

Red Wing Bridge

Project Background

- [Hwy 63 Bridges over Mississippi River and Hwy 61](#)
- MnDOT, in cooperation with WisDOT, the FHWA, and the City of Red Wing, is conducting the Red Wing Bridge Project. The project includes the Highway 63 (Eisenhower) Bridge over the Mississippi River and the Highway 63 Bridge over Highway 61, as well as the highway connections to Highway 61, Minnesota Highway 58, and approach roadways in Wisconsin. The Eisenhower Bridge provides the only regional crossing of the river for approximately 30 miles upstream and downstream for several communities on both the Wisconsin and Minnesota sides of the river.
- This is a project in the heart of a historic Mississippi River town with significant community ownership as well as a strong community partnership with the Prairie Island Indian Community that affects traffic and is adjacent to historic buildings, a historic land mass (He Mni Can/Barn Bluff), river barge traffic, freight and passenger train traffic and a regional bicycle trail. There is a great connection to people and their river bridge. We sought out community connectors to help us explain, listen and connect people to the project.

Public Engagement Challenge

- We are building a new bridge in Red Wing over the Mississippi River to replace its existing bridge and helping the community feel connected, informed and as though it's "their bridge." The construction project began in May 2017 and will open to traffic in late fall 2019, so we needed to find ways to keep the community connected, aware and engaged through the process similar to how they were involved prior to construction. How do we be a pleasant neighbor and not an annoying one by ensuring timely updates, connections and chances to engage, instead of being dominant and obtrusive?

Public Engagement Tool

- We have a strong partner with the city of Red Wing and its city engineer, Jay Owens, who has been a positive, reliable ambassador, who also advocates for his city. Additionally, we've partnered with the Red Wing Area Chamber of Commerce to connect and engage with their members. We utilized many aspects to reach and connect people on their terms and time:
 - Monthly construction updates on Red Wing Public Access Channel 6 that allow people to attend in person and ask questions or watch at their convenience.
 - Monthly column in the Red Wing Republican-Eagle, the community newspaper that provides a look ahead in a personal way from the project engineer, Mark Anderson.
 - A Facebook page dedicated to the project with 3,314 followers.

- Tours for students and community members, coordinating with the Red Wing Area Chamber of Commerce for many tours, but also with Red Wing High School and Dakota County Technical College
- Regular updates with community groups, retirement homes and any group that asks.
- Email updates on regular developments that affect traffic or are significant milestones (5,617 subscribers. Significant for a Greater MN project).
- Attend community events such as River City Days or include information such as a 3-D printing of the bridge to display at the St. James Hotel
- Regular riverboat arrivals were supplied with a one-pager aimed at a visitor audience to explain the construction process and include a few historic facts

Key Takeaways

- Make community connections early and look for opportunities to maintain through construction
- Find a community champion. Ours was City Engineer Jay Owens
- Provide a steady diet of information, images and opportunities to connect and follow the construction progress
- Find ways to help the community feel as though the bridge is theirs

Level of Engagement: Involve

- We chose to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that community issues and concerns were understood and considered because this bridge affects the community both during and after construction

Caveat

- Do your homework. Is the project in a community where there's intense interest or effects or is in a location where inform or consult is better? With major projects that require a higher level of engagement consider assistance from a consultant.

Quote

"We appreciate being part of the project and being involved in the activities." Patty Brown, Executive Director Red Wing Area Chamber of Commerce

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Keywords

- Red Wing, Mississippi River Bridge, major project, Involve

October 9, 2019