

News Release

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MnDOT soliciting interest in historic bow-string arch bridge

Letters of interest due by August 31

MANKATO, Minn. – MnDOT recently partnered with Blue Earth County to save an historic bow-string arch bridge, locally known as the Kern Bridge, and is now accepting “Letters of Interest” from agencies that may have a good home for the uniquely elegant 1873 bridge until August 31.

The Kern Bridge holds the distinction of being one of the oldest bridges in Minnesota, is made from a rare material (wrought iron), and of a rare type. It is the only bow-string arch bridge in Minnesota, and is the longest of its type in the nation at 189 feet.

“The Kern Bridge would be an attractive addition to a bike and pedestrian trail,” explains historian Katie Haun Schuring, who serves on the selection task force. “While our main goal is to see the bridge reused and for many people to experience this unique structure, it is ideal if the bridge could be in a similar setting to its historic one (e.g.: over water).”

The bridge has been removed, carefully dismantled, loaded into sealed containers. New owners will be required to provide a 20-percent match toward the rehabilitation and relist the Kern Bridge on the National Register of Historic places following completion of the rehabilitation effort. Federal funds are available to cover 80 percent with a 20 percent state or local match. Preliminary estimates of the total cost are around \$1.5 million. All FHWA/MnDOT rules and requirements must be followed.

The application process (due September 30) will be similar to the Transportation Alternatives method under the Area Transportation Partnership that selects projects for federal transportation dollars. Cities of less than 5,000 populations must have a county sponsorship.

More information including photos, video, background and a Structural Analysis & Bridge Load Rating Report along with the forms and requirements are posted at <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/historicbridges/L5669.html> and <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/historicbridges/available-bridges.html>. Interested agencies can also contact District State Aid Engineer Lisa Bigham at 507-381-2563 lisa.bigham@state.mn.us or Historian Katie Haun Schuring at 651-366-3603 katherine.haun-schuring@state.mn.us.