



April 13, 2016

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Letter of Support – I-35W North Corridor FASTLANE Freight Funding Application

Dear Secretary Foxx:

On behalf of Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee (MFAC), I am submitting this letter of support for the Minnesota Department of Transportation's application for a grant to help fund the I-35W North Corridor project under the FASTLANE program.

The I-35W North Corridor is a major freeway corridor connecting greater Minnesota and the growing north suburban area to the central business district of Minneapolis. This project proposes adding High-Occupancy-Toll, "MnPASS" lanes. MnPASS lanes offer multiple benefits in reducing congestion and improving safety for both commuters and freight traffic.

Freight tonnage and congestion are expected to significantly increase by year 2040, spurring additional growth and development throughout the I-35W North Corridor. The increased lane capacity will allow for improved reliability and travel-time during congested periods. Additionally, some bridges along that corridor have reached the end of their service life and will be replaced to accommodate maximum height for permitted trucks.

This project will increase highway capacity and improve infrastructure critical in supporting Minnesota's economic vitality and competitiveness.

Thank you for your consideration and approval of this application.

Sincerely,

William E. Goins, Chairman
Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee
"Representing Minnesota Freight since 1998"

Construction Cost Estimate:

\$208 million

Current Funding:

Total: \$129.76 million

*\$50M Mobility SPP FY 19**\$50M Mobility SPP FY 20**\$13M Pavement SPP FY 19**\$10M Pavement SPP FY 20**\$6.76M Bridge SPP FY 20***Funding Needed:**

\$78.24 million

Project Benefits:

- Reduce congestion and improve safety for both commuters and freight traffic
- Increase person throughput and improve trip duration reliability during peak periods
- Improve travel times for transit and carpools

I-35W North Corridor Project

FASTLANE Freight Funding Application

- Ready to deliver within 18 months

Scope and Location: Roseville to Lino Lakes, Minnesota (12 Miles)

MnDOT is planning future construction of an additional lane in each direction on I-35W between Highway 36 in Roseville and Sunset Ave (CR 53) in Blaine, Minnesota. The Project Length is 12 miles. Based on preliminary engineering completed to date, MnDOT is recommending that these additional lanes operate as MnPASS lanes.

What is the problem?

The I-35W North Corridor is a major radial freeway corridor connecting greater Minnesota and the growing north suburban area to downtown Minneapolis. As the region has grown, traffic volumes have increased and a number of segments along the corridor experience

significant peak period congestion each day. Congestion is expected to increase by year 2040 as additional growth and development occurs in communities throughout the corridor. Additionally, the pavement and some bridges have reached the end of their service life and are scheduled to be replaced in the near future.

Corridor Vision: What has been done to date?

The North Metro I-35W Corridor Coalition was established as a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) organization in December, 1996 in response to growing concerns about daily congestion on I-35W north of downtown Minneapolis. Current membership in the Coalition includes the Cities of New Brighton, Mounds View, Circle Pines, Lexington and Blaine along with Anoka County and Ramsey County.

After several years of study on land use and traffic options supported in large part with grants from the McKnight Foundation, requests for federal funding were submitted with the help of the North Metro I-35W Corridor Coalition, federal, state, and local elected officials, resulting in two allocations in federal fiscal years 2008 and 2009. The FFY 2009 funds, \$882,000, were used to support a



Feasibility Study for the potential use of Managed Lanes to address capacity issues, which was completed in 2013. That study evaluated many alternatives. Its conclusion was that adding a lane to this corridor was the most feasible and practical. It also concluded that corridor improvements should be split up into multiple phases:

- First add the lane from Roseville to Lino Lakes, because this area has the greatest congestion and synergy can be achieved with adding the lane and replacing existing aging pavement and bridges,
- Second add the lane from Minneapolis to Roseville, because this will complete the connection of the Minneapolis central business district to the first and second ring suburbs.

In March 2014 and with the help of the North Metro I-35W Corridor Coalition and federal, state, and local elected officials, \$814,086 in Federal Interstate Maintenance Discretionary (IMD) Funds were procured to fund the preliminary design for this project. In January 2015, the Minnesota Legislature, with the support of MnDOT, the Governor, and local elected officials, provided another \$1.1 million in Corridors of Commerce State Bonds to fund the preliminary design from this project.

In October 2014, the Preliminary Design Contract was started for this project. The goal of this Contract is to select a preferred alternative, complete the environmental documentation, produce a detailed cost estimate, which will enable this project to be delivered to construction within 18 months of receiving funding for construction. The major deliverables of this Contract will be complete May 2016.

What is the status of environmental documentation and what is the public and political support for the project?

Federal and state laws require MnDOT to complete an environmental review of the project. Preliminary engineering and the environmental review process began October 2015. MnDOT completed the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) February 2016. It is anticipated that environmental approvals will occur December 2016. That draft EA evaluated alternatives as part of the environmental review process:

- A General Purpose (GP) lane – open to all vehicles at all times.
- A High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane – only transit buses, carpools with two or more people, and motorcycles can use the lane.
- A MnPASS lane – open to all vehicles most of the day with restricted use during peak hours. Transit buses, carpools, and motorcycles use the MnPASS lane for free. Single occupant vehicles have the option to use the lane for a fee.

MnDOT has conducted more than half of its public involvement plans, and results to date indicate broad support for the project from both elected officials and the public.

MnDOT fully expects that this process will validate the results of previous studies which demonstrated the greater long-term benefits to commuters and freight of MnPASS lanes. MnDOT will be working with its project partners to further develop the MnPASS vision for the I-35W North Corridor, and will be soliciting public input as part of project development.

How are you using technology to maximize the efficiency of the freeway for commuters and freight traffic?

Traffic analysis on this corridor indicates that we can't build our way out of congestion. Adding one lane in each direction is relatively easy to do with minimal impacts to homes, businesses, people, and the environment. However, only adding one lane in each direction does not eliminate congestion over the next 20 years. Adding two lanes in each direction would mostly eliminate congestion over the next 20 years, but this causes two major problems:

1. Homes and businesses would need to be bought, environmental impacts are far greater, all of the bridges and interchanges would need to be reconstructed, and the resulting impacts and costs are far too high to be practical. For example, the costs hit \$1 billion plus very quickly.
2. Analysis and experience indicate that even those two additional lanes will get congested again after 20 years and after that we don't have any other solutions. Adding yet another lane is likely unachievable.

Therefore, MnDOT is proposing to make the added lanes a MNPASS lane. A MNPASS lane is a High-Occupancy-Toll (HOT) lane. The lane is open to all traffic 20 hours of the day. The lane has a restriction on it for the four hours during the peak travel time. The lane may be used for free to vehicles carrying two or more people, and a vehicle with a single occupant may use it if they pay a fee. This concept maximizes the people moved, while reducing the number of vehicles used, guarantees a reliable trip time every day for those that choose to use the lane, and allows single occupants to take advantage of that reliable trip time for a fee. Another benefit is that the MNPASS lane will allow the other general purpose lanes to operate more freely over a longer period of years as the population continues to build, which will give benefits to other users including freight traffic. As stated before, we can't eliminate the congestion, but we can maximize the efficiency of this freeway using the technology of a MNPASS lane. Please watch this video for more details on MNPASS lanes:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yS4DC6cb_6U

Synergy with the I-35W Mississippi River Bridge

The I-35W Mississippi River Bridge in downtown Minneapolis was replaced after the previous bridge tragically collapsed in 2007. The new bridge was constructed both wide enough and with enough structural capacity to receive the traffic from an added lane to the north. The I-35W North Corridor Project will maximize the investment made in the I-35W Mississippi River Bridge.

What are the major project costs?

Add the MNPASS Lane: \$103 million

Replace existing aging pavement: \$76 million

Construct eight low cost high benefit improvements (such as add auxiliary lanes): \$29 million

Total cost for a 12-mile long project: \$208 million

Project Schedule (Dependent on funding)

This project is ready to deliver within 18 months depending on receiving additional funding for the project. MnDOT can achieve the following proposed schedule:

- December 2016: Complete environmental process and receive all approvals for the project
- August 2017: Construction Letting
- September 2017: Construction begins
- November 2022: Construction complete

For More Information

Visit: www.dot.state.mn.us/metro/projects/i35wroseville/index.html.

Or contact: Jerome Adams, Project Manager, 651-234-7611, jerome.adams@state.mn.us



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Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Letter of Support – Twin Ports Interchange FASTLANE Freight Funding Application

Dear Secretary Foxx:

On behalf of Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee (MFAC), I am submitting this letter of support for the Minnesota Department of Transportation's application for a grant to help fund the Twin Ports Interchange improvement project under the FASTLANE program.

The project will transform transportation in the Twin Ports bi-state region benefitting not only regional residents and businesses but also the broader upper Midwest region that depends on the regional freight gateway, including freight moving between the Ports of Duluth-Superior and upper Midwest states.

This project will replace and improve the aging I-35/I-535/Highway 53 interchange and the I-535/Garfield Avenue interchange, providing direct access to the interstate system for truck traffic that currently must be diverted to local streets – at significant cost to shippers and the local community. The project will also reduce current bottlenecks and interchange configurations that contribute to unsafe movements through the interchange. These improvements will collectively enhance potential for expanded economic development in the Twin Ports area and the broader upper Midwest region.

Decisively, this project will enhance highway infrastructure for hundreds of permitted oversize/overweight shipments each year which are critical to supporting Minnesota's economic vitality and competitiveness.

Thank you for your consideration and approval of this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'W. E. Goins'.

William E. Goins, Chairman
Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee
"Representing Minnesota Freight since 1998"

Twin Ports Interchange FASTLANE Freight Funding Application

MnDOT will be submitting a Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for the Long-Term Achievement of National Efficiencies (FASTLANE) Grant application to replace the I-35/I-535/Highway 53 interchange and improve the I-535/Garfield Avenue interchange. The purpose of this project is to better accommodate freight movements through the interchanges adjacent to the Clure Public Terminal.

Project Scope

- Reconstruct the I-35/I-535/Highway 53 interchange
- Replace 3 bridges in the I-535/Garfield Avenue interchange
- Replace 27 bridges: overweight permit restrictions (25), fracture critical (7), functionally obsolete (4), structurally deficient (1)
- Improve safety of the I-35/I-535/Highway 53 interchange
 - Provide a new conventional design
 - Provide all exits and entrances on the right
 - Improve merging sight distance and eliminate merge conflicts
 - Eliminate weaving problems near the interchange
 - Provide lane continuity for through I-35 traffic
- Work will be within the existing right of way
- Will not add lanes

Project Freight Connection

- Interchange traffic count
 - Average annual daily traffic – 72,200
 - Heavy commercial average annual daily traffic – 3450
- First mile to the Clure Public Terminal
- Intermodal facility with highway, rail and waterway freight connections
- 25,000 heavy commercial loads generated per year with significant increases projected
- Overweight project cargo such as wind turbine components
- Project will provide direct access for overweight permitted loads

Project Funding Request and Timeline

- Cost: \$150-200M
 - FASTLANE request will be 60% or \$90-120M
 - MnDOT will fund remaining 40%
 - No local agency funding required
- The environmental document will be a Categorical Exclusion and complete in 2017
- Contracting: design-build or construction manager general contractor alternative delivery
- If FASTLANE funding is provided, construction will begin in 2018
- Preliminary design and environmental field work will begin in 2016





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Subject: Letter of Support – Moorhead Minnesota Grade Separation Safety and Mobility Projects FASTLANE Freight Funding Application

Dear Secretary Foxx:

On behalf of Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee (MFAC), I am submitting this letter of support for the Minnesota Department of Transportation's application for a grant to help fund the Moorhead Minnesota Grade Separation, Safety and Mobility projects under the FASTLANE program.

The Moorhead Minnesota Grade Separation, Safety and Mobility projects are multiple projects designed to resolve conflict points for rail and roadway traffic. Grade separations and junction improvements are needed to resolve a bottleneck and inefficient operations on both the BNSF Railroad and access for the Ottertail Valley Railroad that have caused undue traffic delays and safety risks at current at-grade railroad crossings.

This project will also increase mobility and access on two major U.S. highways (10 and 75), supporting energy and farm product carriers in western Minnesota.

These projects will improve highway connectivity and operations of state highways and decrease vehicle-rail exposure, furthermore substantially improving local, regional and national freight transportation.

Thank you for your consideration and approval of this application.

Sincerely,

William E. Goins, Chairman
Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee
"Representing Minnesota Freight since 1988"

MnDOT/Moorhead Rail Safety

March 23, 2016



Report on the
**Improvements to Highway-Rail
Grade Crossings and Rail Safety**

December 2014



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Photo from: Curt Benson

Minnesota lawmakers say Heimdal derailment is evidence for why more rail safety legislation is needed

By Kay Cooley on May 7, 2015 at 6:13 p.m.

- ✓ The City of Moorhead is bisected by 5 active rail lines including BNSF mainline
- ✓ Through trains & crossing blockages (with local movements):
 - ✓ 2014: 85 through trains & 106 crossing blockages per day
 - ✓ 5-7 ND oil trains per day
 - ✓ 2040: 151 through trains & 187 crossing blockages per day
- ✓ Challenges
 - ✓ Traffic gridlock: crossings blocked 4-8 hours per day (2014)
 - ✓ Vehicle & pedestrian safety concerns
 - ✓ Barrier for emergency services & first responders
 - ✓ Negative impacts to Downtown viability
- ✓ Economic disparity
 - ✓ Significant ND state-wide infrastructure investment
 - ✓ Local ND sales tax dedication to infrastructure
 - ✓ Competitive disparities for business & growth
 - ✓ Comprehensive mitigation strategy needs financial support

Financing & Schedule



Proposed Program Financing

Total Project	City	BNSF	2016 Request	2018 Request	Total Program
Previous Investments	\$6.6M				\$6.6M
Additional City Match*	\$5.8M				\$5.8M
SE Main Ave/20 th St/21 st St		\$2.7M ¹	\$34.5M		\$37.2M
11 th St		TBD ²	\$10.0M	\$55.0M	\$65.0M
Inflation Adjustment (per MMB)			\$11.3M ³	\$19.5M	\$30.8M
Total Program	\$12.4M	\$2.7M	\$55.8M	\$74.5M	\$145.4M

¹BNSF match for SE Main Ave/20th St/21st St includes a statutory match estimated at \$1.7M and an additional \$1M for voluntary closure of 1st Ave S grade crossing

²BNSF statutory match to be determined

³\$7.8M for SE Main Ave/20th St/21st St & \$3.5M for 11th St

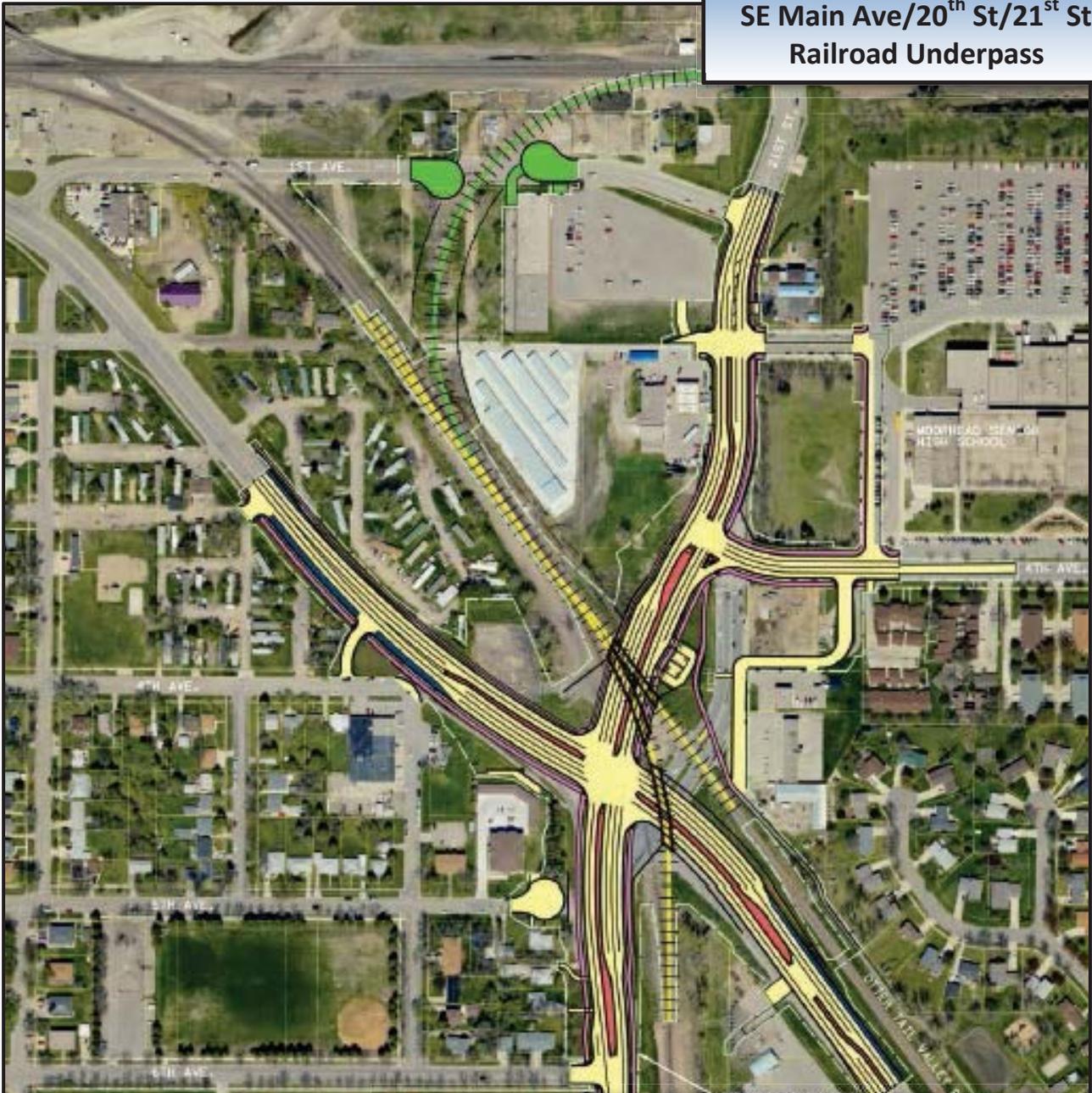
****Proposed City Match: 2% of the median household income multiplied by the number of households in the City (patterned after the State Flood Damage Reduction Grant Assistance Program)***

	SE Main Ave/20 th St/21 st St	11 th St
2002-2010	Prelim Eng & EA	
2010-2012	Final Design & ROW	
2016	Shovel-Ready Construction!!	Prelim Eng & EA
2017		Final Design & ROW
2018		Construction!!



Contacts:
 Jody Martinson, MnDOT District Engineer
 218-846-3603
 Del Rae Williams, Mayor
 218-299-5305
 Michael Redlinger, City Manager
 218-299-5305
 Bob Zimmerman, City Engineer
 218-299-5390

SE Main Ave/20th St/21st St Railroad Underpass



LEGEND	
	PROPOSED ROADWAYS
	PROPOSED BRIDGE/WALL
	PROPOSED MEDIAN/DURB
	PROPOSED SIDEWALK/TRAIL
	PROPOSED RAILROAD
	PROPOSED ROADWAY RELATED TO WYE
	PROPOSED WYE

Cost is Driven by Complexity:

- ✓ Intersection of 2 high volume streets with 2 separate RR lines (not one street crossing one rail line)
- ✓ 3 railroad bridges
- ✓ Dense urban setting
- ✓ Railroad wye provides benefits to multiple crossings beyond the project area & frees up 2.5 hours of rail capacity
- ✓ Large footprint requires significant stormwater management
- ✓ Existing geometry prohibits RR crossing gates
- ✓ Daily vehicle-rail exposures reduced by 412,000
- ✓ 75 petroleum truck & 130 school bus crossings per day
- ✓ Project animation available at:

<http://www.cityofmoorhead.com/departments/engineering/forms-resources/animated-depiction-of-20th-21st-st-se-main-avenue-grade-separation-project>

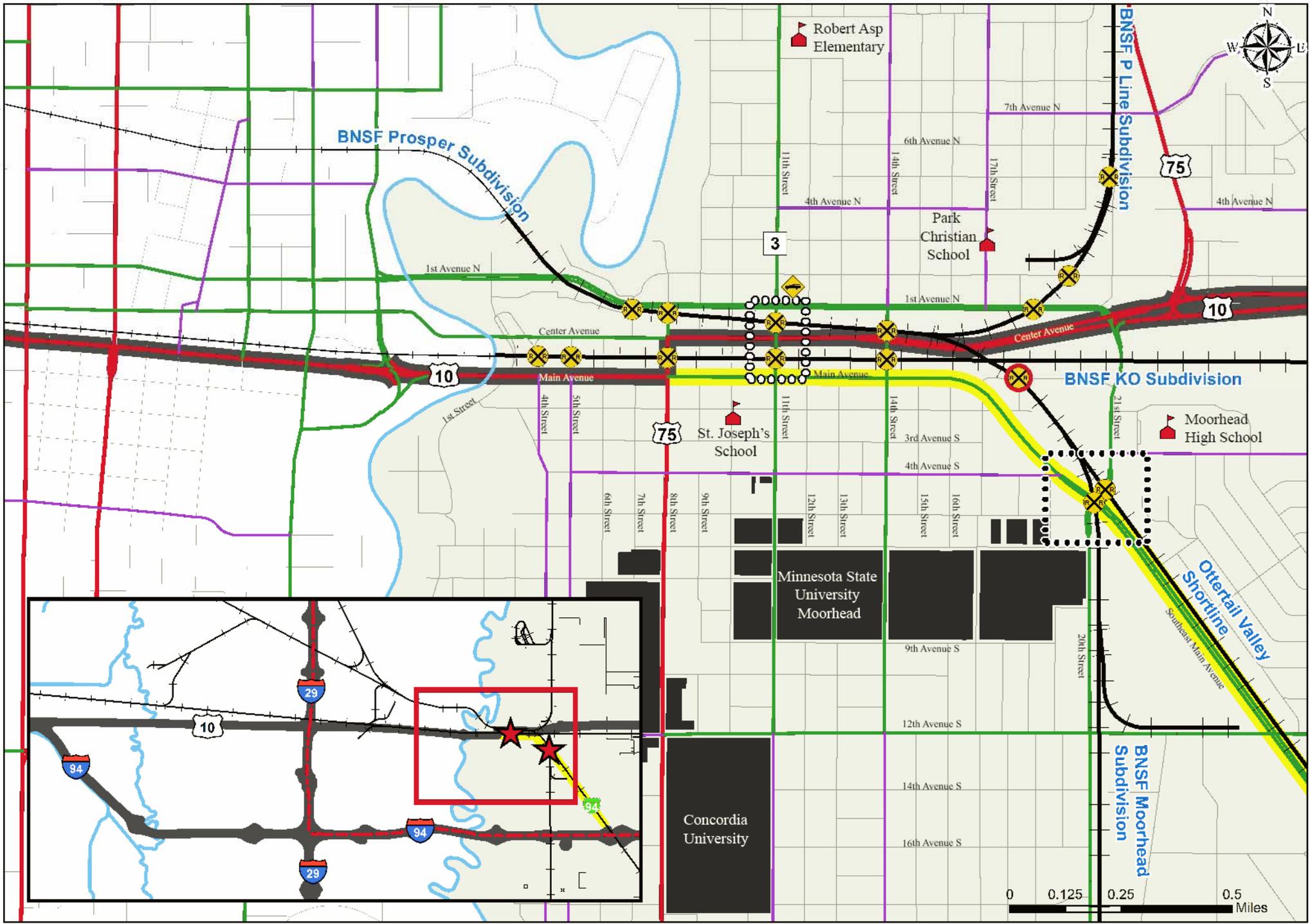
11th St Railroad Underpass

PROPOSED HWY 10 / 75 ALIGNMENT



Cost is Driven by Complexity:

- ✓ 2 grade separations: 4 high volume streets & 2 RR lines (not one street crossing one rail line)
- ✓ 2 railroad bridges
- ✓ Dense urban setting
- ✓ Large footprint requires significant stormwater management
- ✓ Improves connectivity & operations of State highways (US 10 & US 75)
- ✓ Daily vehicle-rail exposures reduced by almost 2,000,000



- Legend**
- | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------|---|
| National Highway System | City of Moorhead, MN | Principal Arterial | Local Roadway | Railroad |
| National Highway Freight Network | City of Fargo, ND | Minor Arterial | Colleges | Railroad Crossing |
| I-94 Business Loop | Rivers | Collector | School | Railroad Crossing Closed with Project |
| | | | | Fire Station |
| | | | | 11th Street Project Location |
| | | | | SE Main Avenue/ 20th Street/ 21st Street Project Location |