

WEB NARRATIVES: TOPICS 3-5

Why Preserve Bridges?

Reasons to preserve bridges can vary, but the most common are to comply with regulations, community identity, and economic development.

LAWS & REGULATIONS

There are state and federal regulations, standards, and guidelines created specifically for preserving and minimizing impacts to historic resources, including historic bridges. For Minnesota, these include:

The Minnesota Historic Sites Act of 1966 ([Minnesota Statue 138.661-138.669](#)) established the State Historic Sites Network and the State Register of Historic Places, and requires that state agencies consult with the Minnesota Historical Society before permitting or undertaking projects that may affect properties listed in the Network or in the State or National Registers of Historic Places.

[Section 106](#) of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, requires Federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties, properties that are listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Potential effects will be taken into account for known historic properties, as well as those that have not been previously identified which may require property documentation within a given area to determine all potential effects.

[Section 4\(f\)](#) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 provides consideration for historic sites, park and recreation lands, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges during transportation projects that receive funding from or require approval by an agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

In addition, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior has established guidelines for maintaining, repairing, and replacing historic materials, as well as designing new additions or altering a historic property. These standards and guidelines are known as the [*Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*](#). These standards should be incorporated into project planning with the assistance of an expert familiar with applying the guidelines.

For more information on laws and regulations related to bridge preservation, see the following guidelines/manuals:

- [Management Plan for Historic Bridges in Minnesota](#)
- [Bridge Design Manual](#)
- [Guidance for Developing Historic Bridge Rehabilitation Alternatives](#)
- [Bridges Preservation, Improvements, and Replacement Guidelines](#)
- [Design Exceptions/Variances for Historic Bridges](#)

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

The preservation of historic bridges allows the continued use of a working, useful part of the community that is a piece of living history and can help foster community pride.

Historic bridges, buildings, and sites create a distinctive place that can help define a community. For instance, historic bridges are often iconic symbols of a community, as is the case in Duluth and Stillwater where their historic lift bridges are used in their city and government agency logos. Such preservation of historic resources can help create a sense of place that binds a community together in shared identity and pride and also makes it attractive to newcomers.



Courtesy of City of Duluth



Photo by Serdar Kaya

In addition, preserving, restoring, and rehabilitating bridges can demonstrate to a community, in a practical way, the benefits of historic preservation. Quality maintenance and stewardship of historic bridges sets an example for all to follow, and pays dividends over time.

TOURISM & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Preservation is also well-known to encourage economic vitality by enhancing the sustainability of the community and enriching the sense of place. That sense of place can be promoted to support marketing efforts and attract businesses and tourists. Heritage tourism, as it is commonly known, has been one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry over the last few years. The rate of growth and impact studies of tourism are generally measured by state tourism offices, or government agencies such as the National Park Service. For more information on the economics of historic preservation please see the following sites:

- [12 Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation](#)
- [Measuring Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation](#)
- [Economics and Historic Preservation: A Guide and Review of the Literature](#)

Many communities have used historic resources to forge a strong brand image that generates heritage tourism, attracts visitors, and helps fuel their economy. Some communities in Minnesota that rely on their lakes and rivers for tourism use historic bridges in their tourism marketing, such as the City of Zumbrota which uses the tagline “Bridging the Past and the Future.”

Some cities and towns celebrate their historic bridges with annual events. For instance, Minneapolis hosts the Stone Arch Bridge Festival and the City of Zumbrota hosts an annual Covered Bridge Music & Arts Festival. Both of these represent economic opportunities within the community to support the needs of the visitor. These include lodging, food and drink, and other entertainment. Money from these services in turn provides jobs and opportunities for small businesses throughout the area, which can help revitalize commercial areas that create jobs, stabilize property values, and increase the tax base.



Photo by August Schwerdfeger



Courtesy of Stone Arch Bridge Festival



Photo by Jimmy S. Emerson, DVM



Courtesy of City of Zumbrota

Preservation also opens up opportunities for potential funding for interpretation, maintenance/restoration, heritage tourism, education and other programs, such as [Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants](#).