

## Update on Winona Bridge Rehabilitation Study

The Winona Bridge is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Due to this designation, any proposed improvements must comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. This law requires federal agencies to consider their project's impact on historic properties, and to seek ways to avoid, minimize or mitigate such impacts. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the lead federal agency on the project, and is therefore required to comply with Section 106.

The Cultural Resources Unit (CRU) of the Minnesota Department of Transportation acts as the delegated agents for the Section 106 process on behalf of the FHWA. The CRU makes determinations on the project's effects to historic properties, and consults with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to seek their advice and concurrence.

The MnDOT CRU and SHPO have reviewed the draft rehabilitation concepts for the Winona Bridge ( [http://www.dot.state.mn.us/d6/projects/winonabridge/public\\_information.html](http://www.dot.state.mn.us/d6/projects/winonabridge/public_information.html) ). The correspondence between the CRU and the SHPO highlight the following concerns:

- Option 1a has the least impact to the historic structure and presents the best opportunities for meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, the standards that provide guidance on how to rehabilitate a historic structure. However, this option meets the least amount of other identified project needs.
- Option 4a replaces more of the bridge's historic elements than option 1a. The CRU noted that it meets more of the secondary needs of the project, although the SHPO remains concerned that too much historic fabric may be replaced.
- Option 6a replaces even more historic elements, and has the least potential to meet Secretary of the Interior's Standards. This alternative may be considered if all parties agree that options 1a and 4a should be eliminated.
- Proposals for widening the bridge under options 4a and 6a, replacement of the deck, and the inclusion for load-path redundancy were questioned by the SHPO, and further information will be provided to their office to clarify these proposals.

The next step in the process will be to develop a detailed rehabilitation report that will seek to balance addressing the project's purpose and need while minimizing impacts to the historic nature of the bridge. The report will be reviewed and accepted by the FHWA and CRU, who will then provide it to the SHPO for their review and comments. MnDOT is beginning work on this report now.

Ultimately, a decision on a recommended option will be made at the conclusion of the detailed rehabilitation study and after potential effects to historic resources, environmental resources, and socioeconomic impacts have been assessed. This recommendation will be made through a process of on-going investigation and collaboration among stakeholders engaged in the process, including the Federal Highway Administration, MnDOT, SHPO, and the City of Winona.