

**PROJECT: Cumulative Impacts Assessment for the Mississippi Scenic Riverway: St. Cloud (10th Street Bridge) to Anoka-Champlin (TH 169 Bridge) in Anoka, Hennepin, Sherburne, Stearns and Wright Counties, Minnesota**

**AGENCIES:** Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Minnesota Division and Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)

**INVOLVED PARTIES:** A study Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was established to review and provide comments and suggestions on the study process, analysis and findings. This committee included staff members from agencies with knowledge of and jurisdiction in managing the resources assessed in this study, including:

Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)  
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)  
Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA)  
National Park Service (NPS)  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE)  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)  
St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (St. Cloud APO)  
Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)  
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

This committee met periodically during the study process to review methodology, provide detail information and review study findings and proposed mitigation strategies. The TAC also provided comments on the draft study report document.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** During the past 30 years, communities along the I-94 and TH 10 corridors between the Minneapolis/St. Paul (Twin Cities) and St Cloud metropolitan areas have experienced high growth rates. Transportation planners from MnDOT, the St. Cloud APO and the Twin Cities Metropolitan Council have identified the need for additional capacity and/or new bridge crossings over the Mississippi Scenic Riverway, to facilitate travel between communities on either side of the river and/or to facilitate regional trips across the river. These planning efforts have identified the need for three new/increased capacity crossings over the river within the next 20 years, to meet projected travel demands.

As MnDOT and FHWA were considering the potential cumulative impacts of the three new crossings currently being studied, the issue was raised of how to address the potential cumulative impacts to the Mississippi River, in consideration of its Scenic Riverway status. To fully address the potential future cumulative impacts on the Mississippi Scenic Riverway, the two agencies decided that a study should be undertaken to identify if future population/development growth and related increases in travel demand would result in the potential need for more additional crossings (beyond the three

projects already being considered) and to determine the potential cumulative impacts to the Mississippi Scenic Riverway.

This cumulative impacts study was initiated by FHWA and MnDOT in 2002, to address these issues:

1. Based on projected development/population growth, estimate the forecast year 2040 travel demand within the study area, i.e. the travelshed along the Mississippi Scenic Riverway from the 10th Street bridge in St. Cloud to the TH 169 bridge in Anoka-Champlin. (The TH 169 bridge is the first river crossing downstream of the southern end of the designated Riverway boundary: at the western Anoka-Champlin city limits.)
2. Determine, based on a volume/capacity analysis, if the existing crossings plus the proposed three additional crossings are adequate to meet future river crossing travel demand. If not, define the number and the approximate locations where additional crossings would be needed.
3. Determine the cumulative impacts of the new crossings (Build alternative), in combination with other foreseeable future actions in the study area (No Build), on the Mississippi Scenic Riverway, and determine the incremental impact of the new crossings compared to the No Build action impacts.
4. Identify mitigation measures that could be implemented to avoid, minimize and alleviate impacts from identified future cumulative impacts.

The study methodology was based upon CEQ guidance and utilized the following steps:

- Identified the timeframe (years) for assessing past, present and future conditions.
- Identified the resources associated with the Mississippi Scenic Riverway that need to be analyzed to assess the level of impact to the river as a Scenic Riverway.
- Identified the geographic area that should be considered in assessing each resource.
- Defined the assumptions for the future No-Build and Build alternative conditions to be studied.
- Compiled available information on the existing and past condition of each resource to provide scoping-level analysis of conditions and impacts. Identified past or existing mitigation that avoided, minimized or alleviated impacts to each resource.
- Assess the potential future impacts of No Build and Build conditions.
- Identify the incremental future impact of the Build alternative(s) compared to the No Build conditions.
- Identify measures to mitigate (avoid, minimize, alleviate) future impacts.

The intent of the study was not to address all cumulative impacts from all potential future river crossings; rather, the intent was to focus on the cumulative impacts to the Mississippi Scenic Riverway resource. The study is intended for use as a technical

reference document for future environmental review process documents (e.g. EISs) on individual projects as they are proposed, to allow them to address the issue of what the cumulative impacts of the proposed individual crossing -- combined with the impacts of other potential crossings and other reasonably-foreseeable actions -- would be on the Mississippi Scenic Riverway, and to identify mitigation strategies to avoid, minimize or alleviate those impacts.