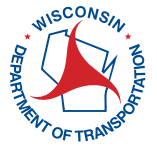




Need for Two Bridges in the Duluth/Superior Area

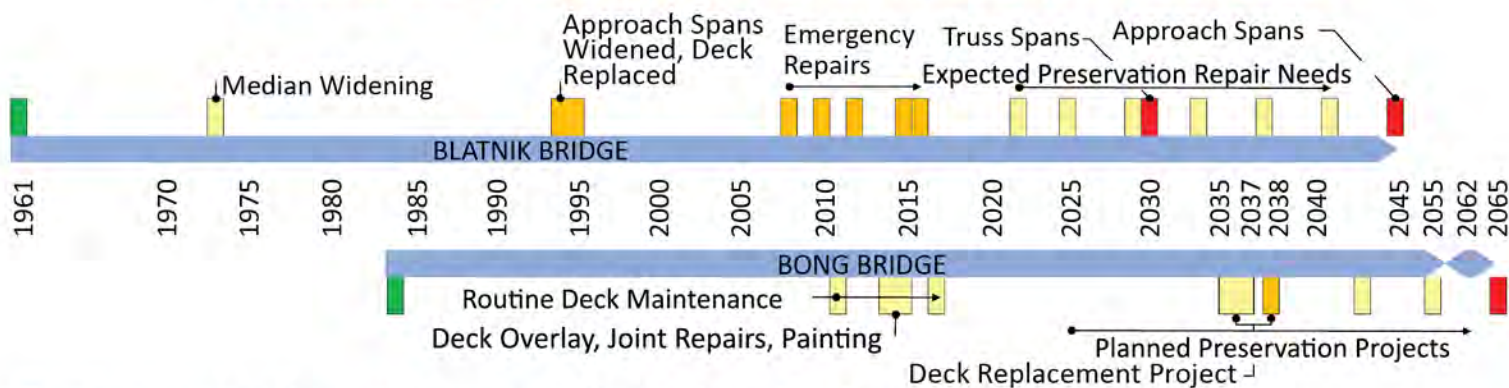
BLATNIK BRIDGE PROJECT // 2021



The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) have initiated a planning and design study of the John A. Blatnik Bridge, which carries I-535 and US 53 traffic over the St. Louis Bay, to address concerns due to deteriorating bridge infrastructure and improve safety and traffic mobility. The other major bridge over the Duluth-Superior Harbor connecting these two cities is the Richard I. Bong Memorial Bridge, which carries US 2 traffic and is about five miles southwest of the Blatnik Bridge. There are several reasons that two bridges are needed in the Duluth-Superior area:

1. Most cities separated by bodies of water have more than one crossing to carry traffic and provide for emergency services. Other cities include St. Paul and Minneapolis in MN as well as other major US port cities such as Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Seattle and San Francisco.
2. Both bridges are needed for the Duluth-Superior area to accommodate interstate freight and port access. The Bong Bridge would not adequately serve those needs alone. However, only loads of 40 tons or less currently are allowed on the Blatnik Bridge.
3. Approximately 33,100 vehicles per day use the Blatnik Bridge. That traffic would be added to the Bong Bridge's daily traffic of 16,100 vehicles if the Blatnik Bridge no longer was in operation and could cause traffic delays.
4. Periodic maintenance and bridge closures are required on the Blatnik and Bong bridges. If both the Bong and Blatnik bridges were closed for maintenance, then the next closest river crossing is the Oliver Bridge, which is approximately 26 miles round trip and is only viable for passenger vehicle traffic. The Bong Bridge is currently the only bridge crossing that allows heavy and wide trucks to cross in the Duluth-Superior area. If heavy and wide trucks are unable to use the Bong Bridge to cross, they must travel south to cross the St. Croix River between Hinckley, MN, and Danbury, WI. That trip is about 75 miles on the MN side and 50 miles on the WI side.

BLATNIK AND BONG BRIDGE MAINTENANCE & REPAIR SCHEDULE



Treatments are dependent on inspections and subject to change based on condition

- LEGEND**
- Bridge Opens
 - End of Service Life
 - Reduced Lanes with Periods of Complete Bridge Closure
 - Complete Bridge Closure



Project Map



Project Contacts:

PAT HUSTON
 MnDOT Major Projects Engineer
 ✉ patrick.huston@state.mn.us
 📞 218-348-9902

MARC BOWKER
 WisDOT NW Region Project Manager
 ✉ marc.bowker@dot.wi.gov
 📞 715-635-4975

WEBSITES

🌐 www.dot.state.mn.us/d1/projects/blatnik-bridge/
 🌐 wisconsin.gov/Pages/projects/by-region/nw/blatnikbridge