

Project Overview

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) commissioned the Northwest Metro Mississippi River Crossing Feasibility Analysis, as it is time to update previously conducted studies, re-engage the cities and counties, and understand the need and impacts of increased river crossing capacity. This feasibility analysis is the first step of many required to identify future needs of the area. This current effort will be a fact-based, traffic investigation.

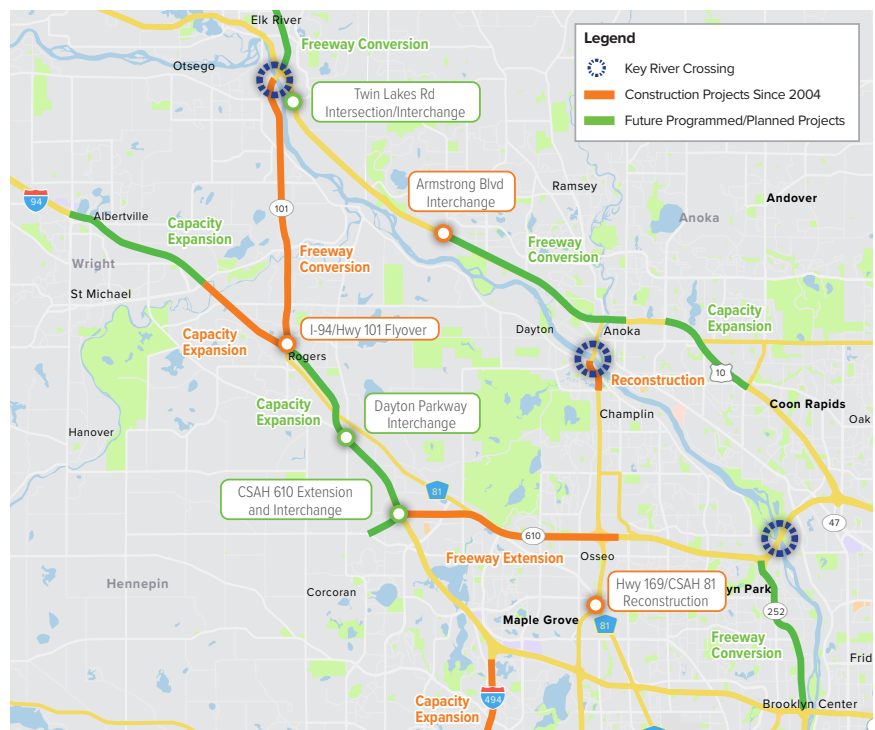
The idea for additional Mississippi River crossing capacity in the northwest metro area dates back to 1989 when the Metropolitan Council completed the *Major River Crossings Study Report*. This study was followed up by an origin-destination study in 2002 to understand travel demands and a Scoping Decision Document in 2004 which developed a purpose and need, explored new river crossing locations, the impact on the environment, and engaged the communities. Consensus on the need and location was not reached so planning for the crossing ceased.

Over the past 20 years, numerous investments have been made on area roadways along with significant growth and changes in land use. Growth in this region will continue beyond 2040 resulting in additional congestion to the roadway network and the existing Mississippi River Crossings in this region. The Minnesota Legislature authorized funding for this Northwest Metro River Crossing Feasibility Analysis to allow MnDOT to complete a technical review of the existing crossings, travel patterns and demands, and explore ideas for increasing capacity.

Area of analysis



The existing Mississippi River crossings on Highways 101, 169, and 610 are approaching/exceeding capacity and experience several hours of congestion daily. Serving a total of more than 200,000 vehicles per day, these river crossings are key for commuter traffic, but they also serve as main routes for freight vehicles and recreational users.



Goals of the Feasibility Analysis

- **Understand Past Efforts** – The idea of additional Mississippi River crossing capacity has been studied numerous times over the past three decades and is a part of some community plans. Understanding how project partners have been planning for improved crossing capacity will serve as a baseline for this analysis.
- **Understand Travel Patterns** - Develop a clear understanding of vehicle travel patterns for the three Mississippi River crossings at Highway 101, 169 and 610. This understanding includes where people are, where they are going, and how they get there. Understanding these patterns will detail where traffic desires to be and assist in how to accommodate those demands.
- **Understand System Performance** - Quantify/monetize vehicle delay associated with each river crossing corridor and evaluate that delay within the context of planned and programmed improvements. This will create an understanding of the reserve capacity in each river crossing and will establish a baseline in performance.
- **Understand Land Use and Growth** – The Twin Cities Northwest Metropolitan Area has experienced considerable growth over the last several decades. Communities in the corridor have adopted comprehensive plans designating future land uses. A comprehensive plan outlines a community's goals for growth, details the plan for types of land uses and development, and provides strategies about how to make these goals a reality. Identifying and compiling these plans will provide an understanding of the long-term population and employment growth along the corridor, the demand this growth will create, the mobility and access needed.
- **Understand Community Position** – This effort includes a strategic engagement process where the team will listen to concerns, explore the facts, understand the work completed in the past, and present clear and consistent findings. Communities in the influence area of this effort will be engaged and informed.
- **Evaluate Concepts to Serve Demands** - This effort includes the development of high-level concepts that address operational issues and maximize the value of in-place infrastructure. The concepts may include improvements to existing river crossings and exploration of new river crossings.
- **Develop Technically Feasible Concepts** - Evaluate the feasibility of improvements based on land use, system benefits, overall cost/benefit analysis and return on investment. This analysis will examine the viability of concepts both on and off the existing infrastructure.
- **Conclusion of this Effort** – This effort is a technical analysis only and will be documented as such. The final document will detail the overall findings of this effort but will not recommend a vision. Next steps for project partners will be identified, and may include further analysis, environmental study, corridor studies, and community engagement.

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