



Blatnik Bridge Update for MIC TAC & Policy Board

August 19 & 20, 2025



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Looking Back...

- **The last update for the TAC and Policy Board was September 18 & 19, 2024**
 - Traffic mitigation plans were covered extensively
 - Nothing has nor will change with the traffic mitigation plan between now and construction
 - Adjustments will be made, if necessary, after implementation of the mitigation plan

What have we been up to?

- Preliminary engineering. Done. The successful design-builder team will complete the design with the requirements of the RFP.
- Developing the Request for Proposal (RFP)
 - The RFP contains the “contract requirements”
- Request for Qualifications (RFQ)
- Environmental permitting
- Environmental Assessment re-evaluation
- Estimating. And more estimating
- Completed the Initial Financial Plan (IFP)
- Completed the Project Management Plan (PMP)
- Completed the pile load test program study
- Contractor meetings
 - Taking questions and input on draft RFQ and RFP
- Right of Way acquisition and relocations
- Grant pursuits (two)
- Risk analysis and workshops
- Developing agreements (railroad, maintenance, partnership/cost sharing, etc.)
- Public outreach

Project Plans – General Layout: No Change



Bridge Type Option 1: Tied Arch



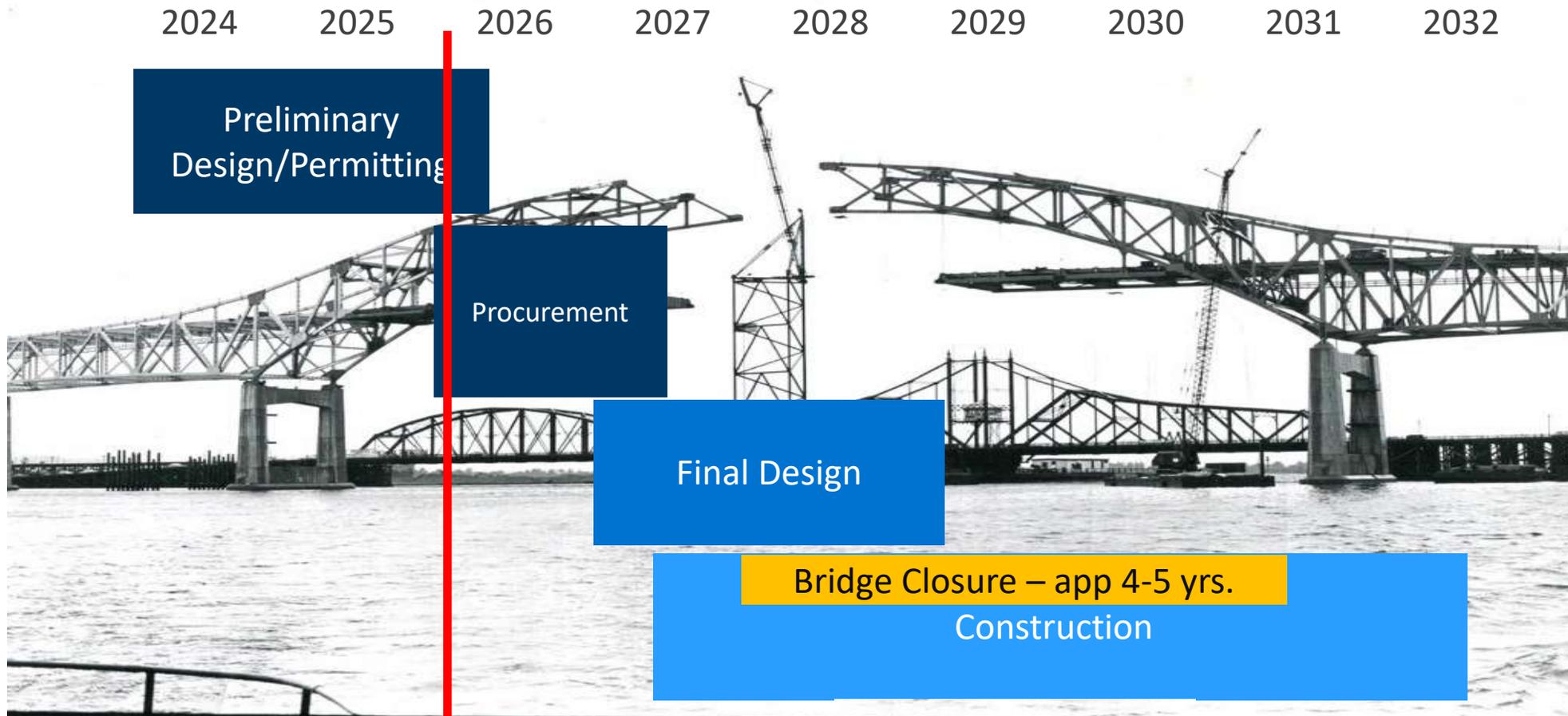
Bridge Type Option 2: Cable Stay



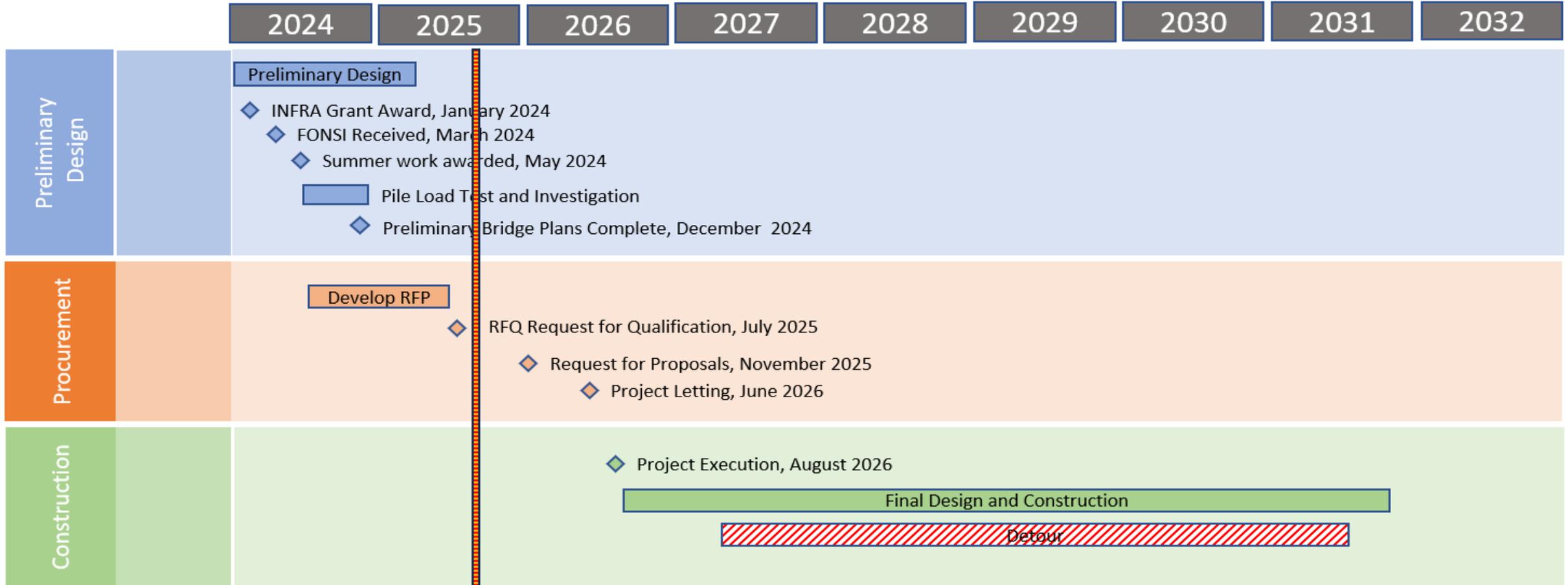
Schedule



Project Schedule (Overview)



Project Schedule



Procurement Schedule & Milestones

TIME FRAME	MILESTONE
December 2024	Pile Load Test and Pier Excavation P/T Contract COMPLETE
December 2024	Preliminary Bridge Plan/Approved Geometric Layout (5/13/24) COMPLETE
June 30, 2025	Release Design Build Draft Request for Qualifications (RFQ) & Draft RFP COMPLETE
July 30, 2025	Release final RFQ COMPLETE
August 20, 2025	Start Contractor 1:1s (up to two with each contractor prior to RFQ due, Sept 2, 2025 is the second opportunity)
September 4, 2025	Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) due
November 2025	R/W Acquired (with PIF and Cert 3), agreements and permits (draft or final) ready
November 7, 2025	Release Final Design Build RFP
Late November 2025 – Late April 2026	Contractor 1:1 meetings, typically every two weeks

Procurement Schedule & Milestones

TIME FRAME	MILESTONE
Early April 2026	Evaluate agreements and permits to see if any are later than expected and require action in addendum
May 4, 2026	Addendum deadline
June 2, 2026	Final RFPs due
June 23, 2026	Letting – starts 60-day clock (max) to award
August 22, 2026	Contract Award
~September 5, 2026	Contract approval/execution & NTP 1 (2 weeks max between award and approval)
February 18, 2027	NTP 2
2027	Final Design Complete and Major Construction Start

Mental Health in the Construction Industry (points from Minnesota AGC)

- 83% of construction workers struggle with mental health challenges
- Several factors tied to the construction industry and company culture, along with worker lifestyle, increase the risk
- Our negative perceptions have prevented too many workers from seeking the help they need
- **The construction industry has one of the highest rates of suicide at 56 per 100,000 workers**
 - **More than four times greater than the national average (14.4)**
 - **Five times greater than the rate of all other construction fatalities combined**

Mental Health in the Construction Industry

- The industry is working on this nationwide
- We, as project owners, need to work with the industry to address this problem
- We, as project owners, need to consider this as we develop project schedules
- We, as project owners, need to share this message with the public – they do not know
- The Blatnik project is the perfect platform to work with our industry and public to make a difference (1.5 – 1.75 million labor hours, public desire for highly accelerated construction and reduced closure time)

Project Cost and Funding



Project Cost and Funding (in round numbers)

- **\$1.8 billion: Current estimated total project cost**
 - \$400 million: Current WisDOT commitment (June 2023)
 - \$400 million: Current MnDOT commitment (May 2023)
 - \$1.06 billion: 2023 Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Program (MPDG) Grant award (INFRA)
- \$216 million: FFY 2025 & 2026 Bridge Investment Program (BIP) grant requests

The Impact of Inflation

- Original construction duration: 1958 - 1961
- Original design + construction cost: \$21 million
- \$21 million inflated to 2028 is about \$2.2 billion
- Current total project cost estimate is \$1.8 billion

Grant Application Summary

Program	Requested Amount	Submitted BCA Score / BCR	Comments
FFY 2022 BIP (Large Bridge)	\$895M	5.11	Not successful
FFY 2023/2024 MPDG (Mega/INFRA)	\$1.06B (Awarded INFRA)	2.47 - No Debrief	Successful
FFY 2023 BIP (Large Bridge)	\$882M	2.43 - No Debrief	Not successful
FFY 2023/2024 BIP (Large Bridge) Resubmittal (FY 2024-FFY 2026 BIP Combined NOFO)	\$215.5M	3.78 - Adjusted Up (11)	Not successful
FFY 2025 BIP (Large Bridge) Resubmittal	\$215.5M	3.78 - In Review	Submitted June 16, 2025
FFY 2026 BIP (Large Bridge) Resubmittal (current)	\$215.5M	2.02 - Submitted	Submitted August 1, 2025

ICE & EE Estimating/Risk

ICE = Independent Cost Estimator
EE= Engineer's Estimator

- ICE and EE prepared risk-based estimates and schedules based on the draft RFP requirements & updated preliminary plans
 - Does the content of the RFP change the price?
 - Last look at cost & schedule before beginning the procurement process
- July 21, 2025 – Risk based estimates and schedules turned in
- July 24, 2025 – Cost reconciliation meeting between ICE and EE
- July 31, 2025 – Risk workshop with ICE and EE

Construction Cost Split

- Minnesota Approach = 100% MnDOT
- Main Bridge = 50:50 cost-share
- Wisconsin Ramps = 100% WisDOT
- Wisconsin Approach = 100% WisDOT
- R/W and Utilities = 100% respective state

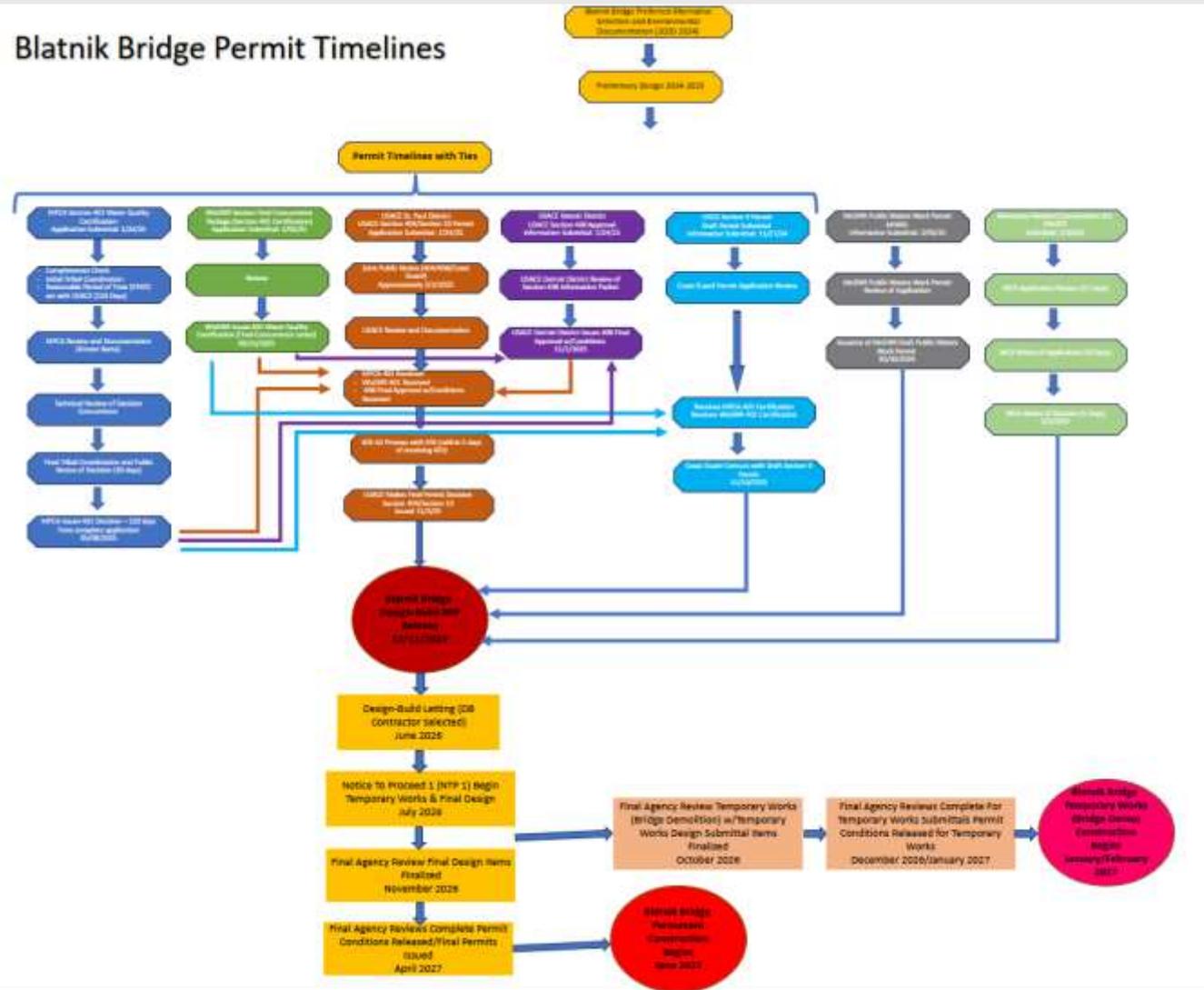
Sounds easy, but the mechanics of setting up the bid documents to make sure contractors put money in the correct place is very complicated!

Engineer's Estimate					Estimating Rationale
Line/Item No.	Description	Line Item Estimates		Unit	Be specific. Give a good engineering explanation for each estimate, unless thoroughly explained by quantities. Address all significant 'incidental' percentages in comments.
A	PROJECT MANAGEMENT	Percentage	Total Item Cost	Unit	
1 2016.901/00010	Contract Management	(% of B&C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Fixed cost split 53/47
2 2016.901/00050	Quality Management	(% of B&C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Fixed cost split 53/47
3 2016.901/00060	Human Resources Management	(% of B&C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Probably not used
4 2016.901/00070	Safety Management	(% of B&C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Probably not used
5 2016.901/00080	Public Information Management	(% of B&C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Probably not used
	Project Management Subtotal:		#VALUE!		
B	ENGINEERING	Percentage	Total Item Cost	Unit	
8 2011.901/00045	Design Services	(% of C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Fixed cost split 53/47. Could consider MN/WI A/B
9 2011.901/00060	Design Surveying	(% of C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Fixed cost split 53/47. Could consider MN/WI A/B
10 2011.901/00110	Sanitary Design - A	(% of C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Used as needed. A and B for these is for specific utilities.
11 2011.901/00120	Sanitary Design - B	(% of C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Used as needed. A and B for these is for specific utilities.
12 2011.901/00210	Watermain Design -A	(% of C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Used as needed. A and B for these is for specific utilities.
13 2011.901/00220	Watermain Design -B	(% of C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Used as needed. A and B for these is for specific utilities.
14 2013.901/00025	Environmental Compliance	(% of C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Fixed cost split 53/47. Could consider MN/WI A/B
15 2013.901/00130	Geotechnical Investigation	(% of C)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Fixed cost split 53/47. Could consider MN/WI A/B
	Engineering Subtotal:		#VALUE!		
C	CONSTRUCTION	Design QUANTITY	Total Item Cost	Unit	
6 2021.901/00005	Mobilization Design Build	(% of C, excluding Mob & Insurance)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Fixed cost split 53/47
7 2012.901/00040	Insurance	(% of C, excluding Mob & Insurance)	#VALUE!	Lump Sum	Fixed cost split 53/47



Permits Update

Blatnik Bridge Permit Timelines

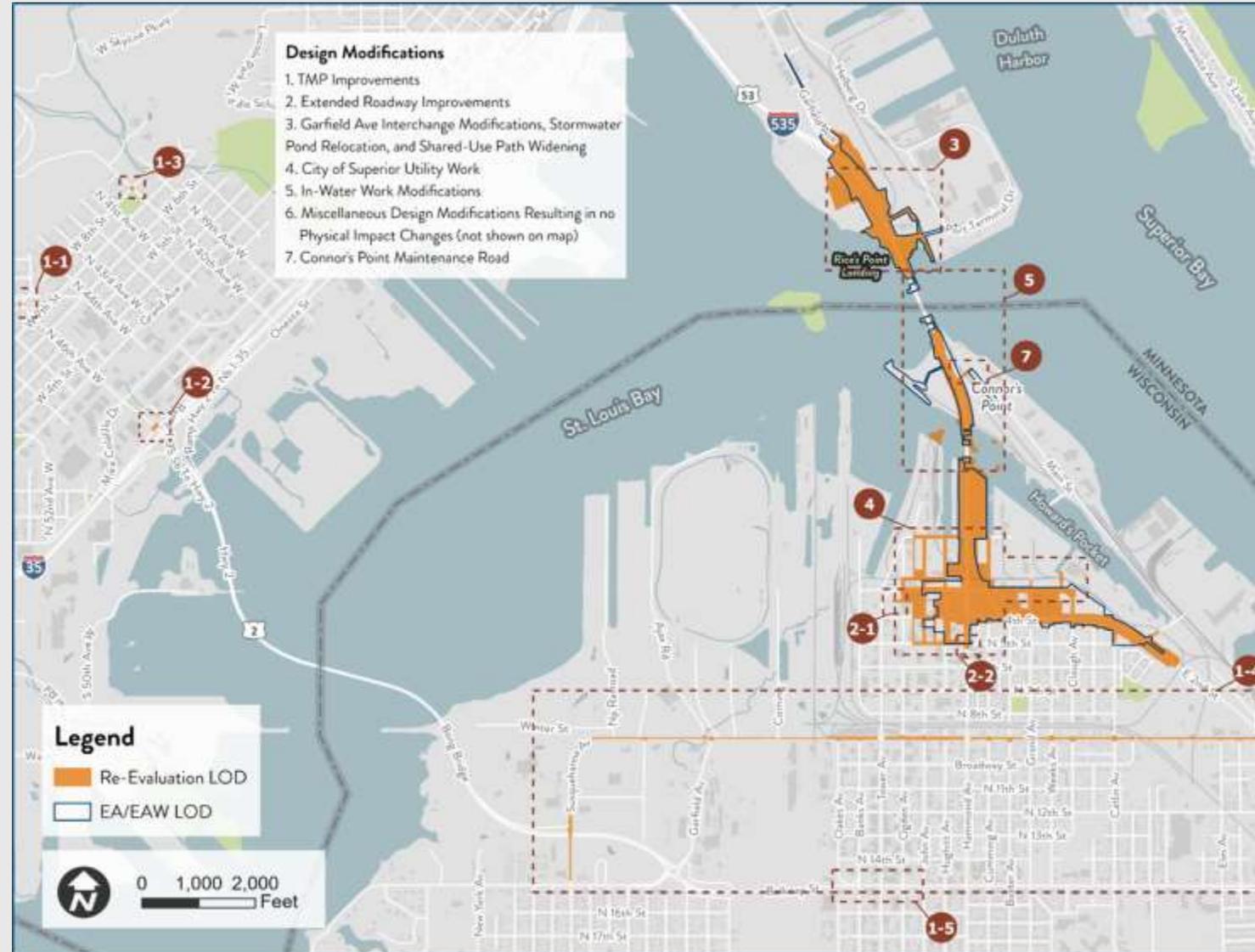


Major Permits Update

Agency	Permit Type	Submitted	In hand?
	USGC Section 9 Final Permit Application	2/18/2025	<i>On track for November 2025</i>
 <small>US Army Corps of Engineers®</small>	USACOE Section 404 Permit	1/24/2025	<i>Provisional letter rec'd 8/15/25. On track for September 2025</i>
	WisDNR Final Concurrence Letter Package (includes Section 401)	2/13/2025	<i>On track for September 2025</i>
 <small>US Army Corps of Engineers®</small>	USACOE Section 408 Permit	1/24/2025	Yes – 5/23/2025
	MPCA Section 401	1/24/2025	Yes – 4/22/2025
	MnDNR Public Waters Permit	2/5/2025	Yes – 6/12/2025

Environmental Assessment Re-Evaluation

- Traffic control measures
 - Temporary signals in Minnesota
 - Winter Street improvements include Mill & Overlay, Temporary Widening for Turn-lanes, Temporary Signals and ADA Improvements
- Roadway tie-ins in Wisconsin
- Completed 8/7/25



Design Build Update

- Received industry comments on Draft RFP
 - Addressed most; more may come
 - Work continues on Structures section in particular
- Insurance Review Continues
 - Opinions from industry, GEC, Admin and their consultant Marsh
 - Project Specific Professional Liability
 - Builder's Risk policy
- Working on Estimate/lump sum/Agreement structure

Structures Update

On-going effort to update RFP regarding requirements for:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vessel clearance requirements• Vessel impact• Pile corrosion• Foundation design• Structural redundancy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Material testing and quality control• Durability and maintenance plans• Service life requirements• Site visits to other bridges to review drainage systems and summarize lessons learned |
|--|---|

Scanning Trip Update (May 19-23)



- Missouri DOT**
- Cape Girardeau Bridge (cable stay DBB rehab – Cape Girardeau, MO)
 - Chester Bridge (cable stay DB new construction – Chester, MO)

Illinois DOT
McClugage Bridge (tied arch DBB new construction – Peoria, IL)

Scanning Trip Update (May 19-23)

- Learning Objectives for cable stay and tied arch bridges
 - Bridge type selection process
 - Cost estimating
 - Contract & procurement
 - Permitting
 - Construction methodologies
 - Maintenance considerations
 - In-service inspection considerations



Scanning Trip Update (May 19-23)

- Take-aways
 - No red flags – we are not missing anything obvious
 - Gained knowledge on both bridge types, particularly maintenance and operations considerations
 - We're going to modify our 1:1 contractor process to help better guide contractors for what we are looking for





Traffic Management Plan (TMP) – No Change

Traffic Management Plan (TMP) Overview



Project Controls/Dashboards

Dashboard update:

- Data connections built
- Working on identifying information and format for executive leadership.
- Based on WisDOT Mega/Major format.
- Scope, Schedule, Budget, Risks
- Include tracking cost for both states by major cost element and projected spending curves
- Track grant spending
- Track partnership agreements and balances
- Keep under 10 pages goal.
 - Brent Spence 89 pages



Communications and Engagement

- Since 2020 when we began outreach for the Blatnik Bridge project, we have had
 - ~90 events (pop-ups, farmers market, business events, organization presentations, Chamber events, etc.)
 - 8 open houses
 - ~40 stakeholder meetings
 - More than 2,700 people engaged at public events
 - More than 25 local, state and federal agencies engaged



Communications and Engagement

Other ways we are engaging the community

- Twin Ports Business Alliance has formed in response to our Business Advisory Group. Consists of businesses and organizations from both sides of the bridge. MnDOT, WisDOT will support their efforts.
- Working with Vista Fleet, Duluth, to offer narrated boat tours during demolition and construction (similar to St. Croix Crossing project)
- Roundabout education on the project website
- Developing project videos

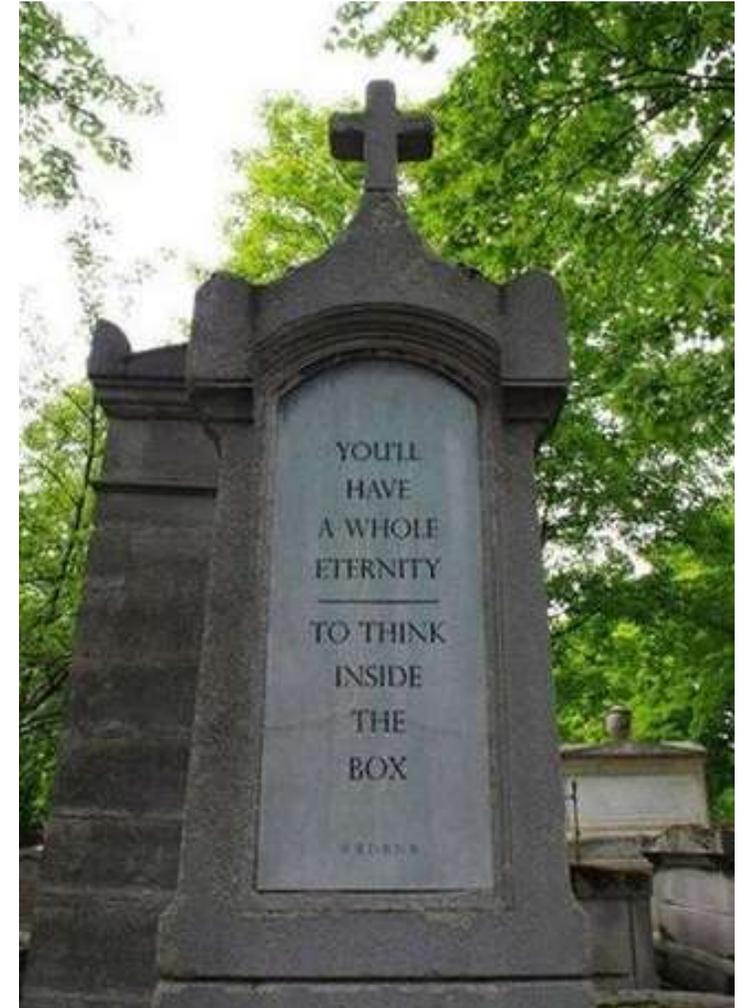
Communications and Engagement

- Beginning a monthly newsletter – sent through MnDOT's GovDelivery email platform. First issue will be sent out in September. Newsletters will share information on the process, history, FAQs and much more.
- Sign up for email updates and the newsletter on the project website



Summary

- There's been a tremendous amount of great work done
- By a team with one jersey – that of the project (MnDOT, WisDOT, many other agency partners and consultants)
- We are on track to deliver the largest project in the history of MnDOT and WisDOT through extensive collaboration and teamwork



Project Website and Contacts



PROJECT WEBSITE:

mndot.gov/d1/projects/blatnik-bridge

CONTACTS:

Pat Huston, MnDOT District 1 | MnDOT Project Director
(218) 348-9902, patrick.huston@state.mn.us

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Stay Connected

- Sign up for email updates on the project website
- Summary of public comments will be posted on the project website
- Look for upcoming events

I-535 Blatnik Bridge

Duluth, Minn. and Superior, Wis.

[Project Home](#) [Accessibility](#) [Meetings](#) [History](#) [Contacts](#)

About this project

MnDOT is working toward a future project to address concerns about the John A. Blatnik Bridge, one of two bridges that connects Duluth, Minn., to Superior, Wis. Carrying I-535 over the St. Louis Bay, the Blatnik is an important freight and commercial connection between the Twin Ports.

Jointly owned and managed by MnDOT and WisDOT, it is Minnesota's second longest bridge and serves an average of 33,021 cars traveling between the two cities each day. MnDOT will lead the project, which will address aging infrastructure, improve safety and better accommodate oversize/overweight loads.

For more information on the bridge, [click here](#).

Project purpose

- Significant deterioration in truss elements



Schedule

- 2020 to 2024: Preferred Alternative Selection and Environmental Documentation
- 2024 to 2026: Preliminary Design
- 2026 to 2028: Final Design
- 2028 to 2031: Construction

Location

- I-535 over the St. Louis Bay between Duluth, Minn., and Superior, Wis.

Benefits

- Improve safety
- Better accommodate oversize/overweight loads

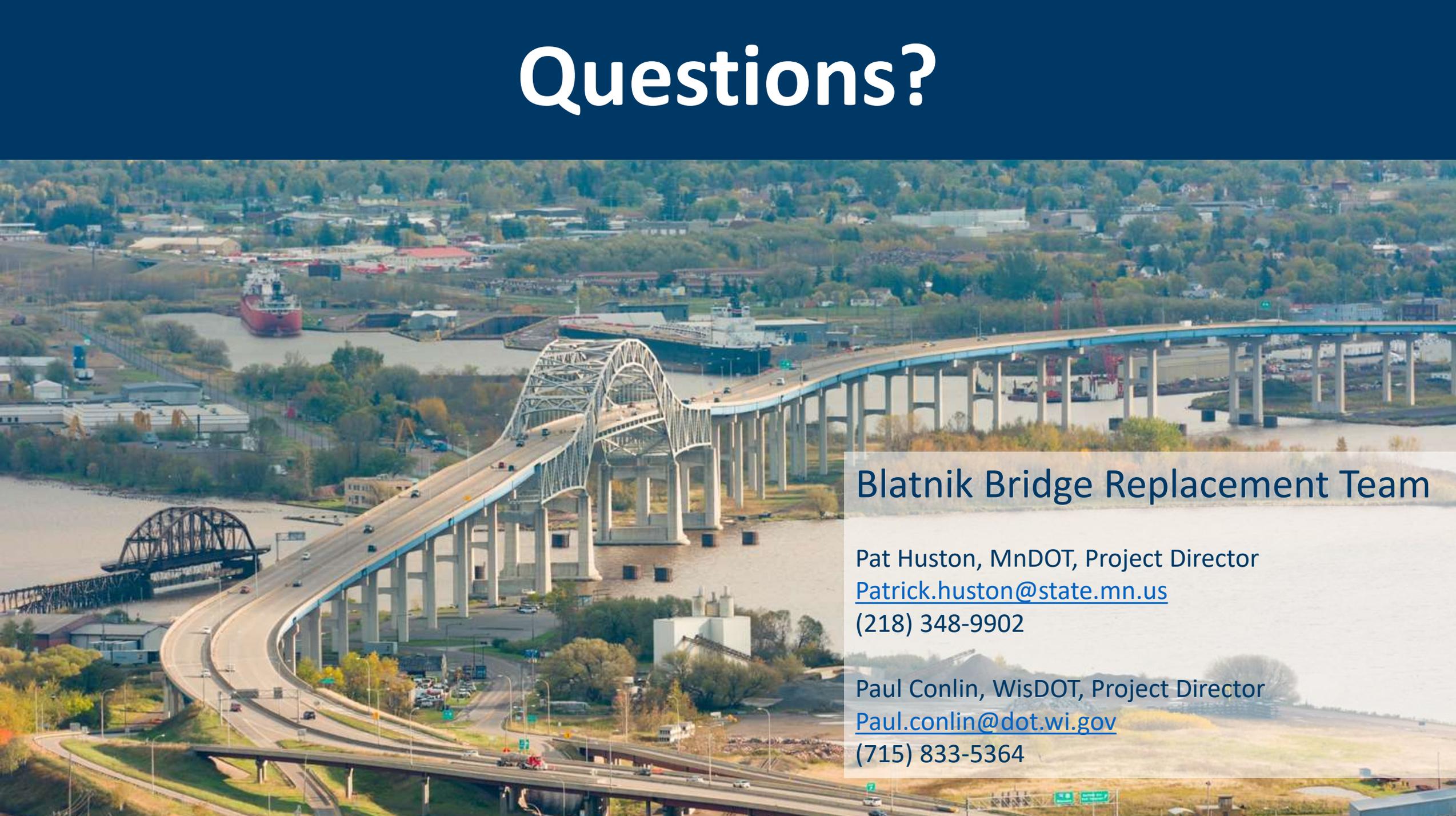
Cost

- Unknown at this time

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Questions?



Blatnik Bridge Replacement Team

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