



Winona Bridge Project – Historic Review

August 2013

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Winona Bridge Project is a full oversight project by the FHWA – they are the agency responsible for compliance with federal laws regarding the protection of historic resources (Section 106 and Section 4(f)) and cannot relinquish that authority to another agency.
- The FHWA delegates a portion of the Section 106 review process to the professionally qualified staff of historians and archaeologists in MnDOT’s Cultural Resources Unit (CRU), although the FHWA remains legally responsible and has the ultimate final determination on any finding or determination. This is a standard practice across the nation.
- The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is a key partner to FHWA and MnDOT in the Section 106 process. Differences of opinions in letters between the agencies are a normal part of the Section 106 process, and help to vet out issues and find the best possible solution that balances historic preservation and the transportation needs of the traveling public. The SHPO represents the historical interests on the project. FHWA and MnDOT balance those concerns with all the other project considerations to find the best solution from many viewpoints.
- Through the collaboration between the FHWA, MnDOT, the SHPO, and the engineering and historical consultants on the project, the historic review process led by MnDOT for the Winona Bridge Project has resulted in the preservation of the iconic historic truss, and an avoidance of any adverse impacts to the other historic properties in the project area.
- The selection of a recommended alternative is informed by the historic review process, but the ultimate decision is made based on many factors –costs, feasibility/constructability, general visual quality issues, impacts to environmental social, and economic resources, and other issues. These considerations are balanced against each other, and the preferred alternative is selected and documented in the project’s National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document by issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

Next Steps

- The FHWA and MnDOT’s CRU will continue to work with the SHPO and other consulting parties as the project’s final design is developed. The agencies are entering into a Programmatic Agreement which spells out the process by which future design decisions will be reviewed for historic concerns. The recommended alternative, including the parallel bridge type, will be included in the Environmental Assessment (EA), which is schedule to be out for public comment this fall.

For More Information

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