



Winona Bridge Project

Letter to the Winona Community

Reflection, Status Update and Commitment

Terry L. Ward, MnDOT Project Manager

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With the permanent elimination of parking underneath the existing bridge and the demolition of the acquired properties scheduled to occur soon on the Winona Bridge Project, I wanted to take some time to reflect on where we've been together, provide a project status update and affirm our commitment toward the future.

When our team started working with the Winona community in May of 2013, there were some very evident concerns and frustrations expressed by city leaders associated with the project. In their view, the project was not moving fast enough and the voices of the city were not being heard.

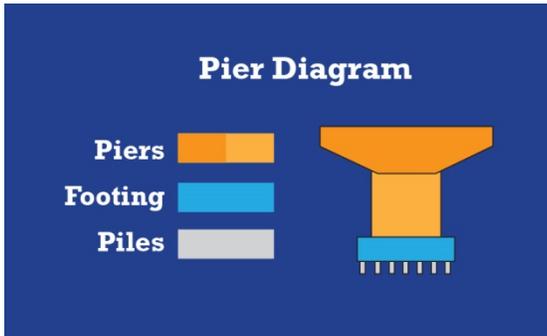
Collaboratively, the goals of starting construction and opening the new bridge as soon as possible, keeping the river crossing open, and minimizing the financial burden on the city were solidified. These goals have shaped how we've worked with and engaged the Winona community. They also led MnDOT to select the Winona Bridge Project as our first Construction Manager General Contractor (CMGC) procurement. Brand new CMGC processes and procedures were developed by MnDOT specifically for this project.

In August 2013, the Winona City Council voted unanimously to grant Municipal Consent, allowing the project to move forward. We promised the council that their leadership and the trust they placed in MnDOT would not be forgotten—and it hasn't. In January 2014, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) granted approval of our Environmental Assessment, effectively clearing the final major hurdle for the project. In July 2014, even though an early start of construction was delayed due to Mississippi River flooding, we started physical construction at the project site.

Our project team continues to use the overarching project goals and objectives developed collaboratively with community leaders—and community members—to guide us. We will continue to rely on these strong partnerships and the trust we've earned, especially when faced with differing perspectives on the project elements.

I continue to be impressed with the passion Winona residents have for their community and the pride they have exhibited in being a part of our journey together...working collaboratively on our Winona Bridge Project. A prime example of this is the efforts of the community-based, volunteer Visual Quality Committee (VQC), who not only continued their efforts into our Final Design phase but also continue to actively participate at meetings, making sure their voices are heard. The VQC members can take pride in the fact that they have truly helped shape the project, as all of their recommendations related to the new bridge were funded and subsequently accepted unanimously by the city council.

Construction work on the project has progressed well this winter, even though we have had our share of extremely cold days and harsh working conditions. Our main objective was to elevate the two piers that flank the navigational channel of the river above and ahead of anticipated spring flooding conditions. Pier #11 is on the left descending side and Pier #10 is on the right descending (levee) side. Late this week, the concrete in the Pier #11 pedestal is scheduled to be poured and within the next 2-3 weeks, the same should occur at Pier #10, first with the footing pour and then the pedestal.



Achieving these important milestones will greatly minimize the potential effects of flooding on the project construction schedule this spring/summer. The importance of meeting this goal can't be overstated. Without this progress, significant spring flooding would have made it highly unlikely that the new bridge could be opened by the end of 2016. However, we remain on schedule to open the new bridge as planned. I want to thank Ames Construction, Inc. and each and every worker on the job for their tremendous efforts in meeting this important project objective while braving the winter weather conditions. To date, there have been no "lost work time" accidents on the project.



Pier #11 Pedestal
Reinforcement



Pier #10
Cofferdam

During the 2015 construction season the Winona community will see the new bridge continue to rise from the river and ground. Following that, in the fall we will start our concrete segmental and approach span bridge construction. Then we will continue next winter to successfully meet the 2016 opening. We will also remove all the buildings acquired for the project and start our roadway work in the Third Street area. The main traffic impact will be the closure of Third Street underneath the bridges for the duration of the 2015 season. The Ames team has

partnered with many Winona-based businesses to provide products and services for the project.

From the community outreach meeting in March 2014 we heard from participants over and over that communication is the key element for the project and that steps should be taken to minimize the business impact to the community during construction. In that regard, the construction staging plan was developed, which included minimal traffic impacts to the community. This plan has been shared with city leaders and at local meetings and is available on our project website.

Furthermore, we plan to deploy a project webcam this spring, an indoor project kiosk at the Winona County History Center, an outdoor project kiosk at the Winona Family Y, and are working with Winona Radio and the Winona Area Chamber of Commerce on a regional radio campaign targeted at getting the word out about the exciting things that are happening in Winona—and that the project will only minimally affect traffic. All efforts are based on direct public feedback from the March 2014 public outreach meeting.

Looking forward, we've announced an opportunity for the Winona community to help shape the site plans underneath the bridges and on Latsch Island by providing feedback on several preliminary site concepts developed to date. Local feedback and participation will continue to be important elements in the development of the final site plans.

Undoubtedly, like all major projects, there will be hurdles to overcome. But with the teamwork and partnerships we've developed, the accomplishments we have behind us, the momentum we've created together, and the trust we've developed, we have and can overcome almost anything. The MnDOT project team is committed to working tirelessly with the Winona community and city leaders on the goals we've developed with our local partners. Thank you.

For additional information, see the Winona Bridge project website at: www.dot.state.mn.us/winonabridge/ or the project Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/WinonaBridge.