



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Minnesota Division

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Jim Gates
Deputy Director of Public Works
City of Bloomington
1700 West 98th Street
Bloomington, MN 55431-2501

Re: Old Cedar Avenue Bridge

Dear Mr. Gates:

Recently, the City of Bloomington (City) re-started the project development process for the Old Cedar Avenue Bridge (Bridge). In November 2008, the earlier project development efforts resulted in a report entitled 'Condition and Rehabilitation Recommendations for Bridge No. 3145' (Report). This Report contained both replacement and rehabilitation options for the Bridge. Our office reviewed this report and concluded that the rehabilitation option was both feasible and prudent. Based on this conclusion, the bridge replacement option that was included in the Report is removed from further consideration under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The replacement of the Bridge would be an adverse effect under **Section 106** of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA). The adverse effect would require the initiation of the Section 4(f) process as directed by the Department of Transportation Act (DOT Act) of 1966. Since there are feasible and prudent rehabilitation alternatives, there are viable avoidance alternatives, as required by Section 4(f), to the replacement of the Bridge. Section 4(f) requires FHWA to implement the avoidance solution when feasible.

As part of the July 18, 2013, meeting, the City suggested looking at only one rehabilitation alternative: rehabilitation with an approximate cost of \$12M. It is our opinion that the high end rehabilitation alternative is feasible and prudent from a cost perspective, however, we do not know if the high end rehabilitation is feasible and prudent from an historic preservation perspective. Meaning, that this high end rehabilitation option may alter the bridge to such an extent that it would lose its historic integrity.

It is our position that there are less expensive rehabilitation alternatives available that would meet the project's purpose and need while still being considered feasible and prudent from a historic perspective. Consideration of cost in the historic bridge process is based upon the least expensive feasible and prudent alternative that meets the project's purpose and need.

Based upon our history with this project, review of documentation, recent meetings, and

discussions with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, our position remains unchanged from 2009: rehabilitation of the Bridge is still both feasible and prudent, thus carrying forward a replacement alternative into the NEPA process is not necessary. It would not be in the best interest of the public to expend additional resources on further consideration of replacement alternatives.

We believe the next step in the process would be for the City to restart the project development process by coordinating with the Minnesota Department of Transportation Cultural Resource Unit, Minnesota Department of Transportation Office of State-Aid for Local Transportation, and other stakeholders, as appropriate, to define a rehabilitation alternative that fulfills the stated purpose and need and meets the Secretary of Interiors Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties. We look forward to working with you and the other project stakeholders to establish and implement a project schedule that neither jeopardizes funds made available for the Bridge in the 2013 Minnesota Omnibus Tax Bill nor unreasonably impacts local public agencies ability to utilize the fiscal instruments made available for the Mall of America expansion.

Please contact Mr. Tim Anderson at (651) 291-6126 if you have any questions regarding FHWA's expectations for advancing this project.

Sincerely,



Derrell Turner
Division Administrator

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