



Blatnik Bridge

FACT SHEET // AUGUST 2020



OVERVIEW: MnDOT has initiated a planning and design study of the John A. Blatnik Bridge (bridge number 9030), one of two major bridges that connects Duluth, Minnesota to Superior, Wisconsin. Carrying I-535 over the St. Louis Bay, the Blatnik Bridge is an important freight and commercial connection between the Twin Ports.

Jointly owned and managed by MnDOT and WisDOT, it serves an average of about 33,021 cars traveling between the two cities each day. MnDOT will lead the project, which will evaluate the aging infrastructure, traffic safety, and how to accommodate oversize/overweight (OSOW) loads.

- I-535 crosses the St. Louis Bay via the **John A. Blatnik Bridge**
- Blatnik is Minnesota's second longest bridge and the third longest bridge in Wisconsin and spans the Twin Ports
- The Twin Ports is the largest volume port on the Great Lakes, 18th largest volume port and 2nd largest dry bulk port in the U.S., and sees 800 vessel visits per year
- Opened to traffic in 1961
- Connects Duluth, MN and Superior, WI
- Nearly 8,000 feet long
- 120-foot maximum vertical clearance over St. Louis River
- 52 total spans with 1,140 foot truss
- Carries 4 traffic lanes (2 in each direction)
- Non-redundant bridge structure

CHALLENGES

- The combined infrastructure of the Twin Ports Interchange and the Blatnik Bridge in this area comprises 3.5% of the infrastructure managed in the entire state and is in poor condition.
- Increasing maintenance and investment in this bridge jeopardizes the ability of this economic engine to safely and efficiently conduct business.

Project Contact:

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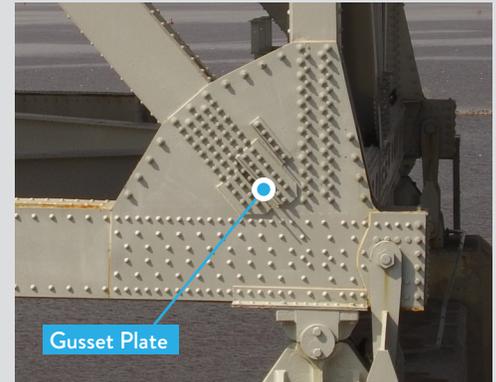
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WEBSITES

🔗 www.dot.state.mn.us/d1/projects/blatnik-bridge

🔗 wisconsindot.gov/Pages/projects/by-region/nw/blatnikbridge

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MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

- Significant deterioration in truss elements.
 - A safety inspection is required every year, which is double the standard inspection frequency of every other bridge. Inspection requires lane closures for 1-3 weeks. Additional maintenance causes lane closures up to three times annually, for 1-3 days each. Significant steel and cable repairs were required in 2016 after inspection revealed increased deterioration.
- On average, structural repair is needed every 4 years.
- In June 2019, the truss span and the approach spans were load posted for 80,000 pounds and can no longer accommodate overweight loads.
- Maintenance requirements result in increased road user delays.

TIMELINE

2020-2024: Preferred Alternative Selection and Environmental Documentation

2024-2026: Preliminary Design

2026-2028: Final Design

2028-2031: Construction

PROJECT COST

The scope of this phase of the project is to evaluate alternatives so that cost estimates can be developed and a final alternative selected.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INPUT

Multiple opportunities for public input will be available for the project. For the most up-to-date project information, upcoming events, and opportunities to provide input, please visit:

www.dot.state.mn.us/d1/projects/blatnik-bridge

or via:

wisconsin.gov/Pages/projects/by-region/nw/blatnikbridge

