

Third Avenue Bridge Project Update, Virtual Meeting Transcript

Meeting Date: November 17, 2020

A picture from the waterline of the Third Avenue Bridge, facing downtown, takes up most of a slide whose trim is in the colors of MnDOT webpages: white, with dark blue trim. At the bottom is the MnDOT logo, a ligature of lowercase M and N in blue and green next to the words "Department of Transportation." At top right is a blank speaker window labeled "Brynna Marusic."

ON SCREEN TEXT: Third Avenue Bridge Project Update
 MnDOT Staff
 November 2020

BRYNNA: Thanks, everyone, for joining us. I think we'll go ahead and get started today. Those of--those people that are still coming in can trickle in.

A new slide, blue and white with a little green, bears text with the heading "Welcome" and three short paragraphs, each by, from top to bottom, a picture of an Unmute toggle with an icon of a crossed microphone, a speech bubble next to the word Chat, and an orange triangular hazard sign with an exclamation mark.

ON SCREEN TEXT: Welcome
 Unmute You are muted and your video is disabled upon entry.
 Please utilize the "chat box" to type in comments or
 questions throughout the session. Questions will
 be answered after the presentation during
 the Q & A session.
 If you experience any technical difficulties,
 please call 612-422-8574 or email
 connect@thirdavebridgeclosure.com

BRYNNA: Before we begin, I'm gonna quickly cover some Webex basics. So attendees are muted, and your video has been disabled upon entry to preserve bandwidth during the meeting. Please utilize the chat box to type in comments or questions throughout the session. All questions will be answered after the presentation during our Q&A session. Make sure to send your question to everyone in the chat box so we can all answer them together. If you do experience any technical difficulties, please call 612-422-8574 or email our project email right here if you do experience any technical difficulties during the meeting. Thank you again for joining us, and I will now give the floor to our speakers today, Dave Aeikens, Tim Nelson, and Chris Hoberg. Thanks.

On a new slide, three schematic head-and-shoulders icons above the names and titles of the presenters.

ON SCREEN TEXT: Today's presenters
 DAVE AEIKENS CHRIS HOBERG TIM NELSON
 Communications and Engagement Project Manager Construction Engineer
 (MnDOT) (MnDOT) (MnDOT)

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DAVE: Thank you, Brynna, and I want to welcome everyone to our open house today, and I'm glad that you could make it, and we're gonna talk about the Third Avenue Bridge. This is our second one. We've got a couple of really good engineers here. Chris Hoberg, our project manager, and Tim Nelson, who's overseeing the construction. They're gonna speak today, and then I'm gonna come back and talk a little bit about communications and outreach and how you can get ahold of us, and then we're gonna take some questions. So I wanna--again, thanks, everyone, for being here. I want to introduce Chris Hoberg, who's the project manager who's been working really hard on this.

DAVE: He's gonna talk a little bit about what we've done so far. Chris?

A new slide with a map of the Mississippi as it flows through downtown Minneapolis. The Third Avenue Bridge is highlighted in orange and labeled "Project area." Text to the left of the map explains, and below that is a bulleted sidebar titled "Project Benefits."

ON SCREEN TEXT: Project Overview
The historic Third Avenue Bridge over the Mississippi River, between Second Street SE and First Street South in Minneapolis, opened in 1918 and now needs significant repairs. The bridge carries Third and Central Avenues
Project Benefits
Provides smoother road surface
Improves safety and accessibility
Extends life of historic bridge (50 years)
Enhances and preserves historic features

CHRIS: Thanks, Dave. Yeah, so a little bit of an overview on the project here. Probably no mystery to anybody who lives in the area or uses Third Avenue or Central that we've got a project out there. The Third Avenue Bridge--you might know it as the Central Avenue Bridge. It carries those roads over the Mississippi River just right in downtown there, right by the St. Anthony Falls, and it's been out there for a long time. That bridge was built in 1918, and it is in need of some repairs, so that's really the purpose for our project and why we're out there. What we expect to see at the end of this project, the benefits, is really a smooth road, a smooth surface for driving and walking and riding. Also improved safety and accessibility, and we are looking to get a good 50 years out of this repair. This is a long-term repair and a really robust rehabilitation, so... And then, additionally, because it's 102 years old going on 103, it's listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We put a really keen eye to the historic features and the things that make it historically significant in our project decision making, and they're taking quite a bit of care in the construction to make sure that we can preserve those features and ensure that that history is not lost with the project. Next slide.

On a new slide, icons accompanying text: a traffic cone, a bicycle between two dotted lines and an upward-pointing arrow, a light bulb with dots radiating from it, and a stylized arched bridge over water.

ON SCREEN TEXT: Summary of Work

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- Repair bridge and replace bridge deck
- Improve bicycle and walking paths
- Update lighting
- Maintain and enhance the bridge's historic and visual appeal

CHRIS: As far as the scope of work, what exactly we're doing out there, we're pretty much touching every surface of the bridge and repairing any damaged concrete or damaged steel. We are gonna be replacing the bridge deck, or the area where cars drive. Additionally, we're gonna be improving the non-motorized facilities on the bridge, so those bike paths and walking paths. We'll have some visuals here a little later that'll help illustrate some of that. The lighting out there right now, it's been out there for a long time as well and is in need of repair, so we're gonna update that and repair that, and then, again, that kind of central theme with this historic bridge, making sure that we're maintaining the historic features and the visual appeal and enhancing that as appropriate.

On a new slide, we see a computer-generated image of sunset in downtown Minneapolis. Most detail is reserved for the bridge, which bears antique-style globular streetlights and separated paths flanking a broad four-lane street. On-screen text provides labels which are connected to their subjects by green lines.

ON SCREEN TEXT:

- Future Repaired Bridge
- Maintains
- TWO VEHICLE LANES
- in each direction
- New
- BRIDGE DECK
- with new pavement and striping
- Updated
- LIGHTING
- Repaired
- BRIDGE PIERS
- 13 ft
- MULTI-USE PATH
- on both sides

CHRIS: Next slide. So this is this is just a little rendering of what the bridge should look like when we're all said and done here, but you can see out there today we have two lanes of traffic in each direction in the permanent condition, and that'll be maintained, and we've got it reduced right now for construction purposes, but you can expect two lanes in each direction when the project is complete. Again, you can see the bridge deck there is being replaced and will have new paint on the roadway there as well. Updated lighting as we said before. Those bike paths that are out there currently are between the vehicle lanes and the concrete barrier, and we're gonna put those bike lanes behind the concrete barrier and have about--it's little over 13 feet, actually. It's, like, 13.5 feet for bicycles and pedestrians to use there behind that barrier. And then you can see those bridge piers down in the water. Those are gonna see repairs. Just about any concrete surface on this where there's damaged concrete will be repaired. Next slide, please.

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A new image of the bridge with a closer perspective.

ON SCREEN TEXT: Future Repaired Bridge
Updated
LIGHTING
Updated Updated
SPANDRELS RAILINGS
Updated
PILASTERS

CHRIS: The spandrels, those are the columns that hold the bridge deck up and go down to the arches. Those are all gonna be replaced as part of this project as well. Again, we see that that lighting there is being updated, and then the railings are actually a character-defining feature, a significant feature in the history of the bridge, and so those panels, those metal panels that are on the bridge today, are gonna be removed and cleaned and re-installed. And then those concrete... pilasters is what we call them, that hold up those steel panels are all being replaced, as well, and we're actually bringing back some of the historic detailing that was there--present--prior to the last rehabilitation in 1980, so we're really excited about that and how it's gonna affect the sense of place that the bridge has. Next slide, please.

On a new slide, a small table with dates. Below the table is a warning, marked with a triangle-and-exclamation-point "hazard" symbol and a stylized visibility vest.

ON SCREEN TEXT: Construction Schedule

Milestone	Date
Construction Start with Traffic Restrictions	May 2020
Close Bridge to Public	January 2021
Open Bridge to Public	November 2022
Project Complete	August 2023

The bridge must be closed to traffic to safely perform these repairs

CHRIS: I'm gonna hand this off to Tim, our construction engineer.

TIM: Thanks, Chris. Yeah. My name is Tim Nelson. I'm the construction engineer for MnDOT. So I just wanted to kind of give you an update on where we're at with things and what to expect kind of over the next couple years. So as, hopefully, you guys know, we started this project back in May of 2020 here with some traffic restrictions. We currently have one lane of traffic each way with a reversible lane in the middle for the Metro Transit buses, and we've kind of flip-flopped depending: on where the contractor is working on the bridge. So one of the big questions we have is, why can't we keep this configuration while we redo the rest of the bridge? And the biggest reason is because it's unsafe. So--and that's due to the structural integrity of the bridge, the complicated nature of those arch spans out there, and basically, you know, trying to not mix traffic--public traffic with construction traffic, and it's just a very: difficult bridge. So that's why we're closing the bridge to the public in January of 2021 right after the New Year, and our big goal for this was to really minimize the closure of the bridge as much

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as possible and really try to keep it under two years. So we're--under two years was what we planned, so we'll reopen back in November of 2022 with a full re-deck of the bridge, and it will look just like those renderings that Chris described: there. Then after that, then we have some more work to finish with painting and kind of finish up the surface repair and make it look finished before we complete the project in August of 2023. Next slide, please.

A new slide bearing text and a photograph of the bridge under construction, with a crane parked atop its deck.

ON SCREEN TEXT: What to Expect
 Crews will work to minimize project impacts; however,
 residents and business owners near the bridge may
 experience the following:
 Dust
 lights
 Construction noise
 Overnight work near
 the bridge

TIM: So what to expect. If you live around there, have driven around there, you know there's impacts right now. We're working on--down by the river, trying to repair. We're also getting prepped to close the bridge and do all that re-deck that we talked about and take down the spandrels. So there's gonna be some dust. We're removing concrete, so that creates dust. We really try to keep it to a minimum. We have best practices out there with saws and jackhammering and other items. As you know, it gets dark early, so there may be some lights in the area, especially when we're working overnight. You also will hear some construction noise that's limited to jackhammering and sandblasting and other just noisy operations. We do our best to try to keep that during the daytime, but there will be some overnight work here starting up at the end of the month and lasting for another four to five months for what we're currently planning. In that time, there might be a little noise, but we're really trying to minimize the amount of noise, and we do obey by as many of the laws and specifications as we can, but being on river, the noise likes to echo a little bit, so we'll really do what we can to limit that. Next slide, please.

On a new slide, bulleted text and a map of detour routes. The Stone Arch Bridge is labeled in yellow as a bicycle detour, the Third Avenue Bridge in red for closure, the Hennepin Avenue Bridge in blue and purple for vehicle/transit and pedestrian detour, respectively.

ON SCREEN TEXT: January 2021 Closures and Detours
 Single lane travel in each
 direction continues
 through December 2020
 Vehicle and transit
 detour via Hennepin and
 First Avenue
 Pedestrian detour via
 Hennepin Avenue bridge

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Bicycle detour via Stone
Arch Bridge

TIM: So then just the--when we close the bridge in January of 2021, we'll have a couple different detours. The main detour for all the vehicles and the bikes, we'll use Hennepin Avenue. We will also work with Metro Transit and the city in the spring of 2021 to modify Hennepin Avenue slightly where we're gonna make a bus-only lane out there. We were gonna do that this fall, but due to COVID and the limited amount of vehicle traffic that's out there, we pushed that off into the spring so that we didn't impact anymore this fall. And then the pedestrian detour will use--will also use the Hennepin Avenue, and the bike detour will use the Stone Arch Bridge, so--but both are options for pedestrians. Next slide, please.

On a new slide, text and two photographs. The upper photograph is of a sidewalk winding through a park under a bridge; it is labeled "Brick sidewalk closed." The lower displays a straighter path near parked cars as it passes under the bridge; it is marked "Use shared path."

ON SCREEN TEXT: Local Closures
Main Street SE
Brick sidewalk closed
under bridge
Bicyclists and
pedestrians share path
Expect short-term
closures and Main St
traffic restrictions

TIM: And then we also just have some local closures. As you know, the bridge goes over Main Street on the east side of the river, and then it goes over West River Parkway on the Minneapolis downtown side. So on the Main Street side, we currently have the brick sidewalk that's closest to the river that's closed underneath the bridge, so that's where we have a lot of our staging 'cause we're doing a lot of work in that area currently. Then there's the paths that are on both sides of the road. Those will remain open for the majority of the project. One side or the other might close at one time, but one side or the other will always be open. There'll also be some short-term closures on Main Street where we'll have a lane closed or not, and there'll be flaggers out there that'll last for probably a couple weeks at some point during the project. Next slide, please.

On a new slide, a photo of two pathways in a narrow park as they run under a bridge. The photograph is labeled "Shared path and sidewalk."

ON SCREEN TEXT: Local Closures
West River Parkway
Sidewalk will be closed
Use shared path
Expect short-term trail and
vehicle closure of parkway
during project

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Park Board Water Works
project nearby

TIM: Then, on the West River Parkway side, there's a unique path that sits right along the river--it's kind of a scenic byway--that will be closed for a lot of the project while we're doing work there on the pier that's closest to that sidewalk. Then the shared use path will remain open, but it will close for a couple two-week chunks during the project two weeks at each time, and that'll close West River Parkway at the time. So those will be closed for about a total of a month at two different points. As you may know, the park board had West River Parkway closed. It did reopen on Friday, so we are coordinating with them nearby. Next slide, please.

A slide bearing text and a logo of a solid blue square occluding a hollow, blue-outlined square; the occluded portions are represented with dashed lines of white on the solid square. The MnDOT logo and the words "THIRD AVE BRIDGE CLOSURE" decorate this design.

ON SCREEN TEXT: Communications and Engagement
 Bridge history
 virtual meetings and
 website content
 Resident Connection events
 Full closure messaging
 campaign
 Messaging campaign to
 support adjacent businesses
 during construction.

TIM: So I will pass it back over to Dave Aeikens. He's our communication coordinator for MnDOT. Thank you.

DAVE: Thank you, Tim. Good job there. Just want to talk a little bit now about what we've done to make people aware of what we're doing and what the changes are gonna be and how they can navigate that. We started a good year, year and a half ago. Before the pandemic started, we were going door to door to businesses. We've been to a lot of businesses downtown. We've been to a lot of businesses on the north side of the river, along Main Street and elsewhere, and we've had a number of meetings with the neighborhood organizations, the Marcy-Holmes, Nicollet Island, East Bank, the business associations. We--before this, we've had a number of meetings virtually since the pandemic started, and we had--this is our second open house. We had one on November 12th as well. So we've been really working hard now to let people know that the bridge is going to be closed for almost two years in Janu--starting on January 4th. So that's kind of our effort right now, and this is part of that. We'll be sending out postcards to the folks who live nearby, and so we'll be working pretty hard to get that, get--make sure everybody knows. Can you please move the slide?

On a new slide, an old monochrome photograph of a man in overalls standing next to a pump and some scaffolding. It is labeled "1913-1918, Minnesota Historical Society."

ON SCREEN TEXT: Like history?

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Check out more bridge history on the project website

DAVE: So one thing that has been a big aspect of this project has been the history of it, and we've embraced that, and we have historians that work for MnDOT that have helped us, and we are--we have-- and there's a lot of efforts being done, as Chris and Tim have mentioned, to maintain the history of the bridge. If you can go to our website, you--and we'll bring that up eventually here in another slide, show you how to get there, but we have some great historical features there. We've got some great photos, some great explanations of how the bridge--the history of the bridge, how the bridge was built. Just some really neat stuff. If you like history and the history of Minneapolis, there's some great stuff in there. And we also have--in early December, we're gonna have another virtual history tour. We had one in September. We've got another one coming up in December. We're still trying to nail down the date on that. We'll make sure that word gets out, and anyway, those are a lot of fun. And, Brynna, can you please change--thank you.

A slide bearing a photo of construction on the Third Avenue Bridge.

ON SCREEN TEXT: Upcoming Events
 Historian Presentation
 (Dec. 2020)
 Look for more information
 in the coming weeks

DAVE: So that--as I said, that's December of 2020. Coming up here, we will have--we'll have another virtual tour. Can you move the slide, please?

Another slide bearing mostly text, including hyperlinks. The points are illustrated with icons of, from top to bottom, a cursor clicking on an HTTP link, an open envelope whose protruding contents bear the at sign, and a telephone receiver.

ON SCREEN TEXT: Stay Connected
 Sign Up for Project Updates:
 mndot.gov/metro/projects/hwy65andthirdavebridge
 Email:
 connect@thirdavebridgeclosure.com
 Construction Hotline:
 (612) 547-7968

DAVE: So we want folks to know how to get ahold of us. You can sign up for project updates. Those are emails that will come when something significant--a closing or whatever, an event of some sort--comes up. You can go to the website. You can see that there: MnDOT.gov/metro/projects/hwy65andthirdavebridge and the email and the construction hotline, 612-547-7968. So we do want to hear from you. If you've got questions about how things are going, if you've got concerns, if you see something that doesn't seem right, please let us know. We do want to hear from you. So thank you very much. So we are--that's gonna complete our presentation, but we are here for questions.

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A slide bearing a little text and a general view of the Third Avenue Bridge and downtown on a sunny day.

ON SCREEN TEXT: Q & A
Project team is here to
answer your questions
Please type your
questions into the
chat box

DAVE: Chris and Tim, and we'll be happy to answer those questions. I do have one already. If, folks, you want to keep sending those in, that'd be great. We will be happy to read those out loud and have Tim or Chris... So here's a question for Tim. Tim, is the bridge surface going to be replaced with new concrete? Yeah, the simple answer is, we're gonna replace everything. Basically, everything down to--all the way down to the arches is gonna get replaced, so that'll be all new concrete. So there'll be new concrete to drive on. Great, thank you, Tim. So yes, brand-new concrete, brand-new driving surface, nice and smooth, newly striped. We--right now, I don't see any other questions, but we'd love to have some. We can--please continue to send those in.

CAROLINE: Dave, I just added a question to the chat box.

DAVE: All right. How will the bicycle and pedestrian paths be striped? Tim or Chris?

TIM: Yep, I can take that. So as Chris described, the bikes are gonna be on the same side as the pedestrians, and they're gonna be delineated from the concrete barrier from the vehicle traffic, and then to separate the bicycles and the pedestrians, we're looking at two different options. One option is it'll be kind of a tile that: will get placed in the middle so it'd be more like the truncated domes that are by the ADA ramps. They'll be kind of pushed off. Otherwise, we'll have a solid striping line.

DAVE: Excellent. Thank you. Tim, we got this question the last meeting. Tell us about how this project coincides with the Third Avenue Br--or, I'm sorry, the 10th Avenue Bridge that Minneapolis is doing? Of course, the 10th Avenue Bridge is east of the I-35 Bridge, and that's closed right now.

TIM: Yep. Thanks, Dave. Yeah, so we've been working with Minneapolis to try to coordinate the two bridges. We do know that they are going to overlap some, but the detour routes that they are using are different. So we're mainly using Hennepin Avenue and 10th Avenue. It's using more the 35W and other local streets around there. But for the most part, you know, most of the traffic will be separated and shouldn't impact this project at all or 10th Avenue.

CHRIS: Yeah. This is Chris. I would just add as well that we've been working pretty closely with the City of Minneapolis to make sure that we've got the pieces in place to be nimble if there's a traffic issue that arises. You know, the city and the state having two river crossings being worked on at the same time is something that--it's in both our interests to make sure that we don't see compounding impacts from that. So our--as Tim kind of said, our modeling would tell us that we're not expecting to see a whole lot of issue there, but we've got pieces in place so that if there's an issue that arises, we're working closely with the city to make sure that that's addressed quickly.

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DAVE: Brynna, would you go to the slide that has all the schedule on it, please, the first construction slide?

The presentation flips backwards through many of its slides before once again settling on the slide with the table of construction milestones and their approximate dates.

ON SCREEN TEXT:	Construction Schedule	
	Milestone	Date
	Construction Start with Traffic Restrictions	May 2020
	Close Bridge to Public	January 2021
	Open Bridge to Public	November 2022
	Project Complete	August 2023
	The bridge must be closed to traffic to safely perform these repairs	

DAVE: Thank you. Tim, someone would like you to talk about the dates again and kind of go a little farther into that.

TIM: Sure. So we are closing the bridge to the public on January 4th of 2021. That's when we'll start to take down the bridge and remove the bridge and then rebuild it back up, and that'll last roughly, you know, 18 to 20 months until November of 2022, and that's when we'll open the bridge back up to the public. It'll be open back to four lanes of traffic, and pedestrian paths will be opened, and then there will be some short-term closures thereafter while we work on finishing the bridge and taking out all the temporary works. So that will be more--mainly just pedestrian path closures all the way until August of 2023 when we're all complete.

DAVE: Thank you, Tim. Chris, can you talk about the structural stability of the bridge and underneath the bridge and why we're doing the work? And I know there have been some cases where a few pieces of concrete have fallen from the bridge, and that doesn't necessarily mean that the bridge is structurally unsound, so can you please talk about that?

CHRIS: Yeah, absolutely. So the first thing is, is the bridge is safe. We wouldn't have traffic out there if it wasn't...

The slides flip forward again to the Q&A slide with the picture of downtown.

ON SCREEN TEXT:	Q & A
	Project team is here to answer your questions
	Please type your questions into the chat box

CHRIS: ...but it does have some repair needs that need to be taken care of, and as Tim was kind of saying, our ability to make those repairs under traffic is--it's not something that we can do. We have to

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have traffic off the bridge to make those repairs. If you think about the way that this bridge is built, you've got the roadway surface sitting on those columns, and those columns then go down to the arches, and if we have to replace those columns, then we can't have traffic driving on the roadway surface while we're working on those columns. So that's why we have to close the bridge to traffic to do the work, but the bridge is--it's safe to carry traffic.

DAVE: Thank you. So we've got another question from someone who's asking about that the piers are enhanced with new--are going to be enhanced with new steel girders outside the old girders in concrete, and he's wondering if he's right about that and can understand why the old steel cannot be removed. Can you talk a little bit about that, one of the engineers?

CHRIS: I'm just guessing that what our commenter here is seeing is what's out there today. We have some steel girders in place that are kind of outside of the dimensions of the bridge as they sit today, and Tim, correct me if I'm wrong here, but those are either for temporary support of the utilities out there while we do some of this work or are in place to help the contractor support their access equipment. Is that correct?

TIM: Yeah, yeah, we have a lot of temporary works that are out there. So I'm not exactly sure what the question is, 'cause we kind of have--around the piers, we have kind of two things going on. We have kind of a cofferdam that's set up so that we can kind of finish the work in the piers in the dry so it keeps the water out so that we can get down further and do our repairs, and we're putting on kind of a concrete jacket around those piers that we're putting new reinforcement steel around it to better withhold, you know, the harsh environment of Minnesota and the river right there.

DAVE: Tim, talk about some of the things that have been brought into--as folks are working on the piers replacing the concrete. Talk about the tugboat and the barges that are in--how--what's that for?

TIM: Yeah, so this bridge is in a really tough environment for the river. You can see the horseshoe dam there that causes a lot of issues, and we can't actually be in the river right there with a tugboat or a barge or anything, and then closer to the other side, away from downtown closer to Main Street, the river there is actually really shallow, and so it's very difficult to bring in a very big barge or tugboat. We have brought in a small barge and tugboat, and they brought in some sheeting forms in there so that we could create a cofferdam in there to cut off the water basically to do the work around the piers.

DAVE: Can you explain to those of us who aren't engineers what a cofferdam is?

TIM: Yeah, so a cofferdam is basically like a metal wall that's sealed tight so that no water can come in.

DAVE: So does--so here's another question, Tim. Does the construction impact or restrict watercraft use?

TIM: So there are--right in this area where the Third Avenue Bridge is, there isn't any--the lock and dam is closed, so there's no navigation channels there, and then the area around the horseshoe dam is--doesn't allow the watercrafts in that area. It's blocked off from Xcel Energy because they also have an inlet there, and it's just very dangerous to be right around there by the horseshoe dam, so we don't see any watercraft, and then anything that's upstream of there, there is no restrictions there.

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DAVE: Tim, can you talk about some of the big equipment we're gonna see once you start working on that deck? Just kind of explain what things are gonna look like for those who are gonna be walking by or may live in those condos nearby.

TIM: Yep, perfect. It's a great question. So when we start to remove the deck back in--or January of 2021, we're gonna be installing some tower cranes similar to what's on 10th Avenue. So there's actually gonna be four of them installed on the bridge. As I mentioned before, the river is very difficult to work in, so a normal river bridge, or a lot of river bridge projects, we would actually have a barge in the water with a big crane on there, and we would actually work from the river, and this bridge, being the difficult nature it is, we're actually working from the deck mostly. So we'll have a lot of--we'll have the four tower cranes out there to do a lot of the work, and we'll actually be installing some temporary bridge to get our equipment in and out on the existing piers as we work, and really a benefit to closing the bridge is that we can really work full width and full length of the bridge to try to speed things up and be safer and also gets us a better product in the end.

DAVE: Great, thank you. So are--so the question is, are you--are we making the piers thicker and bigger in circumference?

TIM: No, so actually, what our operations right now are on the piers is we're actually removing the existing concrete that's out there and we're putting new rebar or metal rebar out there, and we're actually forming it back up to the same dimensions that it was in 1918, so it'll look exactly the same. It'll be the same exact size.

DAVE: Chris, talk a little bit about how much work was done to maintain the history on this. What--it was something we've spent a lot of time on. Talk about the work that you've done and that Katie Haun Schuring has done.

CHRIS: Yeah, so as you alluded, Dave, or said before, MnDOT has historians on staff, and it's for projects like this where we're interacting with a historically significant piece of infrastructure or an area with a history of, you know, human inhabitation that goes back, you know, hundreds of years, so Katie Haun Schuring is the name of our project historian on this, and she was actually embedded in our project management team. So all of our big decisions that we were making as we were going through deciding what repairs to make, how we were gonna make those repairs, how we wrote the specifications, how that work was gonna be executed, she was a party to all of that to ensure that our decisions were in line with the federal laws that protect these historic--historic properties. So she was involved in that decision making as well as helping us report to the various parties that have some regulatory oversight of historic properties as well. So the State Historic Preservation Office, there was a lot of coordination with them on decision making and, you know, making sure that the final appearance was correct to the original construction, and yeah. It went from everything from how we repair the concrete to the color of the coating that we'll apply at the end of the day and the selection of the lighting and how we repaired railings. It was pretty involved, but I think it really is gonna help us have a really nice end product.

DAVE: And she--and Katie remains involved, right, Tim and Chris? She sits at the--in on the meeting--the construction meetings and provides advice as we go forward.

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CHRIS: Yep, and I know that, Tim, you could probably talk about some of the ongoing decision making. We have processes set up for--we call them mockups so that, you know, as we're dialing in on, say, selecting a color on our bridge coating, there's a process that we go through in a mockup process to allow us to make some of those decisions as we work through the construction, and Katie's involved in all of that.

DAVE: Thank you, Chris. So we've posted a link to the history page of the website, and you can find that in the chat. Here's a question. When the bridge is done, will a driver be able to see the river through the metal panels on one side or both, as now the concrete barriers impede the views?

CHRIS: Okay, so that's a great question, one that we had quite a bit of discussion about during our decision making. So the ornamental railing that's out there today or the railing on the very outside edge of the bridge, that railing is essentially--that is the exact same railing that will be there when we're done with our project. It's historically significant, and because of that, it's not something that we want to change. The concrete railing that you see out there today is about 4 feet tall; it's 48 inches tall, and we need to have--because the outside railing isn't crash-tested, we need to have a barrier that is crash-tested and will restrain vehicles from exiting the roadway if they run into a problem. So we needed to have a barrier that was crash-tested. We looked at all of the different barriers in our library that we could use, and we weighed the benefits and the costs to each of them. We ended up landing with a concrete barrier. It'll be shorter than the barrier that's out there today by--let's see. It's gonna be 32 inches tall versus the 48 that's out there today, so that should provide some better viewshed of the river, but from a safety standpoint, we needed it to be crash-tested, and it needed to be able to keep those vehicles on the roadway, so that, kind of, was the guiding principle in our decision making.

DAVE: So we've got someone asking about the--will the recording of the meeting be on the project homepage? And yes, we will put this one and the one--the meeting from November 12th as well. So yes. Thank you for that question. We have time for more questions if folks have them. Here's one right here. Great. Why do you need to remove the trees on the northwest side of the bridge? Tim?

TIM: So, to date, we haven't removed any trees as part of this project. I think on the west side, some of the trees got removed as part of the waterworks project. That being said, we do have a little bit of trees that do need to come down, mainly because some of the--on the ends where the bridge meet the land, that's our abutments, and those retaining walls that are right there need some repair. In order to get in there and do that work, we need to take out some of the trees or at least do some trimming on the trees.

DAVE: Thank you.

CHRIS: Yeah, Dave, I would just expand on that and say that we worked really hard to have as light a touch as possible when it comes to the vegetation. Really only those things that need to be removed so that we can execute our work are being removed, and we've worked with various property owners that if there's a tree that's not on our right of way that's gonna be impacted, that there's some reimbursement associated with that.

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DAVE: All right, thank you. And so that light touch goes for all of our projects that we don't take anything down that we don't need to take down, so--and it's usually on state property. So we've got time for more questions. If folks have them, we can wait a few minutes. Tim and Chris have done a great job here answering them and talking about this project. It's gonna be around for a couple more years, so we will probably cross paths again, and Brynna, would you like to put up the page again on the contacts, please?

The slides flip back to the Stay Connected page.

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DAVE: So this is the important page if you want to reach out to us. The website, you can see the history stuff there, the schedule, sign up for emails. That's there. You can send a question you might have to that email address, or you can call. If you prefer to make a phone call, you can give us a call, and we'll have someone answer that. So do we have any more questions? Otherwise, we can let folks get on with their day. Thanks to Chris Hoberg, project manager, and Tim Nelson, the construction engineer, and my colleague Kevin Walker who's been working with me on this project and our consultant HDR who set this up and has helped us manage this virtual event, so thank you very much. Again, we are not hiding from anyone. There--you can--got any questions or anything, let us know, any concerns, we'll be happy to deal with it and answer it, and this is a project for everyone, and it's state property, and we want to take good care of it and do a good job and keep everyone safe. So thanks again, everyone, for being here, and let us know if you have any questions.