

Introduction

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) have initiated planning for improvements to the Blatnik Bridge. In April 2021, a Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo was prepared for public input as part of the project's environmental process. Input was requested on the conceptual alignments for the Blatnik Bridge project. The purpose of this document is to summarize the methods used to facilitate comments on the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo, the types of comments received, and how comments were considered in the final draft of the Alignment Screening Tech Memo.

Outreach Methodology

The following events and platforms were used to advertise the availability of the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo to the public and to facilitate comment on the conceptual alignments developed for the project:

- Agency Meeting, April 21, 2021
- Public Advisory Committee (PAC), April 27, 2021
- Public Open House, May 11, 2021
- Project website, including project contact information and an interactive feedback map to provide input

The Public Open House was advertised through MnDOT and WisDOT social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter), including some paid promotion advertisements to increase reach. Press releases were provided in advance to relevant news outlets to garner interest in the project and a GovDelivery email was sent to the project's distribution list. The PAC and agency meetings are regularly standing project meetings which received specific presentations related to the alternatives screening process. Agencies, PAC members, and the general public were directed to provide comments on the project website (www.dot.state.mn.us/d1/projects/blatnik-bridge/) by using an online interactive feedback map, or by contacting the project contacts by mail, email, or phone. The interactive feedback map asked users to provide feedback either by drawing their own proposed alignment or placing a comment on the map related to locations of concern or opportunity on the proposed alignments. Concerns and opportunities for future interchange locations were also collected. All comments were accepted through May 21, 2021.

Summary of Comments Received

During the agency comment period (April 21 to May 21), 10 comment letters were received and several comments were provided at the Agency Meeting #3 on April 21. During the PAC #4 meeting on April 27, 6 comments were received. During the public comment period (May 11 to May 21), 66 comments were received. The comments received have been separated into groups by topic and include:

- Alignment options
- Bike/pedestrian

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- Bridge design
- Transit
- Railroad crossings
- Environmental
- Project name
- Economic development
- Traffic/Geometrics
- Other Comments

The following sections explain how these comments were considered in the alternatives screening. A matrix of all comments, organized by how they were received, is included in Table 1.

Alignment Options

Several comments were made regarding the opportunities and challenges presented by the Conceptual Alignments; specifically if there are concerns with which Conceptual Alignments are recommended to be eliminated from further consideration. Comments were also sought to determine if other conceptual alignments should be considered. Generally, comments were consistent with the supporting data provided in the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo. The only exceptions were a few comments in support of either tunnel or Connors Point alignments, which are proposed for elimination. While there are opportunities with these alignments, there are far more challenges which are discussed in detail in Section 7.2 of the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo. **Tunnel and/or Connors Point alignments are still proposed for elimination.**

Bike/Pedestrian

Multiple people commented on the “poor” performance rating assigned to the tunnel alignments for walkability/bikeability. The project team discussed and determined that a rating of “fair” better characterized the tunnel alignments. Section 5.1.2.6 and Appendix A of the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo have been updated to reflect this change. In addition, Table 6 of Appendix A (the Screening Summary of Steps 1 and 2) incorrectly assigned individual performance ratings for each sub-alignment in Step 1, including for Walkability/Bikeability. Sub-alignments were not developed until after Step 1 screening. The only exception is that the evaluation criteria of bridge condition robustness was screened as part of Step 1 and Step 2 (described in detail in footnote 5 of the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo). **These changes do not alter the recommendations summarized in Section 8 of the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo.**

Similar to previous open houses, there has been continued interest in how the project is developing and evaluating accommodations for bike and pedestrian facilities. The Purpose and Need Statement identifies bikeability/walkability as a Secondary Need and therefore consideration for the inclusion of bike/pedestrian facilities will be completed as alternatives are proposed and developed. Furthermore, it is not precluded from the project’s purpose statement. MnDOT/WisDOT recognize the importance of this issue to stakeholders and have organized a Bike/Pedestrian Technical Working Group (TWG) that will meet regularly throughout the alternatives development process. The TWG includes technical

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experts from both DOTs, the Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council, and FHWA. Issues the TWG will be working on include, but are not limited to, gathering data about bike/ped users in the community and facilitating alternatives development and evaluations as it relates to bike/ped accommodations. **No further changes/additions were made to the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo in consideration of these comments.**

Transit

One comment was received regarding the project's consideration of transit. As noted in the project's Purpose and Need Statement, an objective for the project is to consider multi-modal facilities. MnDOT and WisDOT have checked with their respective transit offices and local transportation plans were reviewed for other transit needs identified in the Duluth-Superior area. No plans for light rail or other transit improvements are mentioned in the Metropolitan Interstate Council's long range plan or by the Regional Transit Coordinating Council. Other than the proposed Northern Lights Express (NLX) passenger rail service between Minneapolis and Duluth (via Superior, Wisconsin crossing over the Grassy Point railroad bridge), no other transit needs have been identified between Duluth and Superior. However, the project's Purpose and Need Statement does not preclude the possibility of designing for potential changes in the current transit system. **No changes/additions were made to the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo in consideration of these comments.**

Bridge Design

Several comments were received regarding bridge types (e.g. movable spans) and vertical clearances (e.g. over Howard's Pocket). These elements have yet to be determined and will be analyzed as alternatives development continues. **No changes/additions were made to the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo in consideration of these comments.**

Railroad Crossings

Two comments were received about considerations of rail crossings in the alternatives development process. Railroad crossings were identified as an Additional Consideration in the project Purpose and Need Statement. Given the level of design of the Conceptual Alignments, railroad implications did not represent a differentiator in the screening process and so was not included in screening matrices in Appendix A of the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo. Railroad crossings will continue to be analyzed as alternatives are developed. **No changes/additions were made to the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo in consideration of these comments.**

Environmental

There were several comments about various environmental concerns related to project development such as contamination, cultural resources, permits/approvals, stormwater, and species implications. All of these issues have either ongoing or planned studies that will gather existing conditions data from which alternatives can be evaluated in subsequent evaluation phases. **No changes/additions were made to the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo in considerations of these comments.**

Project Name

One comment suggested changing the name of the project to the “Blatnik Crossing.” The project name was based on the name of the existing infrastructure which is the Blatnik Bridge. **No changes/additions were made to the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo in considerations of these comments.**

Economic Development

Several comments were made regarding the opportunities and challenges each Conceptual Alignment presents from an economics perspective. MnDOT and WisDOT will be conducting economic studies to further evaluate the economic implications of the project. The scope of the economics study will be defined as alternatives are developed further. **No changes/additions were made to the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo in considerations of these comments.**

Traffic/Geometrics

Several comments identified traffic or geometrics as either challenges or opportunities depending on the proposed Conceptual Alignments. MnDOT and WisDOT recognize the traffic and geometric problems of the existing infrastructure, as documented in the project Purpose and Need Statement with vehicle mobility and vehicle safety as primary needs. Traffic studies will be developed in conjunction with alternatives development to fully evaluate the alternatives’ effect on vehicle mobility and safety. **No changes/additions were made to the Draft Alignment Screening Tech Memo in considerations of these comments.**

Other Comments

A few other comments were made that were not central to the purpose of soliciting feedback at this stage of the project. These were addressed during the Agency Meeting, PAC, or Open House. These have been included in Table 1 for reference.

CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENT SCREENING – COMMENT SUMMARY

Table 1: Comment Matrix

Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
4/21/2021	Kenneth Westlake (US EPA)	Agency Meeting #3	With the current alignment where does it touch down in WI? Is there consideration to integrate grade separation with the rail crossing?	Rail crossing
4/21/2021	Ben Orne (USACE)	Agency Meeting #3	408 permit will be required depending on the alignment.	Environmental
4/21/2021	Amy Cronk (WIDNR)	Agency Meeting #3	No additional comments at this time, in general we're heading in the right direction. They would have concerns with the Connors Point connection.	Alignments
4/21/2021	Katie Kaliszewski (Wi SHPO)	Agency Meeting #3	What step are we in the process (related to Cultural Resources review)?	Environmental
4/21/2021	Kris Lilljebad (City of Duluth)	Agency Meeting #3	What are the tunnel options?	Alignments
4/21/2021	Mike Wenzholz (MIC)	Agency Meeting #3	Is any of the modeling work coming into play at this point?	Traffic
4/27/2021	Wendy Meierhoff (Bend Tec)	PAC #4	No comment but will review documents later. Will want to look at options that don't require major delays.	Traffic
4/27/2021	Joe McGuiness (Western Great Lakes Pilots Association)	PAC #4	We have an opportunity to replace the bridge with this project. There are two navigation points in the bay area that need to be considered.	Alignments
4/27/2021	Ken Gerasimos (Key Lakes Great Lakes Fleet)	PAC #4	When we say this won't be recommended for further study, will those be fully excluded going forward? Could we revisit them?	Alignments
4/27/2021	Jenny VanSickle (City of Superior, City Council)	PAC #4	When will the needs and purpose statement be presented to the MIC policy board? Could someone visit the Superior City Council to do a brief overview?	Other
4/27/2021	Mike Casey (We Walk Duluth)	PAC #4	Last I heard is that the piers were under review for life span. What has been the results of that and the piers?	Existing bridge

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Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
4/29/2021	Kris Liljeblad, City of Duluth	Email	<p>John – Thanks for the opportunity to comment on the draft memo and the evaluation process through the PAC. I wrote a few first impressions after PAC meeting #4 and then read the memo more carefully, and found that for the most part you have them covered – they just weren’t given much attention in the presentation or committee discussion. Here they are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. First off I thought it was important to point out that alignments parallel to the existing bridge offer a constructability advantage because they will allow the bridge to function and minimize the necessary construction-related closures. And, I found you’ve pointed that out on page 16. 2. Next up, regarding the ped-bike aspects of tunnel options, the length of tunnels, bad air, and darkness are important, but those negatives could be overcome at significant expense for air shafts, ventilation systems, and increased lighting – so cost and O&M burden may be as big a deal as the aesthetics for users, and the combination would suggest that huge expenses may not be rewarded by high levels of usage. 3. Lastly, and most importantly, until Mike Wenzel, MIC mentioned in the PAC meeting that the alignment alternatives were only for the horizontal, and that each could include variable vertical alignments, I was not contemplating low level movable spans over the navigation channel. While I understand it may be too early to dig into that, I think there has been a widely-shared assumption that we’re focused on a passive high level span. As one who expressed anxiety about the negative wind, weather, and extreme height of the existing bridge, I think it may be valuable to give the vertical element greater attention. I haven’t convinced myself that the evaluation screening fully covers low elevation bridge approaches and the attendant at-grade conflicts. If you agree, possibly some clarification is warranted in Sections 5.1.2.4 and 7.1.2.7. <p>My compliments to your team for the conduct of this process so far, and for the clear and easy to read graphics for the Executive Summary, process description and timeline, and the evaluation matrix. It’s top shelf.</p>	Alignments, Bike/pedestrian,
4/29/2021	Joe McGuiness, For Western Great Lakes Pilots Association	Email	<p>I attended Tuesday’s webinar on the Blatnick Bridge alternatives on behalf of Western Great Lakes Pilots. We are the pilots that bring the ocean-going ships to Duluth and Superior.</p> <p>When alternatives are considered, we’d favor any alternative that allows the span over Howard’s Bay (currently 103 feet) to be raised to the same height as the St Louis Bay Span (currently 123 feet). That will allow the docks inside of Howards Bay to receive ships that come up the St Lawrence seaway.</p> <p>I made these comments on the webinar, but wanted to submit them in writing, too, so you’ll have a record of them.</p>	Bridge design

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Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
5/15/2021	Kathy Laakso	Email	<p>I just read the article about moving the bridge. It seems to say that moving the bridge either way, directing traffic away from the downtown business district, would be a good thing.</p> <p>Since the bridge was built Superior has struggled to be a viable, individual and sustainable city of its own, and not a spillover or "bedroom community" of Duluth. Highway 53 charges through like a freeway so that travelers don't even know a downtown exists. The city has been trying to revitalize the downtown and further ignoring that it exists doesn't help.</p> <p>Maybe this is just a marketing and signage problem that hasn't been addressed, and in that case I am not helping with my input. I just wanted to give my opinion, which is what the article was asking for.</p> <p>Thank you very much for asking for public comment.</p>	Alignments
5/16/2021	Blake Twyford	Email	<p>Dear gentlemen, my name is Blake Twyford and I live in Hermantown Mn and work in the Allouez neighborhood or Superior Wi.</p> <p>I drive down Piedmont, thru the can of worms and over the Blatnik Bridge five days a week. My commute time is 25 minutes for about a 16 mile trip.</p> <p>I would support the bridge being straightened to align with highway 2....</p> <p>I believe that if I want to go into Superior business areas...I will. I support Superior restaurants on a regular basis....Guadalajara at the Mariner Mall is a prime example...I am a regular customer...however the rest of the mall is dead...just because you build it doesn't mean they will come. Conversely...build a restaurant named Hog Wild in Solon Springs and provide a dining experience..... people will come.</p> <p>My point is the state should provide a route with appropriate entrance and exit ramps to promote interstate commerce...not everyone wants to see every Business in Superior as they traverse the city.</p>	Alignments
5/18/2021	Christopher Smith, MnDOT	Email	<p>My only suggestion is to call it the "Blatnik Crossing Project" or similar as I thought a tunnel is one of the alternatives being considered.</p>	Project name
5/19/2021	Amy Cronk (WiDNR)	Email	<p>WiDNR has no objections to the alignments that are not being recommended for further evaluation (Connors Point and tunnel options). Removal of the Connors Point options from further consideration will help protect several existing wetland areas on Connors Point that provide much needed filtration, stormwater retention, and habitat protection to the St. Louis River and Bay area. There is also important northern pike spawning habitat at the southern tip of Howards Bay that WDNR is working towards restoring that could be negatively impacted if the new alignment was located on Connors Point.</p>	Alignments, Environmental
5/27/21	Nathan Carlsgaard	Email	<p>Sorry for responding late, but I'm responding to the call for feedback regarding the upcoming replacement bridge. We do need a buffer against high speed traffic right off the bridge. Even though I'm a Superior resident, I know that the straight route onto Hammond has to go.</p> <p>My preference is for the Blatnik Bridge to lead directly onto highway 2/53, but a sizable off-ramp should be built that takes people into the north end of Superior (a Hammond Ave / Tower Ave exit).</p>	Alignments

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Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
5/19/2021	Kenneth Westlake, Deputy Director, Office of Tribal and Multi-media Programs Office of the Regional Administrator	Letter/Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the project team include any additional alignments to study further? <p>The draft technical memo (page 20) identifies 10 conceptual sub-alignments 1 (a - e) and 2 (a - e) as recommended for development as alternatives and further detailed evaluation via Step 3. Based on current information, we have no additional alignments to recommend.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What opportunities do you see with the proposed alignments? <p>Table 6. Screening Summary of Steps 1 and 2 (Appendix A, page 6) rate all 10 proposed recommended alignments as “Fair” for the opportunity for some improvement for bike and pedestrian connectivity. The recommended alternatives present an opportunity to incorporate ped/bike lanes as part of the overall project design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What concerns do you have with the proposed alignments? The existing bridge and all 10 proposed alignments cross Howards Bay in Superior, Wisconsin. EPA’s Great Lakes National Program Office (GLNPO) is overseeing the \$12.1 million cleanup of contaminated sediment in the St. Louis River Area of Concern at Howards Bay. This cleanup effort is a combination of routine navigation dredging along with environmental restoration to remove the contamination. EPA anticipates the cleanup will be completed by fall 2021. <p>2</p> <p>EPA has concerns regarding the location/s of bridge support structure/s for any of the proposed alignments. Support structures should be located so they will not interfere with GLNPO’s on-going and/or completed clean-up/restoration efforts/activities in Howards Bay. We recommend this concern be considered/addressed during Step 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any objections to alignments not being recommended for further evaluation? <p>Based on current project information, EPA has no objections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other feedback that is relevant at this phase of the project? <p>We have no additional comments at this phase of the project.</p>	Alignments, Bike/pedestrian, Environmental

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Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
6/10/2021	W. B. Stanifer (USCG)	Letter/Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should the project team include any additional alignments to study further? <p>The Coast Guard does not object to considering any alignment that meet the reasonable needs of navigation and preserves or increases the vertical and horizontal clearances of the current structure. The vertical clearance of the main truss is 123.00-feet at low steel and the horizontal clearance is 460.00-feet. The vertical clearance of the truss spanning Howard's Pocket is 103.00-feet and the horizontal clearance is 150.00-feet. The Coast Guard encourages the Project Team to consider alternatives that would increase the vertical clearance over Howard's Pocket.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What opportunities do you see with the proposed alignments? <p>All Concept 1 alignments (1.a. through 1.f.) preserve the alignment of the current structure and would not negatively impact the reasonable needs of navigation. Similarly, Concept 2' s surface alignment options (2.a. through 2.e.) preserve the alignment of the current structure. All Concept 3 surface alignments (3.a. through 3.c.) preserve the alignment of the main span over St. Louis River and Bay and eliminates any navigation concerns regarding Howard's Pocket by removing the crossing there. Additionally, all tunnel concepts eliminate any impacts upon navigation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What concerns do you have with the proposed alignments? <p>Although the Technical Memo uses the term "offset" to describe East and West Alignments for Concepts 1 through 3, the examples in exhibits indicate that each alternative alignment preserves the same angle relative to the navigation channel over St. Louis River and Bay as well as Howard's Pocket. The Coast Guard prefers these type of alignments. The Coast Guard would not object to alignments whose angles veer westward relative to the navigation channel. However, the Coast Guard would object to alignments whose angles veer eastward relative to the navigation channel. These alignments would cause mariners to adjust longstanding tracklines and maneuvers when entering or exiting St. Louis Bay.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any objections to alignments not being recommended for further evaluation? <p>Coast Guard has no objection with the recommendation in Paragraph 5 of the technical memo to refer Concepts 1 through 3 and the No Build alternative for further evaluation. The Coast Guard has no objection with the recommendation to not forward Bridge Rehabilitation for further evaluation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any other feedback that is relevant at this phase of the project? <p>The Blatnik Bridge Project Team should continue to engage with the Coast Guard and mariner community to ensure that any alternative meets the reasonable needs of navigation.</p>	Alignments, Bridge design
5/20/2021	<p>Mike Casey, Prescott Morrill, Skip Williams, Mark Baker, Dick Haney,</p> <p>We Walk in Duluth, Blatnik Bridge committee</p>	Letter	<p>We need to step back to Step One: Purpose and Need (P&N) Screening before we can comment on the Step Two: High Level Screening of alignment and sub-alignment phase of the environmental process.</p> <p>Current P&N Statement: The purpose of the Blatnik Bridge project is to provide an Interstate highway connection across the St. Louis Bay that does not restrict the movements of freight and provides local, regional, and international movement in a reliable and efficient manner.</p> <p>The statement does not mention the need for an intermodal crossing as aproi to any TIP. Reference: 23 US Code §134; https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/23/134.</p> <p>TIPs for each metropolitan area shall provide for the development and integrated management and operation of transportation systems and facilities (including accessible pedestrian walkways, bicycle transportation facilities, and intermodal facilities that support intercity transportation, including intercity buses and intercity bus facilities and commuter vanpool providers) that will function as an intermodal transportation system for</p>	Alignments, Bike/pedestrian, Transit

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Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
			<p>the metropolitan planning area and as an integral part of an intermodal transportation system....</p> <p>Recommended Statement: The purpose of the Blatnik Bridge project is to provide a St. Louis River crossing that facilitates heavy and outsize movement of freight, creates a major highway right-of-way for vehicle traffic, safe shipping traffic, accessible pedestrian walkways, bicycle transportation facilities, and provision for public transit (e.g. intercity buses or other appropriate transit which minimizes congestion and emissions).</p> <p>Discussion: The present statement with the focus on vehicle and freight, preempts an objective high-level screening and analysis of all modes of transportation. The poor condition of the present bridge informs the timing for the project, not the purpose and need for the crossing project. Clearly the present bridge creates significant operational factors that must be addressed. Some of these are related to life-cycle weathering and some related to the bridge’s design and functionality. Currently, the inability to fully facilitate crossing of heavy and outsize freight is a major need that must be addressed due to the relationship of the desired capability to the future of the Twin Ports. The lack of provision of a pedestrian, bike, and public transit is just as great. The fact that no other safe means exist for pedestrians or bikes or the fact that public transit is subject to congestion are as great of a shortfall as heavy freight. These are primary not secondary considerations.</p> <p>No other current crossing, including the present aging Blatnik Bridge, provides the necessary safe and efficient intermodal capability. Also, these crossings do not facilitate the heavy and outsize freight movement between ports or within the region. In addition, other crossings where they exist are generally less direct than the present Blatnik crossing. This means there is no facility for pedestrians or biking transportation to travel between the downtown areas of Duluth and Superior for employment or other needs. (The Bong Bridge crossing does have a very limited provision for pedestrians and bikes. However, it is not compliant with present standards nor is it considered safe, much less in wet, winter, or windy weather.) Public transit is currently via bus in traffic making a schedule-based service difficult to sustain in all weather and intermittent congestion. With the present need to reduce emissions and congestion, providing a separate transit lane or other capability would not only meet this need, but also facilitate bike and pedestrian travel between the two downtowns. Given the direction in the federal statute, the purpose of the proposed crossing, and the life of the new crossing being planned, clearly provisions for pedestrians, biking transportation and public transit must be fully stated. Otherwise the functionality will be limited and not a fiscally prudent project given the limited points of crossing the Saint Louis River, a significantly high barrier to mobility.</p> <p>The screening matrix is incomplete. It is interesting that while impacts to pedestrian/bike connections is a metric category, there is no category for public transit or rail. The MN-Dot assumption may be that public transit would be via a bus vehicle operating in congestion. Given the fact that the service life of the project that would approach the next century, more analysis and documentation may be necessary. It would be unfortunate that the option for an independent lane or some other means for accommodating transit does not receive due regard. The same would be for rail or commuter rail knowing that about half the current traffic is related to common commuting times. As already mentioned, given the potential for emissions and service failures due to traffic congestion the loss of a reliable and safe public transit capability between Duluth and Superior would be an unfortunate and fiscally imprudent outcome in screening. Therefore a necessary step toward a more objective development of alternatives.</p> <p>Precedent exists in the recently completed I-495 crossing between Virginia and D.C. (Wilson Bridge). This crossing provides in addition to interstate highway crossing for vehicle traffic, pedestrian and bike crossing, and</p>	

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			<p>a provision for future separate transit capability connecting with existing DC-Metro or a separate bus transit option. A similar project is under final planning between Virginia and Maryland that includes separate pedestrian and bike lanes to name only two. These bridges are much larger, but the project included the needs of non-vehicle transportation early in the purpose and needs phase and allowed a fiscally prudent and inclusive approach to transportation to emerge. (The intermodal approach allowed both efforts to create scenic overlooks at minor additional cost.) Similar to Duluth and Superior the Potomac River creates a major boundary to not just vehicle travel, but for all modes.</p> <p>Both Duluth and Superior have developed bike and pedestrian trail networks. The St. Louis River currently blocks interstate transportation for users of these networks.</p> <p>Finally, the project proposed for the Blatnik crossing has a potential life span approaching the next century. Not designing an intermodal crossing as required, becomes functionally shortsighted and fiscally imprudent.</p> <p>Importance of Purpose and Need Statement</p> <p>The purpose and needs piece of the environmental process does not look close at design nor costs so an objective-based statement will help facilitate a more outcome-oriented result in the high-level screening. Getting this statement right will assist in the High-Level Screening, Step 2, and later development of alternatives. The statement will help frame the project with the most relevant context. Getting it closer to the need will help save design time and fiscal resources as limiting the potential for false starts. The current Purpose and Needs statement on the project’s web site is still in draft form, dated February 23, 2021. The latest does not include any information on how the public outreach impacted the draft. One intent of planning reform was to attempt to take a step back and look objectively at the need and not just “replace a bridge with a bridge”. The Saint Louis River is a significant boundary to personnel mobility in the Twin Ports. We need to take that challenge seriously.</p> <p>Step Two: High Level Screening; alignments/sub alignments</p> <p>Tunnel alignments: It has been determined that any tunnel option is unfeasible. We want to point out that it received poor ratings within the matrix for “provides bike/ped connectivity”. The reasons stated were that close proximity to traffic, long distance and air quality were the main factors for a poor rating. If we are not to take into account final design or cost we feel that a tunnel could provide at least a fair rating. A tunnel would provide shelter from weather which some feel is an issue for bike/ped infrastructure on a bridge. The bridge bike/ped matrix received a fair rating so it is logical that a tunnel could also at least a fair rating if the design accommodated good air quality and a comfortable barrier from other forms of traffic. Our further thoughts on a tunnel are that it most likely is unfeasible, mostly from a cost and maintenance perspective for any mode of transportation given the shipping needs and known issues of the area.</p> <p>Bridge Alignments: All three alignments have received a fair matrix rating for “provides bike/ped connectivity”. We believe that all three alignments could accommodate bike/peds so therefore they should receive a good rating. Where we have no pedestrian or bike facilities now, any facility would be good, and if designed and funded well they most certainly can be very safe and comfortable to be used in most weather conditions. At the public meeting someone from the agency side mentioned that snow and ice would make it very difficult. The same can and should be said for the other modes as well so this should not be an issue at this stage of the</p>	

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Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
			<p>process if we understand the process correctly. If the existing approaches for alignment option 1 can not accommodate bike/peds due to size and shape shouldn't we consider separate approach facilities to accommodate bike/peds? It feels like we could design and fund this if needed or at least rate it as good if funds and design are not part of this phase.</p> <p>Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments to a very important connection between our cities and states.</p>	
5/11/2021	Eric Viken	Open House #3	Was any kind of modern/automated lift or swing bridge considered? I get the sense that there is little ship traffic this far into the bay so that bridging delays due to ship traffic may be very infrequent. The City of Duluth Master Plans and Bike and Trailways plans have goals to add bicycle/pedestrian facilities to the Blatnik bridge (I- 535) when it is rebuilt or sooner if can be retrofitted cost effectively. Does the City of Superior have any similar plans?	Bridge design, Bike/pedestrian
5/11/2021	Jill Peterman	Open House #3	Please review why west and east alignments are options	Alignments
5/11/2021	Shelley Nelson	Open House #3	What intersection is that on option 2 on Highway 53 in Wisconsin?	Other
5/11/2021	Andrew Slade	Open House #3	Is there a commitment to having some sort of bike/ped access in this project?	Bike/pedestrian
5/11/2021	Jordan van der Hagen	Open House #3	What are the DOT's criteria for evaluating whether or not secondary needs will be accommodated in transportation projects?	Bike/pedestrian
5/11/2021	Brian Koczur	Open House #3	I wear three hats for this topic. I belong to a local cycling club, a foot traffic advocate organization, and am a highway maintenance worker. Any bike/ped accommodation also needs good maintenance to be successful. Nobody wants a path that can't be maintained year around.	Bike/pedestrian
5/11/2021	Mike Casey	Open House #3	The MIC bikeway plan includes Superior	Bike/pedestrian
5/11/2021	Eric Viken	Open House #3	Why is bike pedestrian access being considered a secondary need by the project team? Many people depend on bikes and walking for daily transport.	Bike/pedestrian
5/11/2021	Paul	Open House #3	Can you ask this question for me, has MnDOT or WisDot looked into the rebuild of the Huey P. Long Bridge between Louisiana and Mississippi? And was the pile/found at study completed?	Other
5/11/2021	Mike Casey	Open House #3	What other bridge projects have bike/peds as secondary and can you find any that have them as primary where they did not have bike/ped infrastructure on it. I have looked for some but hard to find from my seat.	Bike/pedestrian

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Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
5/11/2021	Eric Viken	Open House #3	What are the most similar bridges to this in Minnesota?	Other
5/11/2021	Jordan van der Hagen	Open House #3	Could a pedestrian/bike deck with some sort of swing span or draw be built at a lower elevation using the vehicle span's substructure to alleviate the height concerns and offer some weather shielding? Or would that be out of the project's scope?	Bike/pedestrian
5/11/2021	Eric Viken	Open House #3	I agree with Jordan's comment that perhaps the bridge could be engineered to carry the pedestrian bikeway underneath the motor vehicle deck to protect it from rain and snow and use the bridge deck supports to help provide protection from the winds for pedestrian and bicyclists.	Bike/pedestrian
5/11/2021	Brian Koczur	Open House #3	Will bridge maintenance remain as it is now? Minnesota plowing, etc. Or will new agreements be on the table?	Other
5/12/2021	Jenny Van Sickle, City of Superior City Council	Open House #3	Commented support for an alignment directly to the highway, instead of Hammond Avenue.	Alignments
4/28/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1f and 1g)	Tunnels might be a good way to get bikes across in poor weather. Not the most scenic but vey doable. Of course it would need to be more than painted line on the surface	Opportunity (Bike/pedestrian)
5/6/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concepts 1a, 1b and 1c)	On 1b & 1c alignments I'm assuming new piers would be needed. If that is the case then new piers could be designed to carry bikes/peds would be possible.	Opportunity (Bike/pedestrian)
5/6/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concepts 1a, 1b and 1c)	On 1b & 1c alignments I'm assuming new piers would be needed. If that is the case then new piers could be designed to carry bikes/peds would be possible.	Opportunity (Bike/pedestrian)
5/6/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concepts 1a, 1b and 1c)	On 1b & 1e alignments I'm assuming new piers would be needed. If that is the case then new piers could be designed to carry bikes/peds would be possible.	Opportunity (Bike/pedestrian)
5/6/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concepts 2a, 2b and 2c)	On 2a, 2b, & 2c alignments I'm assuming new piers would be needed or piers modified. If that is the case then the piers could be designed to carry bikes/peds would be possible.	Opportunity (Bike/pedestrian)
5/6/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2d and 2e)	On 2& 2e alignments I'm assuming new piers would be needed or piers modified. If that is the case then the piers could be designed to carry bikes/peds would be possible.	Opportunity (Bike/pedestrian)

CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENT SCREENING – COMMENT SUMMARY

Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
5/6/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 3a, 3b, and 3c)	All 3 alignments could be designed to carry bikes/pedestrian where we have no bike/pedestrian now.	Opportunity (Bike/pedestrian)
5/12/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Continuing to dump all traffic straight onto Hammond would continue to be problematic with traffic and the RR. The single lane option is better for speeds, but there are times when side streets can not get onto Hammond let alone across Hammond. Increasing accident risk.	Challenge (Traffic)
5/12/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	Moving the approach to the bridge back to the area between Clough and Catlin Avenues may create a more gentle incline and place interchange in an area where there are fewer homes and businesses on the south side of the approach.	Draw your own alignment suggestion
5/12/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	Snake behind Lidgerwood Mundy and in front of Frasier ship yards. Would this give more room for the vertical profile to have a lower grade (less steep) approach? This could give room for STH 35 off/ on ramp to the business district.	Draw your own alignment suggestion
5/12/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	This is the best option of the three; it makes sense to move traffic from one highway to the next. Landing on Hammond Avenue is a nightmare, especially when traffic is backed up on the bridge when a train is stopped across the Hammond Avenue at rush hour. I suspect the same issue would exist if the bridge landed on Connors Point.	Opportunity (Alignments)
5/12/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 3d and 3e)	Whatever the alignment end up being, connecting Duluth and Superior for pedestrian/bike access is an important component. Thank you for the public engagement efforts!	Opportunity (Bike/pedestrian)
5/14/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 3d and 3e)	the high speed entry into a CDBG neighborhood is an injustice. The mayhem is uncontrolled and ripples negatively up the bridge and into the city. 30K+ in traffic provably does not bolster economic development (see: SPUR on Hammond, closed)--it hinders a vibrant downtown by ripping this volume of traffic through it.	Challenge (Traffic)
5/14/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Traffic careening into the city are commuters, not shoppers. This traffic volume is intimidating, and decimates opportunity. If traffic entering a city at 60 mph was good for anyone, Itasca would be a economic mecca--it's not. The fast-paced havoc is an active strain on the neighborhood and over the decades, real restaurants, pharmacies, and grocers closed along the corridor leaving only the current wall-to-wall greyness, noise and pollution.	Challenge (Traffic)
5/14/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Hammond Avenue has a significant rehabilitation being planned now, which will include a road diet, medians and plantings. Heavy freight will quickly deteriorate the city's investment in this neighborhood.	Opportunity (Economic development)
5/14/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	Yes, highway to highway. Sends travelers past the businesses designed for travel, like the Bong museum and visitor's center, larger gas station accommodations, Fairlawn etc	Opportunity (Economic development)
5/14/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	Opportunity to show case waterfront, barker's island festival grounds, hotel and marina to more people	Opportunity (Economic development)

CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENT SCREENING – COMMENT SUMMARY

Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
5/14/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	how can multiple full tunnels be conceptualized but not a bike lane.	Opportunity (Bike/pedestrian)
5/14/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	remove interstate status, or redefine what interstate means. Interstate means interstate, it's not exclusive to one mode of transportation or industry. This structure is suppose to serve the twin ports for the next 100 years. it's high-time to design with modern concepts not dusty manuals.	Opportunity (Bridge design)
5/14/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	what if people could walk or bike across this.	Opportunity (Bike/pedestrian)
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Two lanes of southbound US53 traffic must merge into one lane, make a 360-degree turn to the right and then a 90-degree turn to the left to continue going southbound on US53.	Challenge (Geometrics)
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Dangerous blind merge under bridge while turning. Traffic continuing to go southbound on US53 must change lanes without colliding with traffic from N 3rd Street that's changing lanes to get to the northbound US53 (I-535) entrance ramp.	Challenge (Geometrics)
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Southbound US53 traffic must come to a stop to allow Northbound US53 traffic to stop.	Challenge (Geometrics)
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Northbound US53 traffic must come to a stop to allow southbound US53 traffic to stop.	Challenge (Geometrics)
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Two lanes of southbound US53 traffic must merge into one lane to continue going southbound on US53.	Challenge (Geometrics)
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Continued heavy traffic in residential area	Challenge (Traffic)
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Can be difficult to turn left to get on the bridge	Challenge (Geometrics)
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	US53 traffic does not have to come to a stop or go through exit ramps to continue travelling on US53.	Opportunity (Geometrics)
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 3a, 3b, and 3c)	Removes heavy traffic from residential area	Opportunity (Traffic)
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 3a, 3b, and 3c)	Straightens US53 and removes multiple existing traffic conflicts, allowing traffic on US53 to proceed through the area without having to go through exit ramps and stoplights.	Opportunity (Geometrics)

CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENT SCREENING – COMMENT SUMMARY

Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
5/15/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	Will there at least be an exit to continue on Hammond, rather than having to go all the way to grand or belknap, or go through residential neighborhoods?	Opportunity (Geometrics)
5/19/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	South bound exit to Hammond Ave. North bound from Hammond Ave to 3rd Street and Hwy 35, expand roadway to Clough Ave and install a roundabout at Hwy 53 connection	Draw your own alignment suggestion
5/20/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	By changing the traffic from Hammond this will greatly affect our local business's and the whole community.	Challenge (Economic development)
5/20/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	At grade combo with the 3d tunnel to lower costs. This would require a little fill to align 535 to run on the south side of main street	Draw your own alignment suggestion
5/20/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2a, 2b, and 2c)	This is a possibility for local traffic to eliminate the 5th street connection if necessary....	Draw your own alignment suggestion
5/20/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 3d and 3e)	I like 3d the best of all options in terms of allowing the north end neighborhood to heal and be safer for residents, to focus traffic from 535 to hwy 2, to protect the passage from weather concerns and making it less of an eyesore by placing it in a tunnel. We could cut down the cost of this opportunity by shortening the tunnel and bringing traffic out to grade on Connors point, not at hwy 2. This would require purchasing a couple low cost houses and possibly widening the point a tad to accommodate the width of traffic lanes next to a separated main street which would sit just north of 535...	Opportunity (Alignments)
5/20/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 3d and 3e)	A large roundabout here may work to slow traffic but allow continuous flow to Hill, 535, hwy 2, and a new local street to the north 4th street connection. The middle could be landscaped and contain a welcome to WI sign.	Opportunity (Geometrics)
5/20/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	The business's in Superior should be a top priority when determining the routing. If you make traffic away from easy access to downtown this would not be beneficial.	Opportunity (Economic development)
5/20/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	I don't like the options of steering traffic away from Hammond Avenue!	Opportunity (Economic development)
5/20/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 2f)	this option to me makes the most sense. It is ambitious and costly, but less obstruction to the surrounding land. Simplifies movement of traffic through communities.	Opportunity (Alignments)
5/21/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Connecting directly to Hammond avenue is a significant safety risk and degrading to the surrounding neighborhood. If the bridge lands on Hammond at all, traffic must come to a full stop before entering this residential neighborhood and it must allow the merging of traffic into a single lane on Hammond. The current configuration does not help business as it moves traffic far too quickly for customers to safely access businesses in the North Hammond area. Reducing highway traffic and improving the environment for pedestrians and local traffic will better serve residents and businesses while minimizing safety hazards.	Challenge (Traffic)

CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENT SCREENING – COMMENT SUMMARY

Date	From	Via	Comment	Topic/Theme
5/21/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concept 1a, 1b, and 1c)	Vertical curves on existing alignment make it difficult to see ahead for slowed/stopped traffic in inclement weather or incidents.	Challenge (Geometrics)
5/21/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concepts 2d and 2e)	Any of the options that get rid of the roundabout coming off of the bridge. Connect the bridge directly to HWY 53 with options to merge off and head to Down Town Superior. Must still allow access to downtown otherwise businesses will suffer. However with the traffic corridor, get rid of the stop lights and let traffic float.	Opportunity (Geometrics)
5/21/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concepts 3a, 3b, and 3c)	If the bridge were straighter with this alignment, it could connect straight to Piedmont Avenue over the water, allowing for heavier loads to cross over here and leaving Garfield Avenue be an industrial zone and perhaps a better commuter train connection to Superior.	Opportunity (Alignments)
5/21/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concepts 2a, 2b and 2c)	This is by far the best option. It keeps highway traffic moving quickly for commuters without inhibiting access to businesses on N. 5th. By creating an early access/exit to N. 5th, local traffic can easily travel all the way to the North Tower area. N. 5th is large enough to accommodate increased auto traffic as well as bike and ped improvements.	Opportunity (Alignments)
5/21/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concepts 2a, 2b and 2c)	Alternative concept 2b may reduce some bridge length.	Opportunity (Alignments)
5/21/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concepts 2a, 2b and 2c)	Agree with this new alignment suggestion behind Lidgerwood to provide more gentle grade for on-ramp	Opportunity (Alignments)
5/21/21	Public comment	Interactive Map (Concepts 2a, 2b and 2c)	Prefer alternative 2b or 2c	Opportunity (Alignments)