St. Croix River Crossing Project

Project Summary – January 18, 2005

A. **Scope of Services Overview:** The State of Minnesota, Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) is currently executing consultant services to support a visual quality planning process and the development of a visual quality manual for the St. Croix River Crossing Project’s preferred alternative. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (Wis/DOT) is a funding and design partner in this project, but Mn/DOT will be responsible for Consultant administration and oversight. The chosen Contractor will prepare hard copy and identical digital documentation to support not only the initial visual quality planning process and workbook development, but the final visual quality manual for hardcopy publication and online posting. The initial visual quality planning process and development of the workbook is anticipated to span approximately six (6) months and involves a facilitated public involvement process, requiring expertise in a number of disciplines:

Important specific services to be provided under the Contract include:

- **Project management and coordination.**
- Facilitation services to conduct review meetings and presentations with the DOTs and other governmental agencies, and public representatives.
- **Architectural expertise** for a variety of bridge types including: cable stay, extradosed, segmental box and beam structures.
- Landscape architectural expertise including comprehensive experience with visual quality planning and projects involving a wide range of aesthetic elements in varied contexts of application.
- **Structural engineering expertise** to assess and evaluate architectural opportunities and implications regarding design and constructability for a variety of bridge types including: cable stay, extradosed, segmental box and beam structures.
- **2-D, 3-D and 4-D visualizations, renderings and animation services** will be developed and used throughout the planning and workbook development.
- **Development of a Visual Quality Manual** for the project including:
  - Design alternative plans, elevations, sections and details for the preferred alternative package (alignment location, bridge type, future lift bridge use and mitigation elements) documented in the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.
  - Construction directives that support the preferred design alternatives.
  - Estimated costs for all design alternatives.
  - Analysis of long-term maintenance requirements.
  - Final animations and photo simulations for both the land and riverway perspectives in the preferred alternative package.

B. **General Project Background & Description:** The States of Minnesota and Wisconsin acting through the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (the DOTs) have been studying a new crossing of the St. Croix River in the Stillwater area for more than two decades. The development of alternatives to address the congestion and safety problems in Stillwater and evolution of the documents related to this project have a lengthy history, which must be thoroughly understood before moving into the visual quality planning process. (For project history and current status, see the project specific web site: [www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/stcroix](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/stcroix).) The project includes:

1. **Beginning at Highway 5, roadway and bridge(s) within the Highway 36 corridor passing through the cities of Oak Park Heights and Stillwater, Minnesota;**
2. The Highways 36/95 interchange and bridge approach on the Minnesota side of the river crossing, including Highway 95 approach leading into Stillwater and across the Lift Bridge into Wisconsin Highway 64;
3. The new river bridge crossing over the St. Croix River;
4. The bridge approach on the Wisconsin side of the river crossing;
5. The roadway and bridge(s) within the Highways 35/64 corridor passing through the Town of St. Joseph, St. Croix County, Wisconsin (ending at 150th Avenue).

The project history includes several recent attempts to develop a concept that would comply with the Lower St. Croix National Scenic Riverway’s Cooperative Management Plan and address protection of the integrity of the Stillwater Commercial Historic District, the Stillwater Cultural Landscape District and the visual quality of other significant resources in the project area, while balancing the need to address the transportation purpose of this project.

In September 2002, issuance of Executive Order 13274 elevated the project’s visibility both locally and nationally. A facilitation firm was retained to proceed with a dispute resolution process to move the project forward. A designated stakeholder group made up of 28 Federal, State and local agencies and special interest groups began facilitated meetings in June 2003 to take a new approach in addressing the environmental, historical and transportation concerns surrounding the project. It was agreed the project would address the new river crossing and the future of the lift bridge. It is expected that a preferred alternative package could be selected as early as November 2004. The preferred alternative package will include river crossing location, bridge type, future lift bridge use, and mitigation package elements.

A Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement was published on August 16, 2004 identifying four river crossing alignment alternatives in combination with seven bridge types for the river crossing locations. Each river crossing alignment connects to a proposed grade separated facility that does not vary in any of the four alternatives west of the Highways 36/95 interchange. Each river crossing alignment also connects to the Highways 35/64 interchange in a variety of configurations in Wisconsin. Various alternatives would require realignment of the Highway 95 and Highway 36 interchange area as it enters the Stillwater commercial district.

The Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Statement is expected to be released in January 2005. The SFEIS will describe the preferred alternative package (alignment location, bridge type, future lift bridge use and mitigation elements).

C. Project Goal: It is the goal of this planning project to develop visual quality guidance that provides corridor continuity, while enhancing the diverse environments within the limits of the roadway project. Visual criteria and parameters will be established to evaluate impacts and opportunities within the project area for the preferred alternative and to assess financial feasibility along with funding needs and responsibilities.

D. Communication: To facilitate effective communication and deliver the work, the Consultant will coordinate and review work with: over twenty Mn/DOT and Wis/DOT Functional Groups; twelve federal, state and local Cooperating Agencies; and fifteen Stakeholder Groups.

E. Applicable Design Standards and Requirements: All planning and design work will conform to applicable roadway, bridge and transportation design standards and requirements, including, but not limited to:
• Mn/DOT Context Sensitive Design (CSD) Commitment and Principles as documented in the publication *CSD, The Road Best Traveled*, (website: www.cts.umn.edu/education/csd/index.html#whatiscsd).

• Mn/DOT Technical Memorandum No. 00-24-TS-03, Context Sensitive Design, November 9, 2000. (Mn/DOT website: www.dot.state.mn.us/tecsup/tmemo/active/tm00/24ts03/html)


• Nineteen additional items listed in the Request for Proposal.

F. **Work Tasks:** Upon execution of an Agreement to proceed, the Consultant will commence the following work:

• Design Workshop: The Consultant will form the Visual Quality Review Committee and schedule, attend, facilitate and document one (1) Design Workshop to gather information, synthesize public opinion and weigh citizen values.

• Visual Quality Review Committee & Public Involvement: The Consultant will synthesize the results from the Design Workshop and coordinate and direct a public involvement process (Visual Quality Review Committee) to articulate community values and objectives to ensure sensitive visual quality and aesthetic design results.

• Draft Visual Quality Manual: The Consultant will prepare a detailed draft Visual Quality Manual. The level of detail must be sufficient to successfully communicate design intent. The draft Manual will document and illustrate visual quality, architectural and aesthetic design recommendations for the primary visual design elements used in transportation planning and design, including but not limited to bridges, retaining walls, noise barriers, grading, signing, lighting, landscaping, fencing, storm water ponds, and bike and pedestrian facilities, barriers and connections.

• Public Open Houses: The Consultant will be responsible for preparing exhibits, scheduling, conducting and documenting two (2) Open House presentations, one each in Minnesota and Wisconsin, to gather public comments on the Visual Quality Manual.


• Final Public Open House: The Consultant will be responsible for preparing exhibits, scheduling, conducting and documenting one (1) Open House presentation to disseminate and communicate the Final Visual Quality Manual.

Further more detailed information is found in the Request for Proposal and chosen Consultant Work Plan, which will become non-proprietary after execution of the Agreement to proceed with work.
In the summer of 2004, the States of Minnesota and Wisconsin acting through the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (the DOTs) began composing a professional/technical consultant services Scope of Services and Request for Proposal (RFP) for a visual quality planning process and the development of a visual quality manual for the St. Croix River Crossing Project’s preferred alternative. It is the goal of this planning project to develop visual quality guidance that provides corridor continuity, while enhancing the diverse environments within the limits of the roadway project. Visual criteria and parameters will be established to evaluate impacts and opportunities within the project area for the preferred alternative and to assess financial feasibility along with funding needs and responsibilities.

The RFP, composed by the DOTs with input from stakeholders, explained and detailed the project background, description and goals, project management and communication, deliverables provided by the DOTs to the Consultant, applicable design standards and requirements, quality assurance/quality control, deliverable format standards, work tasks and deliverables, qualifications of consultant team and general terms and information for contractual professional services.

Collaboration and teamwork were stressed as especially important for the selected consultant team. The RFP included very specific professional qualifications and requirements for a facilitator, landscape architects, structural engineers and bridge architects. Participants of the consultant team would need licensure, specialized training (including Context Sensitive Design programs) and a great depth of experience working on complex transportation and environmental projects. Three bridge architects were required from three different firms to allow industry peer review for the variety of issues and bridge types being considered for the St. Croix River Crossing.

Four national engineering consulting firms with large Twin Cities offices submitted Proposals. Each of the four teams included local as well as national architectural and engineering talent. Proposals were evaluated on a best value basis as 80% qualifications and 20% cost considerations. The seven-person selection committee consisted of DOT project development team members and individuals from stakeholder groups, with several rater advisors auditing the process throughout. The selection process involved three steps. Covering 40% of the evaluation points, step one was a qualification and project approach evaluation of the consultant’s technical proposal, including work plan, experience of team and expressed understanding of project objectives. All four firms were deemed well qualified to perform the work and “short-listed,” proceeding to step two. Step two was a presentation and interview of the consultant teams, comprising 40% of evaluation points. Following 40-minute presentations, the teams were questioned on their understanding of project issues, public process facilitation, direct conflict resolution and their methodology for consensus building. After the 80% qualification scores had been individually determined and finalized by the raters, detailed cost proposal were opened and announced as the final step. Throughout the selection process all consultant teams demonstrated professional and competitive skills. As of today, the DOT’s are in the process of negotiating and finalizing the scope of work and Contract Agreement with the one selected consultant team.

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