

# Hwy 53 transportation improvements at Rock Ridge Public Schools

## Project purpose

Safety improvements are being evaluated along Hwy 53 in Eveleth in response to the new Rock Ridge Schools campus being constructed east of Hwy 53. Rock Ridge Schools combines Virginia and Eveleth-Gilbert high schools into one facility and replaces Eveleth and Gilbert elementary schools with a new facility with a total of 1,700 students utilizing the campus. MnDOT has been leading an effort along with St. Louis County (SLC) to develop a new transportation network that will safely and conveniently get students, staff and the community to their destinations.

Due to the complexity of the community and roadway jurisdictions MnDOT/SLC has been working with many agency/stakeholders groups including the cities of Eveleth and Virginia, Rock Ridge Public Schools, the Mesabi Trail, Virginia-Eveleth Economic Development Authority (VEEDA), and the business community along the corridor to plan and implement transportation improvements.

## Key points

- There is an urgent need with the new elementary school, which opened in the fall of 2022, and the high school, opening in fall of 2023.
- This corridor has two intersections in the District 1 safety plan, with Hat Trick being the highest risk intersection in the District.
- This project would provide connection that is currently not there for pedestrian or bicycle users to the school.
- Open up large area for economic development for an area that has over twice the poverty rate of the state of Minnesota. Bois Forte Band of Chippewa is looking at a development that would stem from the Progress Parkway extension.
- All students 7-12 in the Eveleth/Virginia area will be utilizing this school, including the census tract in Virginia designated as a disadvantaged community.
- Highway 53/37 bridges are in poor condition, has clearance issues for freight and acts as a barrier for pedestrians/bicycles/snowmobiles/ATVs.
- The iron that is mined in these communities is vital for the supply chain and national security. This project would maintain that key supply chain advantage for the U.S. by enhancing the transportation network.
- MnDOT have been actively engaging impacted agencies, businesses, and the public on this project having more than 10 meetings with these groups to gain consensus on the project.



## Project components

The Hwy 53 Transportation Improvements Project at Rock Ridge School project includes 6 components to address and correct immediate safety issues.

- Component 1: Progress Parkway intersection improvements (roundabout)
- Component 2: Hat Trick Avenue intersection improvements (offset intersection)
- Component 3: Bourgin Road intersection improvements (continuous T intersection)
- Component 4: Progress Parkway extension and trail construction
- Component 5: Hwy 53 and Hwy 37 bridge replacement and trail connections
- Component 6: Hwy 53 unbonded overlay
- Total construction cost estimate: \$33.5 million



## Why do we need this project?

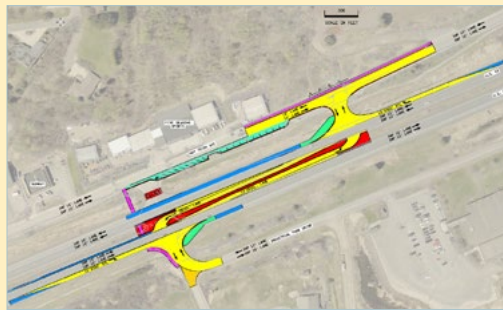
- Urgent safety need for students and public
- High crash rates at the intersections along corridor currently, is only projected to become worse with increased school traffic
- No pedestrian or bicycle facilities along corridor and connection to new school campus
- Poor condition of existing roadway and bridges

### Component 1: Progress Parkway



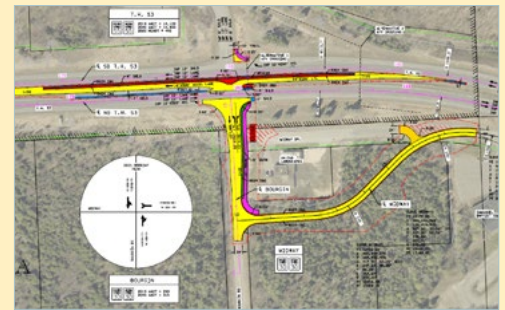
Estimated construction cost:  
\$4.6 million

### Component 2: Hat Trick Avenue



Estimated construction cost: \$2.6 million

### Component 3: Bourgin Road



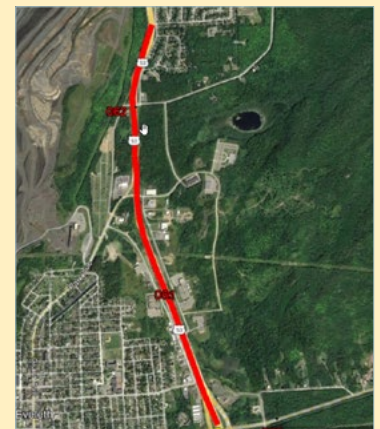
Estimated construction cost: \$1.2 million

### Component 4: Progress Parkway extension and trail connection



Estimated construction cost:  
\$11.3 million

### Component 6: Resurfacing



Estimated construction cost:  
\$6.6 million

### Component 5: Bridge replacements



Estimated construction cost: \$7.2 million