is surpassed, priorities will need to be set by the DOTs or, if possible, alternate funding sources identified.

### 10.4 VQRC INTENT FOR RIVER SPANS

The VQRC provided direction on the following topics:

A haunched superstructure option is not acceptable to the VQRC and will not be considered for the river spans of the new bridge.

The “Organic” concept for the river spans was selected in the visual quality planning process. This concept and its attributes, represents the light and elegant character desired for the river bridge. The “Organic” concept was initially developed with two columns at each of the river piers. Investigation of extradosed bridges around the world indicated the need for additional vertical support at each of the piers. The concept was revised to include a third column at each pier to ensure adequate structural support and appropriate load distribution to the pier towers. While there has been a great deal of discussion centered around the desire to retain the two-column pier, the structural design within the visual quality process indicates the necessity of the third column. It is important to note, there are no examples of extradosed bridges with a two-column pier design and a bridge width similar to St. Croix in the world. Therefore, the three-column pier is carried forward in the Visual Quality Manual.

There is recognition of the visual preference for a two-column pier to maintain the “simple and elegant” appearance of the “Organic” design concept. A future contract for preliminary bridge design will further investigate the feasibility of a two-column pier design. It should be noted that modifications to accommodate a two-column pier arrangement, if structurally achievable, will impact the overall appearance of the

“Organic” bridge concept. Visual impacts may include: introducing more massive pier columns, adding considerably more depth to the lateral cross beams between the pier columns, or losing the symbolic relationship of the bridge to the environment. Structural integrity, constructability, and serviceability will be evaluated during the preliminary bridge design. Visual impacts and proposed modifications will also be reviewed during this phase of project development.

### 10.5 VQRC INTENT FOR LANDSCAPE

Two primary themes were repeated in the guidance on almost every landscape concept developed:

- Include as many trees as budget and operational requirements allow. This includes seeking public/private partnerships, in Oak Park Heights, which has very limited space along TH 36, to place trees outside of the right-of-way. Ownership and maintenance responsibilities of the trees would then belong to the property owners.
- Reduce straight lines and speed encouraging treatments. This guidance is reflected primarily in the edge planting treatments, and the treatment of the trails, which are viewed as recreational features and not commuter type facilities. Meandering of the trails, both horizontally and vertically, is encouraged wherever right-of-way will allow. This guidance is also reflected in steps taken to narrow the field of view on the roadways, to encourage moderate speeds, where appropriate and applicable.

