Project Development Process

Project development—steps that must occur before construction—takes five to eight years for major projects that encounter relatively few obstacles. Projects that require extensive environmental reviews or that involve a variety of challenges and conflicting interests can take many more years as with Hiawatha Avenue reconstruction (25 years) and the Stillwater replacement bridge (40 years and counting.) The project development process is not necessarily linear and phases may overlap or occur simultaneously.

Planning/Programming (Varies)  
- Regulations limit purchase of right-of-way property until late in the process.

Project Scoping (About 12 months)  
- Coordination with local plans and programs is required. Public and agency involvement begins.
- Consultant contracting process is highly regulated by law and by the Department of Administration.

Preliminary Design and Environmental Studies (24-26 months)*  
- Environmental review and approval process is extensive, potentially involving:
  - 49 federal & 25 state environmental laws
  - 19 federal & state agencies
  - Regional and local agencies
  - 26 subject/impact areas
  - About 10 permits
- Municipal consent gives cities the power to delay a project significantly.
- State noise standards are more restrictive than federal standards.

Detail Design and Right-of-Way Property Purchase (About 24 months)  
- Right-of-way property acquisition process is highly regulated and sequential.
- Numerous permits must be obtained.
- Agreements must be negotiated with cities, counties and utilities.
- Laws limit use of design/build project delivery methods.

Contract Letting and Award (15 weeks)  
- All construction bids must be submitted in paper format to Mn/DOT’s St. Paul office. Electronic bidding is not yet available.

Construction (12-48 months)*  
- Length of construction phase varies depending on complexity of traffic and availability of funding.

* Highly variable depending on project specifics—complexity, impacts, funding, approvals/permits, controversy, etc.