



Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

Guiding the Future of Transportation for the Twin Ports Area

August 1, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Letter of Support – Blatnik Bridge Reconstruction Project
Bridge Investment Program (BIP) Funding Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

On behalf of the Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Duluth-Superior urbanized area, I am pleased to submit this letter of support for the joint Minnesota and Wisconsin Departments of Transportation application for a grant to help fund the Blatnik Bridge Reconstruction Project under the Bridge Investment Program (BIP).

The Blatnik Bridge is one of two bridges that connects Duluth, Minnesota to Superior, Wisconsin, carrying I-535 across the St. Louis Bay. This project will replace or rehabilitate the entire Blatnik Bridge structure to restore it to good structural condition, modernize the approaching interchange, and ensure the bridge's long-term operations and safety. Many industries, employers, health care patients, students, shoppers, commuters, and tourists depend on the Blatnik Bridge to deliver their goods and services and provide access to jobs, hospitals, and other destinations in Duluth, Superior, and the surrounding region. As such, replacing this bridge is a top priority for both states.

This bridge is an important freight and commercial connection between the Twin Ports and for the Upper Midwest region. The Blatnik Bridge is essential to the functioning and success of the national shipping industry, as the project serves commerce through the international multi-modal Port of Duluth-Superior. The Port of Duluth-Superior is the largest U.S. port on the Great Lakes and one of the largest marine gateways for U.S. trade with Canada, the number-one trade partner of Minnesota and the nation. The port is located on the western tip of Lake Superior and the St. Lawrence Seaway, one of the nation's principal NAFTA trade corridors. Improvements made to the bridge will bring further economic success to the port and regional economy, and strengthen the national supply chain as the Port of Duluth-Superior is 17th largest port in the U.S.

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www.dsmic.org

*Duluth-Superior
urban area
communities
cooperating in
planning and
development
through a joint
venture of the
Arrowhead Regional
Development
Commission and the
Northwest Regional
Planning Commission*

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This project will improve the poor conditions of the bridge by completely replacing all structural elements of the bridge and ensuring it is resilient to weather and climate threats. Inefficient and dangerous traffic operations will also improve, with a redesigned bridge span and Wisconsin approach that has a high crash history. Additionally, this project provides the opportunity to add strongly supported bicycle and pedestrian facilities to the Blatnik Bridge, improving non-vehicle mobility and recreation.

These improvements are consistent with the BIP's goals and grant criteria. The BIP grant carefully considers projects that improve the condition of bridges as well as the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the movement of people and freight over bridges. The proposed transportation improvements will greatly improve safety and mobility on the Blatnik Bridge and improve access to and from regional businesses - especially the downtowns of Duluth and Superior and the Port of Duluth-Superior. These improvements will not only encourage regional economic growth but also strengthen the reliability of the transportation network that serves hundreds of communities across northern Minnesota and Wisconsin while also expanding nationally.

As the federally designated MPO for the Duluth-Superior area, the MIC is responsible for determining transportation projects that are federally funded. Our mission includes dedication to region-wide transportation planning and acting as a forum (with our member committees) for transportation issues in the urbanized area. The initiatives within this grant application support a key objective within the MPOs Metropolitan Transportation Plan; that of safe and efficient movement of people and goods within the Duluth-Superior metropolitan area.

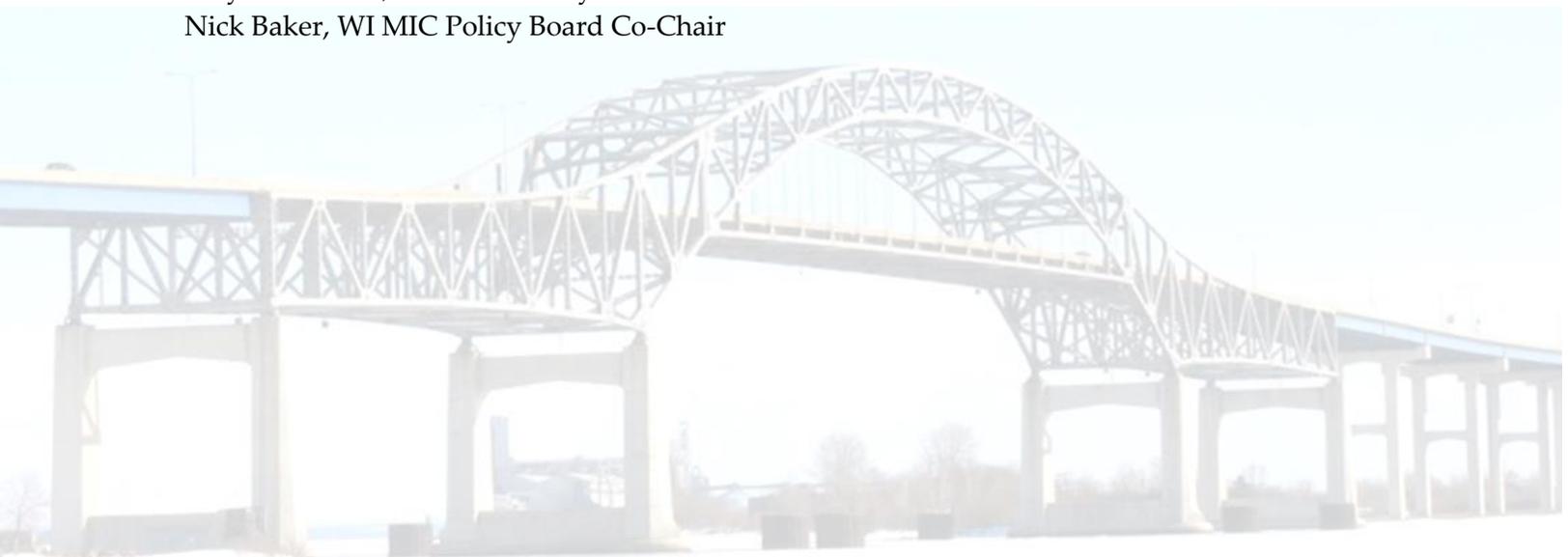
Thank you for your consideration and approval of this application for a grant to help fund the Blatnik Bridge Reconstruction Project under the Bridge Investment Program (BIP). The MIC looks forward to the collaborative work ahead. If you have any questions or need any further information please let me know.

Sincerely,



Ron Chicka, Director AICP
Metropolitan Interstate Council
rchicka@ardc.org
218.529.7506

cc: Wayne Boucher, MN MIC Policy Board Co-Chair
Nick Baker, WI MIC Policy Board Co-Chair





Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council

Guiding the Future of Transportation for the Twin Ports Area

August 2, 2022

Randall J. Kirk, P.E.
Northwest Region Local Program Manager
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
Northwest Region Eau Claire
718 W. Clairemont Avenue
Eau Claire, WI 54701

Dear Randall:

In consultation with the City of Superior Public Works, the MIC prioritizes the Barker's Island Causeway as the #1 project to utilize additional BIL-authorized funding (above prior FAST Act levels) for the allocated Superior STP-Urban amount (\$1,507,616) in the FFY 2023 to 2026 supplemental cycle. All awarded dollars should be targeted at this sole project.

The Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) was created by the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) and the Northwest Regional Planning Commission (NWRPC) as the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Duluth-Superior and charged with transportation and land use planning for the urbanized area.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at rchicka@ardc.org or (218) 349-8625.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ron Chicka'.

Ron Chicka, AICP
MIC Director
rchicka@ardc.org
218.349.8625

cc: Michael Loughran, Local Program Manager
Nick Baker, MIC Policy Board Co-Chair
Wayne Boucher, MIC Policy Board Co-Chair
Sheldon Johnson, MIC Deputy Director
Todd Janigo, Public Works Director
Dena Ryan, WisDOT

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ARDC

Newsletter

Summer 2022

A Quarterly Update from ARDC

London Road Reconditioning Project

MnDOT and the City of Duluth have road work planned on London Road from 26th Ave East to Lester River in 2025 and 2026. Many of the proposed roadway design improvements are derived from prior MIC planning efforts. These include narrower driving and parking lanes to allow bike and pedestrian improvements, intersection safety upgrades, and roundabouts at 26th and 40th Avenues East. Pedestrian crossing enhancements have been installed as demonstration projects at 36th and 60th Avenues East.

To learn more about the 2026 project, [three online public meetings](#) are planned for Tuesday, July 19, or contact Prescott Morrill at pmorrill@ardc.org.



To demonstrate the safer pedestrian crossings on London Road, temporary pedestrian refuge islands have been installed at 36th and 60th Avenues East.

AAAA Lauded for Vaccine Outreach

The AAAA Division was recognized by St. Louis County Public Health for our collaboration and support throughout the pandemic. We partnered on disseminating information on testing and vaccinations, and ensuring access to essential community supports. *Cont'd on page 3, "AAAA Outreach"*

Updates From the Executive Director

As we move into summer, portions of the Arrowhead Region continue to take on economic challenges. Crane Lake, Kabetogama, International Falls, Ranier and Rainy Lake are experiencing record flooding, causing hardships and impeding the economic impacts from the loss of tourism incomes. ARDC encourages those that are able to help in some fashion do so. ARDC experienced another loss in International Falls – long time Area on Agency employee, Karen Tveit, is retiring. She worked out of an office in International Falls. Her dedication and reliability were outstanding, and she will be missed by all. Congratulations and best wishes to her and her family! Finally, this is the season when many ARDC employees and our stakeholders take time off to enjoy the summer. I hope that people are able to get out and have a relaxing time. ▼

~Andy Hubley



Management Team

Andy Hubley, Executive Director
and ARDC Planning
Kristi Kane, Arrowhead Area
Agency on Aging
Ron Chicka, Duluth-Superior
Metropolitan Interstate Council
Sister Mary Matthew Morrisroe,
Finance and Operations



Our Mission

To provide local units of government and citizens groups a means to work cooperatively in identifying needs, solving problems, and fostering local leadership.

For career opportunities, visit ardc.org/careers.

*EOE/AA/M/F/Vet/Disability
Employer*

Diversity & Inclusion Statement

ARDC is committed to building an inclusive culture that encourages and supports the diverse voices of our employees and of the communities we serve. ▼

Staff Notes

Joining ARDC:

- Nathaniel “Prescott” Morrill was hired as a Planner for ARDC’s Metropolitan Interstate Council (MIC) in April. Prescott has two Master’s Degrees (Urban and Regional Planning & Landscape Architecture) from the University of Minnesota. He also has a Bachelor’s Degree in Environmental Studies from UMD.
- In May, Julia Weegman, began a summer internship for ARDC’s Planning Division. Julia is pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in GIS, with a Minor in Environment, Sustainability and Geography.

Celebrating Staff Promotions:

- In May, Carlie Mies changed her position from a Pre-Admission Screening Specialist to a SLL Administrative Support Specialist II.

Leaving ARDC:

- In April, Laura Peterson, Pre-Admission Screening Specialist, voluntarily left ARDC.
- In May, Maxwell Robb, Planning Intern, internship ended.
- At the end of June, Karen Tveit, Information Assistance and Counseling Specialist, retired after 24 years. We are thankful for so many years of service! ▼

To view current job openings at ARDC, please visit www.ardc.org/careers

Division Updates

AAAA

For the first time since 2019, the entire AAAA staff met in-person in June. During the day, they trained with Kristi Harju of the College of St. Scholastica on Personal Boundaries & Cultural Awareness Ethics. Additionally, staff proposed a Land Acknowledgement statement and expanded their goals and skills via StrengthsFinder. A celebration in honor of recent retirees highlighted the lunchtime break. ▼

Metropolitan Interstate Council

The MIC and MnDOT have launched the process to develop a plan that will identify and prioritize current and future needs along the I-35 corridor. The plan area extends along I-35 from the County Road 61 interchange in Midway Township to the intersection of 26th Avenue East in Duluth. Work will involve a wide variety of stakeholders and will include an assessment of current and future conditions including congestion, design and safety issues, transportation infrastructure, and land use. Then concepts, designs, or improvements will be created to visualize how I-35 can help reach community goals. Finally, an implementation plan will be created to guide MnDOT’s future improvements and investments.

For more information, see the project website at dsmic.org/i35. ▼

“AAA Outreach” Cont’d from page 1

Georgia Lane, Gina Marsalla, and Jess Langer attended a community recognition event on April 26th in Hoyt Lakes to receive the award. ▼



A certificate and commemorative plaque including an empty COVID-19 vaccine vial were presented to the AAAA in recognition of their partnership.

Regional Roundup

On June 22 - 25, 2022, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College (FDLTCC) hosted the inaugural Indigenous Healthcare Career Exploration Camp. The camp was supported financially by Essentia, the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, the Northland Foundation, and Minnesota Power. The camp was targeted towards, but not limited to, students who self-identify as having a tribal background. Students were provided with hands-on opportunities in the fields of nursing, nutrition, dentistry, physical therapy, community health, mental health, ER medicine, and flight nursing. They had the opportunity to visit the RSI Equine Assisted Psychotherapy Facility, UMD College of Pharmacy and UMD School of Medicine. In addition to healthcare programming, students had the chance to experience Ojibwe ceremonies to honor the beginning and closing of camp, learn traditional hand games, and stay in student housing on the beautiful FDLTCC campus. This camp was a pilot program under HealthForce SCRUBS Camps (experiential learning) coordinated and supported by the Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging, Center of American Indian and Minority Health, FDLTCC, Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Fond du Lac Health and Human Services, the Minnesota Indian Area Agency on Aging, and Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. The Arrowhead Area Agency on Aging staff also provide support and coordination for another regional SCRUBS Camp hosted by Hibbing Community College on August 3 – 4, 2022. <https://bit.ly/HealthcareCamp> ▼

Upcoming ARDC Meetings

Mark these upcoming ARDC Commission and Board meeting dates on your calendar!

- Thursday, July 21 @ 10 am – Commission Meeting
- Thursday, August 18 @ 10 am – Board Meeting
- Thursday, September 15 @ 10 am – Board Meeting

Division Updates

(Cont'd)

ARDC Planning

ARDC Planning Division staff have been off to a busy summer. Safe Routes to School Plans have wrapped up in Chisholm, Littlefork, and the Oshki Ogimaag school in Grand Portage. Staff have presented updates at all of the county boards across the region regarding our work with transportation planning, work continues on Coastal Erosion Hazard Mitigation mapping in conjunction with our partners at the Soil & Water Conservation Districts and UMD's U-Spatial office to develop useful analytical tools for measuring erosion along the North Shore of Lake Superior. ARDC Staff were happy to assist with ribbon cutting events for two great projects that we have assisted with long-term planning processes including a new segment of Gitchi-Gami State Trail spanning Grand Marais to Cut Face Creek State Wayside, and the opening of a new campground at Split Rock Lighthouse State Park which features ADA accessible camp sites, connections to the Gitchi-Gami State Trail, and serves as a trailhead to the Split Rock Wilds mountain bike system, a system we have helped with planning and public input for many years. Wayfinding signs geared towards pedestrians have been installed in Nashwauk and Keewatin, supporting our work with active living and transportation alternatives. Additionally, we can report that our CARES Urgent Loan Program has invested all \$3.88 million in the Region's COVID impacted businesses. We can now continue to operate that program using the principal and interest that has been paid back by our recipients. ▼



Arrowhead Regional Development Commission

221 West 1st Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
(218) 722-5545
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Commission

County Board Representatives (8)

Aitkin County: Don Niemi*, Vice Chair
Carlton County: Dick Brenner*, Chair
Cook County: Ginny Storlie*
Itasca County: Terry Snyder*
Koochiching County: Wade Pavleck*
Lake County: Pete Walsh*
St. Louis County: Frank Jewell*
St. Louis County: Ashley Grimm

Representative of Cities, Townships, Tribal Nations, and School Districts (21)

Aitkin Cities <10K: Sharon DeWitt (Palisade)
Aitkin Townships: Vacant
Carlton Cities >10K: Roger Maki (Cloquet)
Carlton Cities <10K: David Lucas (Kettle River)
Carlton Townships: Jason Paulson (Thomson)
Cook Cities <10K: Michael Garry (Grand Marais)
Cook Townships: Vacant
Itasca Cities >10K: Dale Adams (Grand Rapids)
Itasca Cities <10K: Calvin Saari (Nashwauk)
Itasca Townships: Larry Salmela (Effie)
Koochiching Cities <10K: Brian Briggs (International Falls)
Koochiching Townships: Kevin Adee (Koochiching County)
Lake Cities <10K: Vacant
Lake Townships: Vacant
St. Louis Cities >10K: Tim Harkonen (Hibbing)
St. Louis Cities >10K: Terese Tomanek (Duluth)
St. Louis Cities <10K: Steven Johnson (Virginia)

St. Louis County Townships: Warren Tinker (Lavell)
Bois Forte Tribal Council: Sidra Starkovich
Fond du Lac Tribal Council: Jason Hollinday*, Secretary
Grand Portage Tribal Council: Robert Deschampe
School Districts: Pat Medure (ISD #318, Grand Rapids)
School Districts: Walter Hautala (ISD #2711, Mesabi East)

At-Large (Citizen) Members (8)

Jim Berg (McGregor)
Dirk Davis (Morcom Township)
Mike Hoops (Silver Creek)
Joel Hoppe (McGregor)
Paul Nevanen* (International Falls)
Allen Rasmussen (International Falls)
Gordon Salisbury (Hovland)
Mary Somnis* (Grand Marais)

Advisory Members (3)

AAAA Advisory Board: Pamela Franklin
NEMNATP: Duane Hill
DSMIC Policy Board: Tom Szukis

*denotes members of the ARDC Board

Officers

Dick Brenner, Chair
Don Niemi, Vice Chair
Allen Rasmussen, Treasurer
Jason Hollinday, Secretary

Walking and Bicycling Between the Twin Ports

The Benefits of a Path on Lake Superior's Blatnik Bridge

What is this project about?

The John A. Blatnik Bridge on Interstate 535 (I-535) connects the communities of Duluth, Minnesota, and Superior, Wisconsin across the St. Louis Bay. It is one of two bridges that connect the Twin Ports over the waterway. The other bridge is the Richard I. Bong Memorial Bridge on U.S. Route 2 (US 2). Due to concerns about the bridge's condition, safety, and mobility, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) have undertaken a study of how to best address these concerns.

This planning includes consideration of including a multimodal path on the bridge for people walking and bicycling. There is currently no bicycle or pedestrian facility on the bridge and people are prohibited from walking or bicycling on the 1.5 mile bridge and the approach spans.

“Having multiple transportation/mobility options can only enhance the quality of life for those living or visiting the Twin Ports. It is extremely important to not just do this as an afterthought.”

~Survey Response

What could a path on the Blatnik Bridge achieve?

- Provide **transportation and recreation options** to Twin Ports residents and visitors
- Enhance the **economic vitality** of the Twin Ports
- Improve the prospects for continued **economic development** in the region
- **Connect** people to educational, shopping, dining, employment, and recreational destinations
- **Close an identified gap** in the regional trail network



Photo Credit: Jakes18-Wikimedia Commons

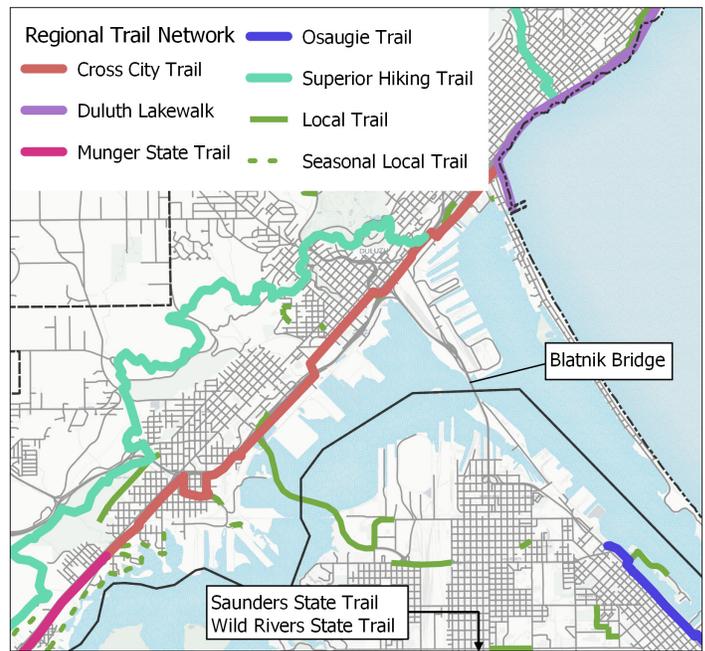
Duluth and Superior residents support more multimodal options

- **Trails** are the **most wanted outdoor recreation** opportunity in Duluth.¹
- The **top 2 reasons** motivating people to stay in Duluth are enjoyment of **Lake Superior** and **recreation** opportunities.²
- **Walking** is one of 2 **preferred modes of daily travel** for 42% of people in Duluth. Similarly, bicycling would be preferred for 37%.³
- There is a strong desire **for expanded trails along the waterfront** in Superior.⁴
- In a recent survey, **72% of comments were supportive of including a multimodal facility on the Blatnik Bridge.**
- **Nearly half of non-trail users support expanded public spaces for people to exercise**, and over a third of non-trail users are willing to pay more taxes to build more parks and trails in their community.⁵
- **Four in five millennials** say they want to live in places where they have a variety of options to travel to jobs, school, or daily needs.⁶

A path on the Blatnik Bridge will better connect the Twin Ports

- The path would connect with **three regional trails**: the existing 310-mile **Superior Hiking Trail**, the future **Munger/Cross City/Lakewalk/Gitchi-Gami Trail** corridor from Hinckley to Grand Marais, and the **Osaugie Trail/Tri-County Recreational Corridor** in Superior.
- Traveling from **downtown Superior to downtown Duluth is 5.8 miles shorter round trip** using the Blatnik Bridge than the Bong Bridge – **a savings of 36 minutes if bicycling and nearly two hours if walking.**
- A Bicycle Network Analysis demonstrated that **a path on the Blatnik Bridge would significantly improve bicycle connectivity and access** to destinations in the Twin Ports.
- US Bike Route (USBR) 8 is planned to connect the existing USBR 10 in Michigan to the USBR 41 in Duluth. USBRs serve long distance bicycle tourists. The Blatnik Bridge is the logical connection for the route, and **a path on the bridge would be a significant attraction** to users if included on the route.
- The **Gandy-Dancer, Saunders, and Wild Rivers** Wisconsin State Trails terminate in or near the City of Superior, but do not connect to nearby trails in Minnesota.

- Multiple **local, regional, and state plans identify the Blatnik Bridge as a high priority** for a walking and bicycling connection.^{7,8}
- **The Duluth-Superior Metropolitan Pedestrian Plan** lists the Blatnik Bridge as a **critical pedestrian way** that should be a **top priority for investing in pedestrian facilities.**
- **MnDOT’s Statewide Pedestrian System Plan** identifies the area around the Blatnik Bridge as a Tier 1 area where “projects [...] should **prioritize comfort and safety for people walking over convenience for people using other modes of transportation.**”



“There needs to be two ways to bike and walk across St. Louis Bay so that access is not cut off when one bridge is closed.

~Survey Response

Case Example: St. Croix Crossing (MN-36 / WI-64), Minnesota and Wisconsin

- **Connects:** Oak Park Heights, MN and St. Joseph, WI
- **Length:** 1.06 miles (including approaches)
- **Opened:** August 2017
- **Multimodal facility:** 12-foot wide shared use path

This bridge crosses the St. Croix river just south of Stillwater, MN. The shared use path is 12’ wide and is part of the 4.7 mile St. Croix River Crossing Loop Trail that also includes the historic Lift Bridge in Stillwater, which was converted to bicycle and pedestrian-only use when the St. Croix Crossing opened. Constructed jointly by MnDOT and WisDOT, the path includes a scenic overlook that provides space for users to stop and enjoy the scenery.



Photo Credit: Visit Stillwater

Paths and trails support local economies and create jobs

- **Tourism contributes over \$1.1 billion** in annual value added spending and over **16,000 jobs** to Duluth's economy.⁹ The Aerial Lift Bridge is one of the area's most popular destinations.
- For every job added in Duluth's tourism industry, **0.28 jobs will be added in other industries.**¹⁰
- **Mountain biking contributes \$36.6 million to \$48.9 million** and leads to the creation of **313 to 417 local jobs** each year in Duluth.¹¹
- Consumers spend **\$1.42 billion per year on bicycling** in Wisconsin. This spending supports 13,500 jobs and \$83 million in state and local taxes.¹²
- Bicyclists and walkers, on average, **spend similar amounts or more**, and make more trips than those using automobiles at local retailers.¹³
- The **bicycling industry in Minnesota** (manufacturing, retail, non-profits) produced \$780 million of economic activity in 2014, including **5,500 jobs.**¹⁴
- Four **local trails brought in an estimated \$18 million** in 2018. **74% of respondents said the trail was one of the main reasons for visiting the region.**^{15 16}
- Moore's Bicycle Shop in Hattiesburg, MS saw a **dramatic spike in sales when a multi-use trail was built** nearby. Owner James Moore says, "As a direct result of this federal investment in our local community, **my small business has generated an additional \$175,000 in sales tax.**"¹⁷

"Make it a destination bridge for Duluth/Superior and have a nice path for walking/biking that's safe for families for sightseeing."

~Survey Response

- The 3.6-mile Tappen Zee Bridge path includes **visitor centers** and **parking lots** at each end of the bridge, **food trucks**, and **free tours**. Historic Hudson River Towns Chairman Phil Zegarelli says, "We know the path tours will be a major attraction, **drawing residents and visitors out to enjoy the beauty of the bridge** while they hear about the history and wonders of the river we all love so much."¹⁸
- According to Charleston, SC **Mayor Joe Riley**, the path on the 2.5-mile US 17 Bridge has "become a destination spot. **Day and night, people are walking and biking.**"¹⁹
- In Lincoln, NE the **vice president of Pinnacle Bank** says "[trails] are really helpful when **recruiters are talking to people about what you can do** in Lincoln."²⁰
- **Homes near trails often have higher property value**, with a price premium ranging from five to ten percent.²¹
- In 2008, the **National Association of Realtors** revised its policy statement on transportation to call for the **consideration of all transportation types, including bicycling, in every transportation project.**²²

Case Example: Twin Bridges (I-74), Iowa and Illinois

- **Connects:** Moline, IL and Bettendorf, IA
- **Length:** 0.65 miles
- **Opened:** December 2021; path opened April 28, 2022
- **Multimodal facility:** 14-foot wide shared use path

This interstate bridge crosses the Mississippi River in the Quad Cities region. The shared use path is 14' wide and includes a scenic overlook and an elevator on the Iowa side. The path was included in the project because of support from the public, the connectivity it provides between trails on each side of the river, and the inclusion of the project in the Quad Cities Long Range Transportation Plan. The path is designated as part of the Hiawatha Pioneer Trail and includes a glass-bottomed scenic overlook (see photo).



Photo Credit: Iowa DOT I-74 River Bridge Project

Paths and trails promote health, wellness, and productivity

- **Even small increases in physical activity can improve public health.**²³ **People who report using trails at least once a week** are twice as likely than people who reported rarely or never using trails to **meet physical activity recommendations.**²⁴
- **Active travel is less stressful than driving**, and contributes to mental health and happiness.²⁵
- The **need for improved mental health and physical activity** are the first and third highest priorities to improve the health of Douglas County residents.²⁶
- Every \$1 invested in trails can yield anywhere from \$1.65 to \$13.40 in direct medical benefits.²⁷
- Twin Cities employer Quality Bike Parts (QBP) encourages employees to bike to work by providing secure bike parking, showers, and stipends of \$3 per day for each day employees ride to work. Daily stipends add up to approximately \$45,000 per year. Employees participating in the “Bike to Work” **program reduced health care costs by approximately \$200,000 per year** versus those employees not involved in the program.²⁸
- The “Bike to Work” program at QBP is increasing employee productivity as fewer employees miss work days, representing an equivalent of **\$300,000 per year in recaptured productivity.**²⁹
- In Lincoln, NE, **one dollar invested in trails saved \$2.94 in direct medical costs.**³⁰
- Physical activity results in a **reduction in clinical depression**³¹ and **may be as good as standard anxiety treatment**, including psychotherapy and medication.³²
- The presence of multimodal trails is tied to more physical activity, **especially in women and people in lower socioeconomic groups.**³³

“Bike and pedestrian infrastructure is one important piece of a healthy and sustainable future, and I hope to see that in the Blatnik Bridge reconstruction!”
~Survey Response

Increasing walking and bicycling is good for the local environment

- Approximately **1,300 motor vehicle trips every day across the Blatnik Bridge are 5 miles or less** in length – a distance that can easily be covered on a bicycle.³⁴ Converting even a small portion of these trips to active transportation modes can reduce air and noise pollution.
- Replacing car trips with bicycle trips reduces local air pollution, which especially benefits children, older adults, and those with respiratory and cardiovascular problems.
- Operating a bicycle results in 92% less carbon dioxide emissions per mile than driving a car.

Case Example: John F. Kennedy Memorial Bridge (US Highway 2), Minnesota and North Dakota

- **Connects:** East Grand Forks, MN and Grand Forks, ND
- **Length:** 0.25 miles
- **Opened:** 2018 (rehabilitated)
- **Multimodal facility:** 9-foot wide shared use path

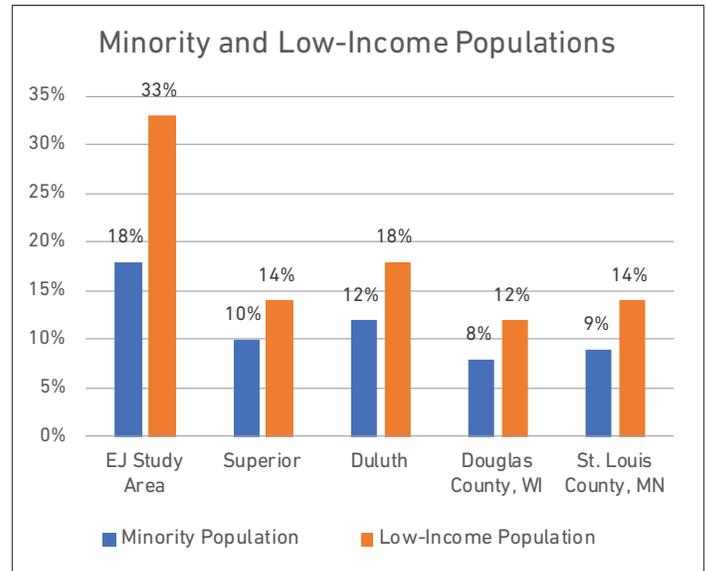
The Kennedy Bridge was rehabilitated in 2017 and 2018 to replace failing structural elements, replace the bridge deck, and add a shared use path for bicycle and pedestrian travel.⁴⁰ The path was added within the existing bridge width by removing the center median on the bridge and reducing travel lane widths. The Kennedy Bridge is one of two local vehicular bridges across the Red River that accommodate people walking and bicycling in addition to two dedicated bicycle and pedestrian bridges.



A path would serve the area's most disadvantaged communities

- WisDOT estimates that **30% to 40% of Superior's residents are non-drivers**. They include aging adults, students, low-income individuals, those with physical, mental or intellectual/developmental disabilities, and those who prefer not to drive.³⁵
- The Census tracts at either end of the Blatnik Bridge have **higher rates of households without a vehicle** than the surrounding cities: 29% of households in Tract 211 in Superior do not have a vehicle (compared to 10% citywide in Superior) and 28% of households in Tract 156 in Duluth do not have a vehicle (compared to 11% citywide in Duluth). **These neighborhoods are within walking and bicycling distance of the Blatnik Bridge.**
- People in households with no vehicle **are four times more likely to walk to work** than people in households with one vehicle, and seven times as likely as people in households with two vehicles.³⁶
- The project's Environmental Justice Study Area includes **greater concentrations of minority and low-income populations** than within the cities of Duluth and Superior and the surrounding counties.
- For people living close to the Blatnik Bridge without access to a car, a path can provide **access to jobs and essential services** across the St. Louis Bay that are currently difficult to access.
- **Households in auto-dependent communities devote 50% more of their budgets to transportation** than those with more multi-modal transportation systems.³⁷
- The neighborhoods at both ends of the Blatnik Bridge—including parts of **Lincoln Park and Central Hillside in Duluth and the North End in Superior**—are **Qualified Census Tracts** with high concentrations of low income households.³⁸ Low income people walk and bike to work at a higher rate than higher income people.³⁹

“I am a teacher and a student came to school over an hour late, because he walked over the Bong Bridge. The Blatnik would have been much shorter for him.”
 ~Survey Response



Case Example: Tappen Zee / Governor Mario M. Cuomo Bridge (I-87/I-287), New York

- **Connects:** Nyak and Tarrytown, NY
- **Length:** 3.6 miles
- **Opened:** 2018; path opened 2020
- **Multimodal facility:** 12-foot wide shared use path

This crossing of the Hudson River is the longest bridge in New York state. The previous bridge prohibited bicycling and walking. Proposed as a transportation-focused link for bicyclists and pedestrians, the final design included visitor centers at each end that provide restrooms, brochures, and interactive displays as well as parking lots for visitors to the bridge. The path includes six scenic overlooks and had over 250,000 bicyclists and pedestrian users in its first six months of being open.



Photo Credit: The Journal News

There is support for a path on the Blatnik Bridge

- Numerous local and regional plans **recommend a walking and bicycling facility on the Blatnik Bridge.**
- The path would likely **connect to the Cross City Trail** in Duluth, which connects to the Lakewalk Trail and the Howard Munger State Trail. Over **400,000 people use the nearby Lakewalk Trail every year** and the Munger State Trail has an average of 225 daily users.
- In a recent online survey, **28% of respondents indicated that they would walk or run across the Blatnik Bridge and 35% stated they would bike across the bridge** a few times a few times a month or more frequently.
- 22% of survey respondents indicated that they would walk, run, or bike on the Blatnik Bridge even though they currently never use the sidewalk on the Bong Bridge, indicating the **potential for a new connection over the St. Louis Bay to encourage more walking and bicycling**

“The Blatnik is much closer to my house and the Lakewalk and connects to the areas in Superior I most frequent so I would use it a lot more than I do the Bong Bridge.”

~Survey Response

What about the path on the Bong Bridge?

- The Bong Bridge has a 6-foot wide sidepath that is open to people walking and bicycling. **The width of the sidepath is insufficient** for two-way bicycling, and requires people on bike to dismount when they encounter other users of the bridge.
- The Bong Bridge is the **only non-motorized connection** between Duluth and Superior. When the bridge is closed for maintenance or emergencies, all walking and bicycling activity between the Twin Ports is eliminated. **Having two crossings is essential to maintain reliable access between Duluth and Superior.**
- The Bong Bridge best facilitates trips between Superior’s West End and Duluth’s more southern neighborhoods. **Trips between Superior and Duluth’s central and eastern neighborhoods are inconvenient due to the longer detour required.** A path on the Blatnik would reduce round trips by up to 11 miles.
- Survey respondents cited the **narrow width, a lack of connecting paths** at both ends, the **absence of noise barriers and nighttime lighting**, and **poor winter maintenance** as issues with the Bong Bridge.



Case Example: Arthur Ravenal Bridge (US Highway 17), South Carolina

- **Connects:** Charleston and Mount Pleasant, SC
- **Length:** 2.5 miles
- **Opened:** 2009
- **Multimodal facility:** 12-foot wide shared use path

This Ravenal Bridge crosses the Cooper River and was the largest transportation infrastructure project in South Carolina’s history when it opened.⁴¹ The original project design did not include a path. However, a community-driven campaign resulted in the path being added.⁴² According to Charleston Mayor Joe Riley, the bicycle/pedestrian lane has, “become a destination spot. Day and night, people are walking and biking.”⁴³



Photo Credit: Visit Historic Charleston

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Case Example: Woodrow Wilson Bridge (I-95/I-495), Virginia and Maryland

- **Connects:** Alexandria, VA and Washington, DC
- **Length:** 1.3 miles
- **Opened:** 2009
- **Multimodal facility:** 12-foot wide shared use path

This crossing of the Potomac River is located between Maryland and Virginia, on the south corner of Washington, D.C. The 12' wide shared use path includes viewing lookouts and was included in the initial bridge construction. The bridge was originally owned by FHWA and was later turned over to the Maryland and Virginia DOTs.



Photo Credit: Trail Link