



January 29-30, 2025

Blatnik Bridge Replacement Project

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WisDOT



Blatnik Bridge Replacement Project

Project Background



Partnership – MnDOT and WisDOT

- Two DOTs but one Twin Ports
- Frequent Collaboration
 - Border bridges
 - Maintenance
 - Inspection

Recent examples:

- *Red Wing Bridge (US 63)*
- *St. Croix Crossing (WI 64/MN 36)*
- *Dresbach Bridge (IH 94)*



Top: Eisenhower Bridge of Valor. Bottom: Snooper truck / inspection

History and Future of the Blatnik Bridge



History and future of the Blatnik Bridge



Blatnik Bridge Overview

- Opened to traffic in 1961
- Approximately **8,000** feet long (*1.5 miles*)
- **120-foot** clearance over St. Louis Bay
- Carries **4** traffic lanes (*2 in each direction*)
- Accommodates **33,021** vehicles per day (2019)
- Bridge conditions limit vehicle weight to about **60%** of a standard highway bridge



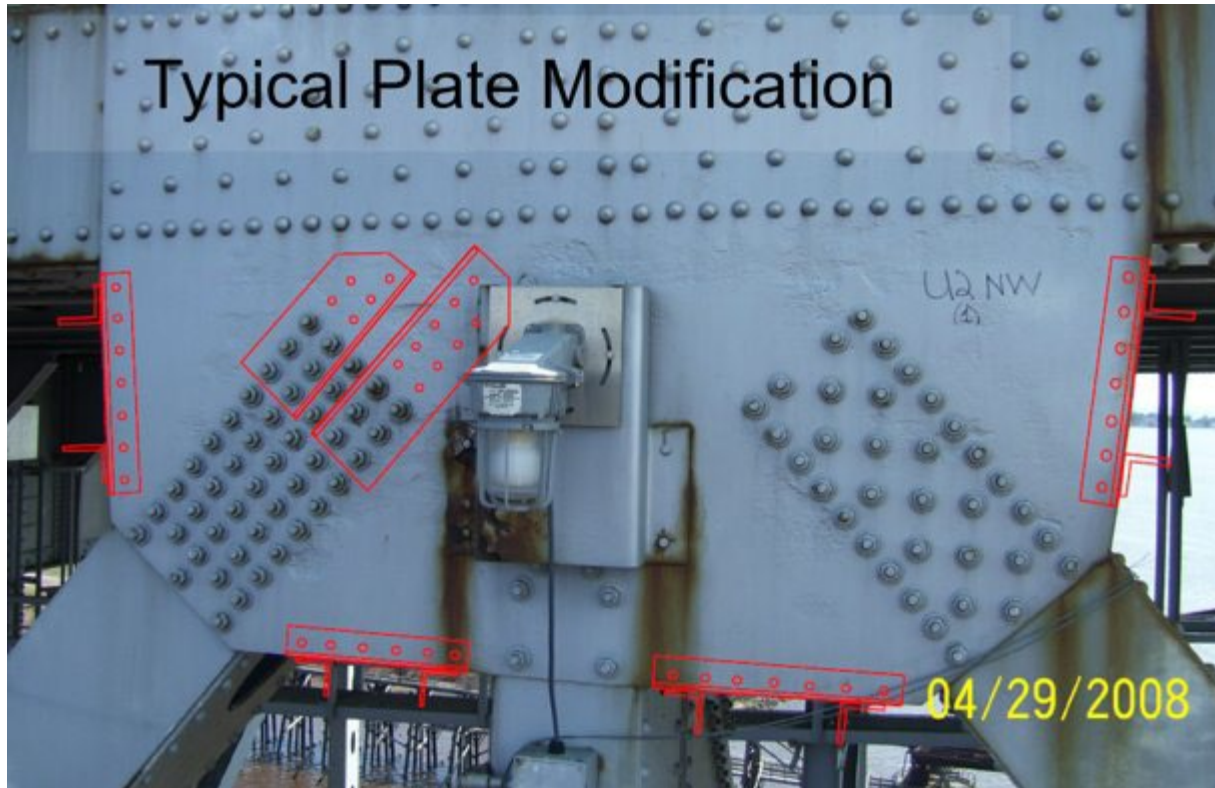
Blatnik Analogy...

Looks good from 50 ft at 50 mph...



Blatnik Analogy...

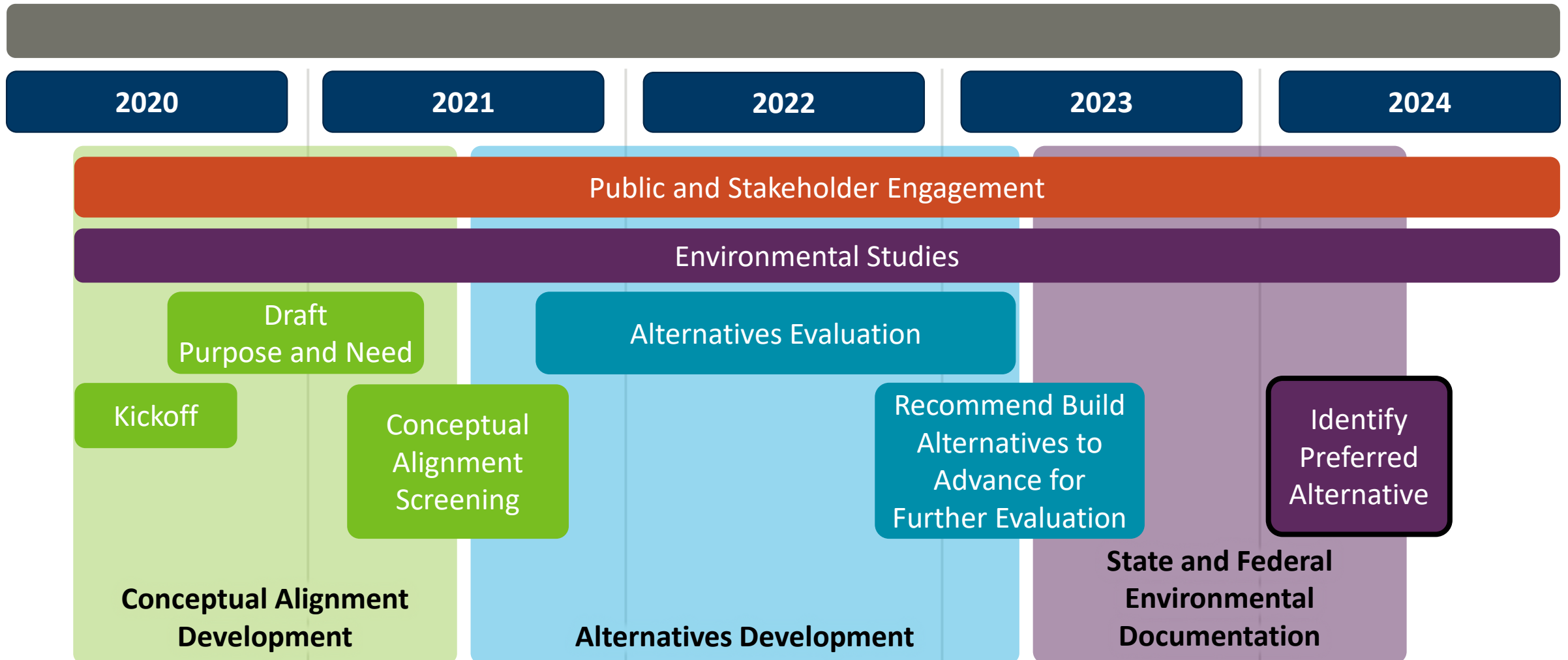
Looks good from 50 ft at 50 mph...



Leading Up to the Project

- 2009 memo from MnDOT State Bridge and Maintenance Engineer
 - Recommendation to replace at least the truss spans in 2030 – 2035 timeframe
- 2017 Blatnik Management Study
 - Strategies to maintain the bridge for 15 – 40 years within parameters with life cycle costs
 - Lowest life cycle cost to replace the entire bridge
- 2017 – 2020 Blatnik Technical Studies
 - Filling information gaps/needs identified in the 2017 Management Study
 - Boots on the ground physical testing on the bridge
- August 2020: Joint project team kick-off for environmental and early engineering

Where We Have Been (NEPA Process)



Alternatives Development

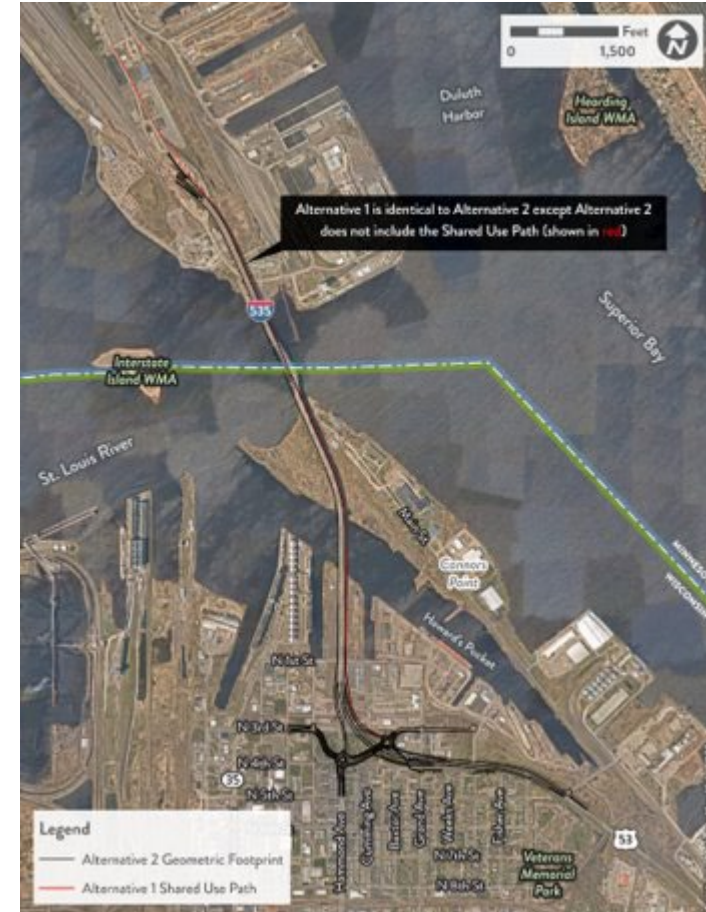
Detailed Evaluation



Selecting the Preferred Alternative

The preferred alternative:

1. Utilizes existing alignment
2. Provides a direct connection to USH 53 in WI
3. Includes Shared Use Path
4. Provides local road connection via interchange



Why Existing Alignment was Selected

- Minimizes impacts to property and wetlands
- Allows for one phase construction, providing the shortest overall construction duration
- Provides the greatest schedule acceleration opportunity since crews can work on any portion of the project at any time
- Closing the existing bridge eliminates risk of construction next to traveling vehicles
- Provides the lowest cost alternative



Blatnik Bridge Replacement Project

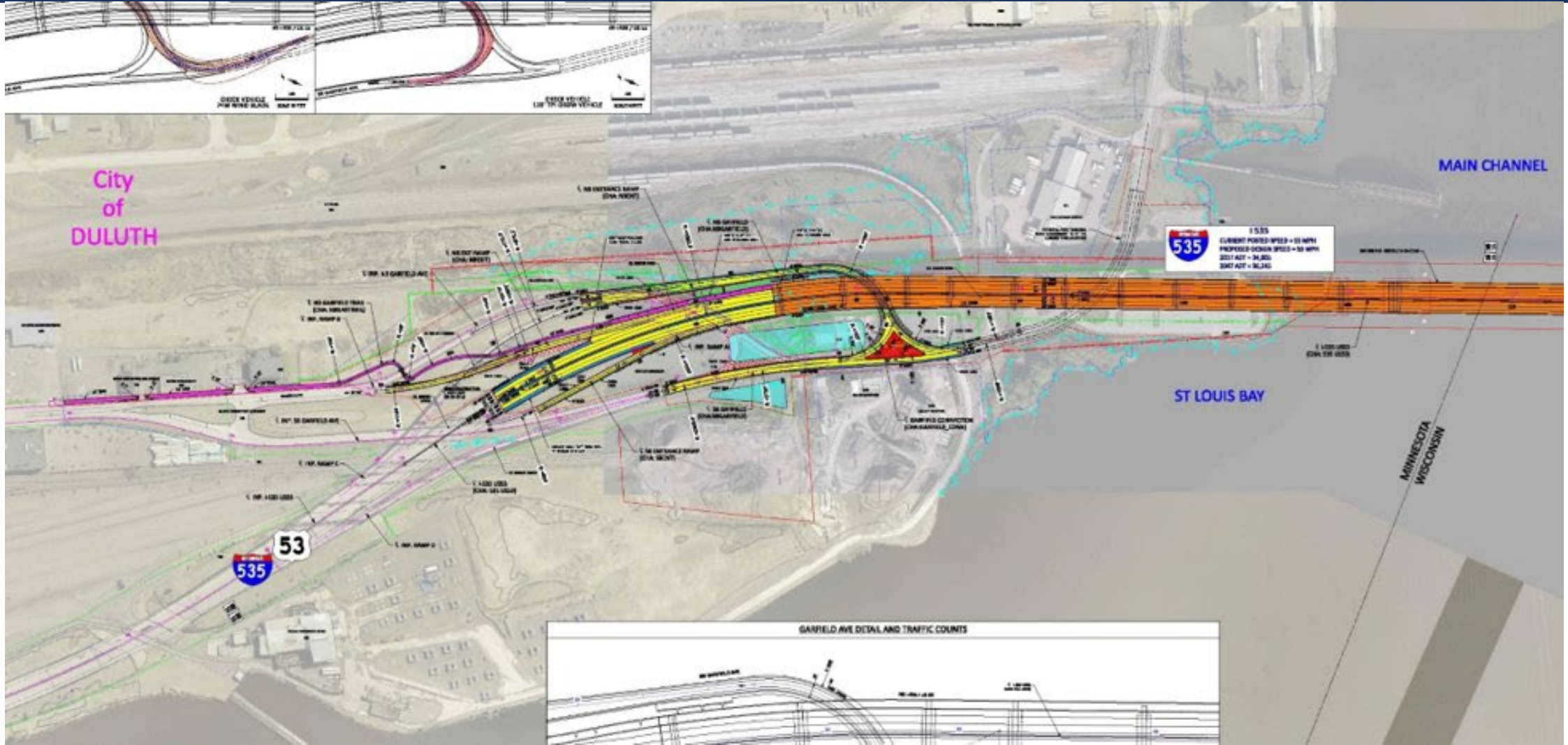
Project Scope and Design



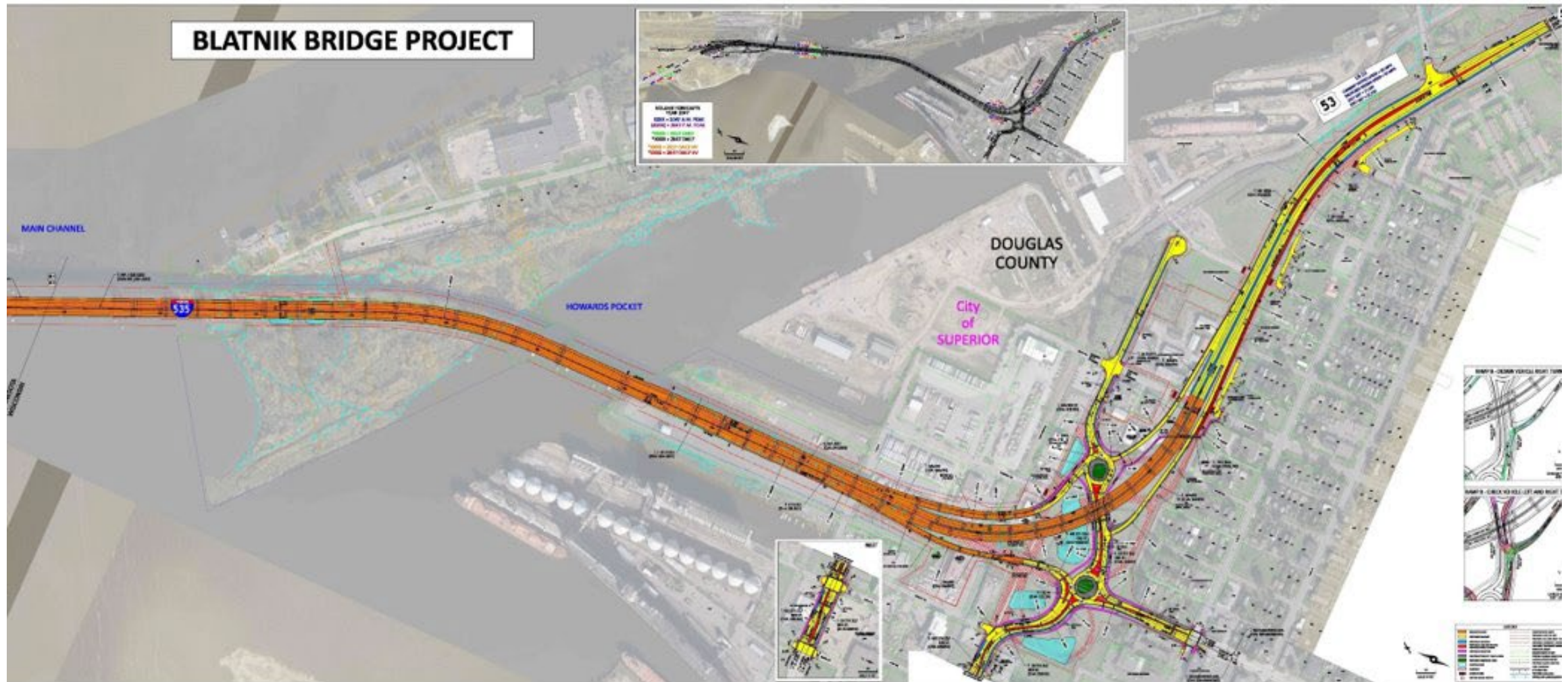
Project Plans – General Layout



Project Plans – Minnesota Approach



Project Plans – Wisconsin Approach



Current Wisconsin Approach



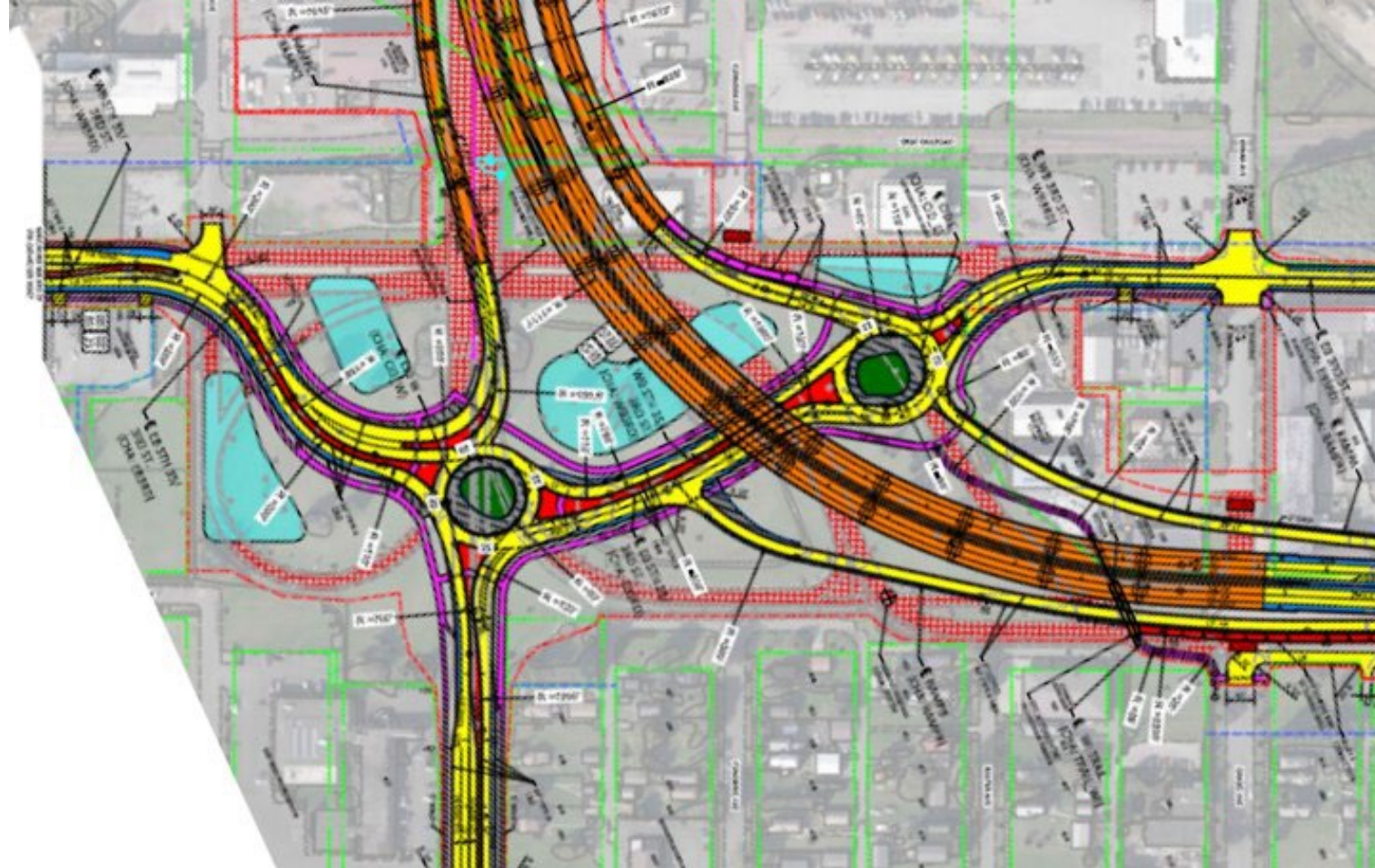
Project Layout

Proposed Wisconsin Interchange

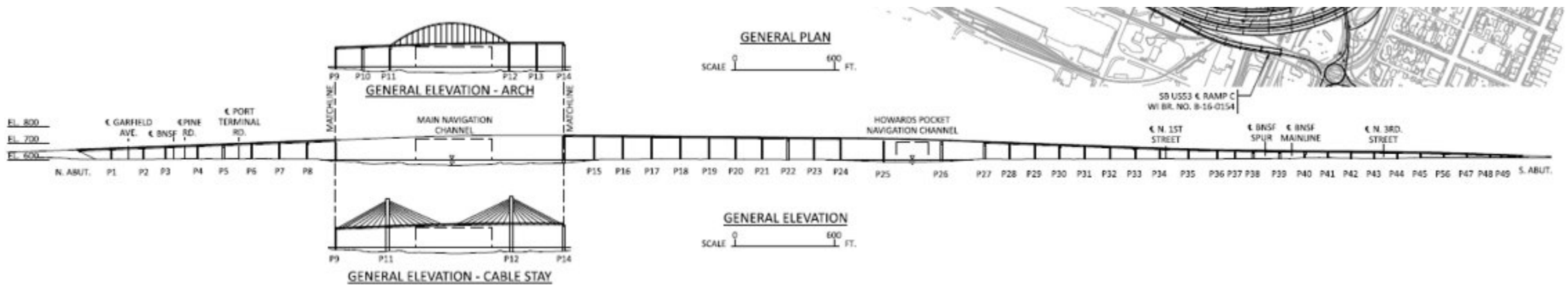
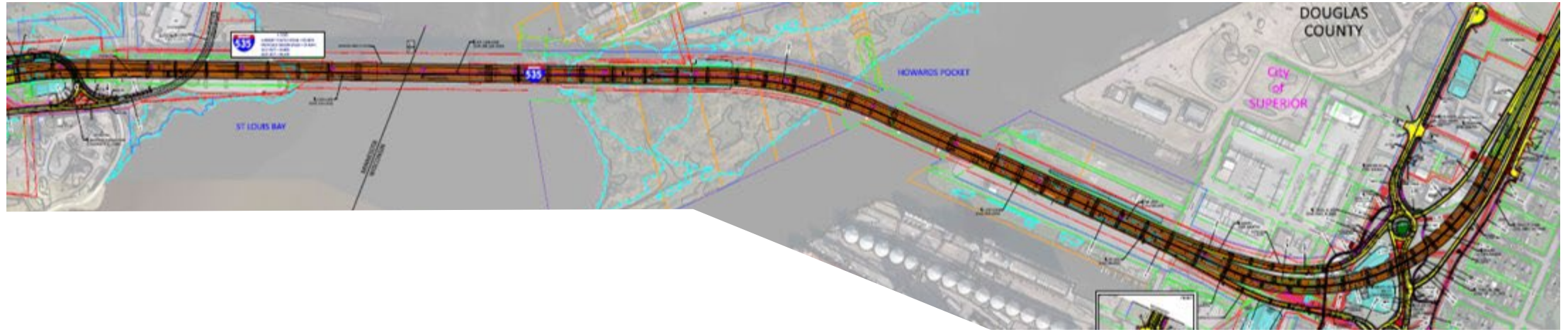
City of Superior

USH 53/IH535 Interchange

- Offset RAB Interchange
- Pedestrian connections
- OSOW Compliant

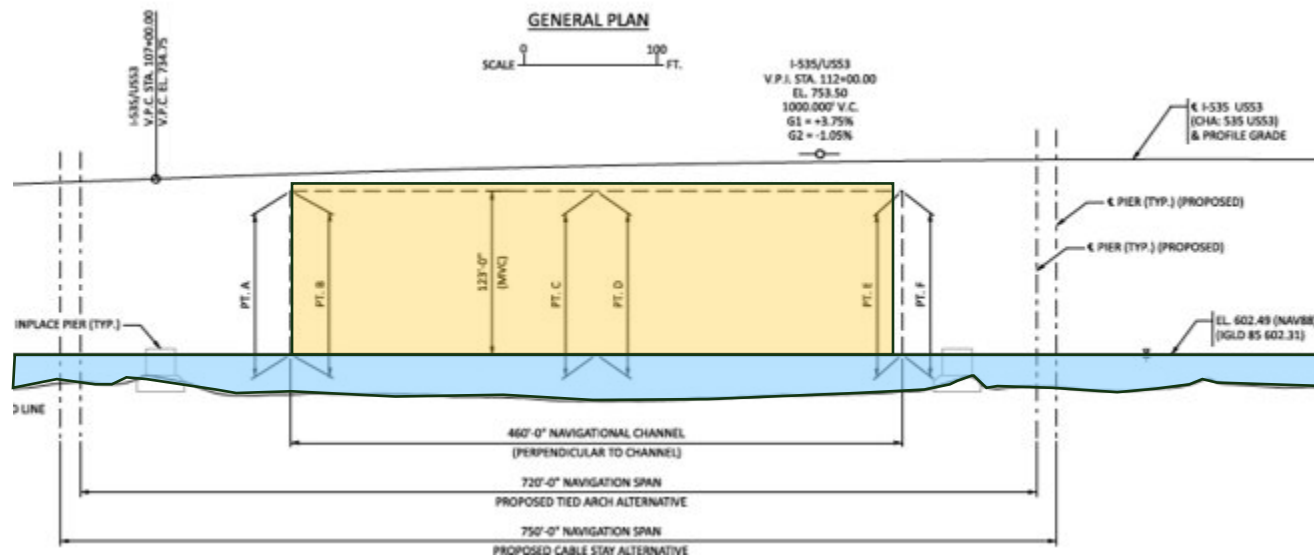


Project Layout – Bridge Profile

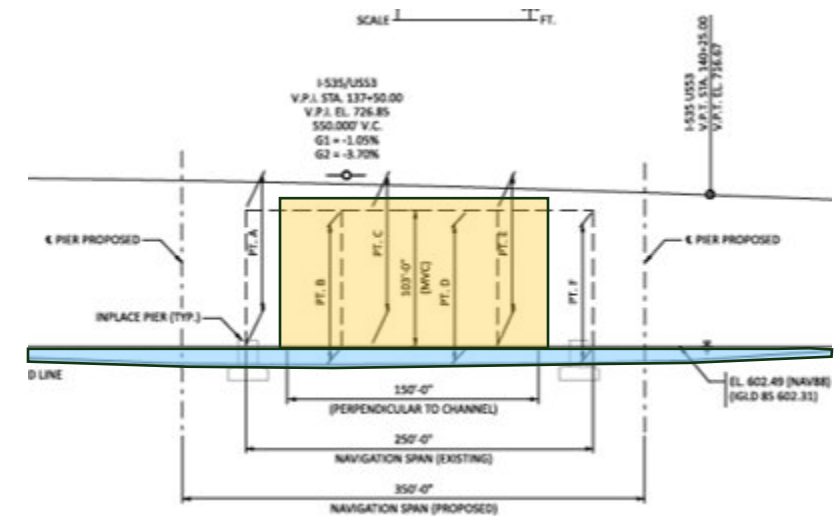


Technical Studies & Preliminary Engineering

- Navigation Openings



MAIN NAVIGATION OPENING



HOWARDS POCKET NAVIGATION OPENING

Blatnik Bridge Replacement Project

Visual Quality and Impact



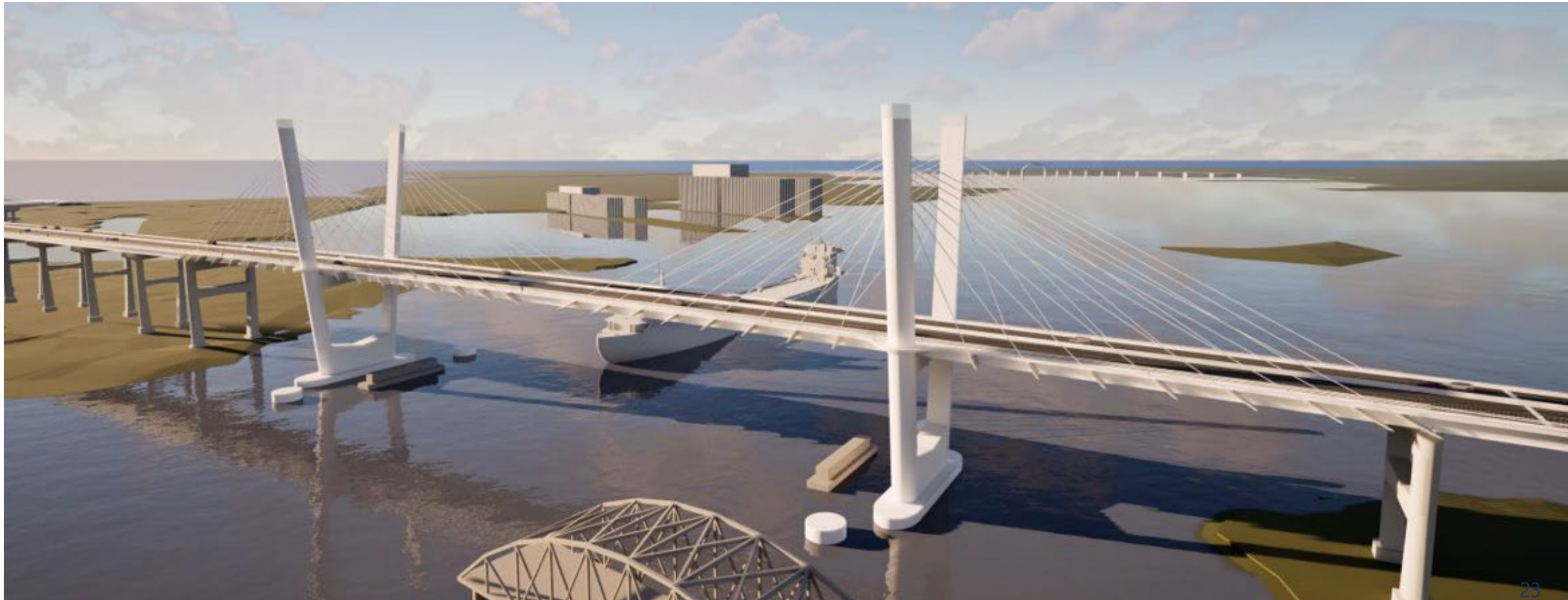
Visualizations of Main Span Options

Tied Arch



Visualizations of Main Span Options

Cable Stayed



Blatnik Bridge Replacement Project

Project Schedule



Federal Funding Awarded

The project received its full federal funding request (**\$1.058 Billion**) on the INFRA Grant. Minnesota and Wisconsin have applied for additional grant funding for the project.



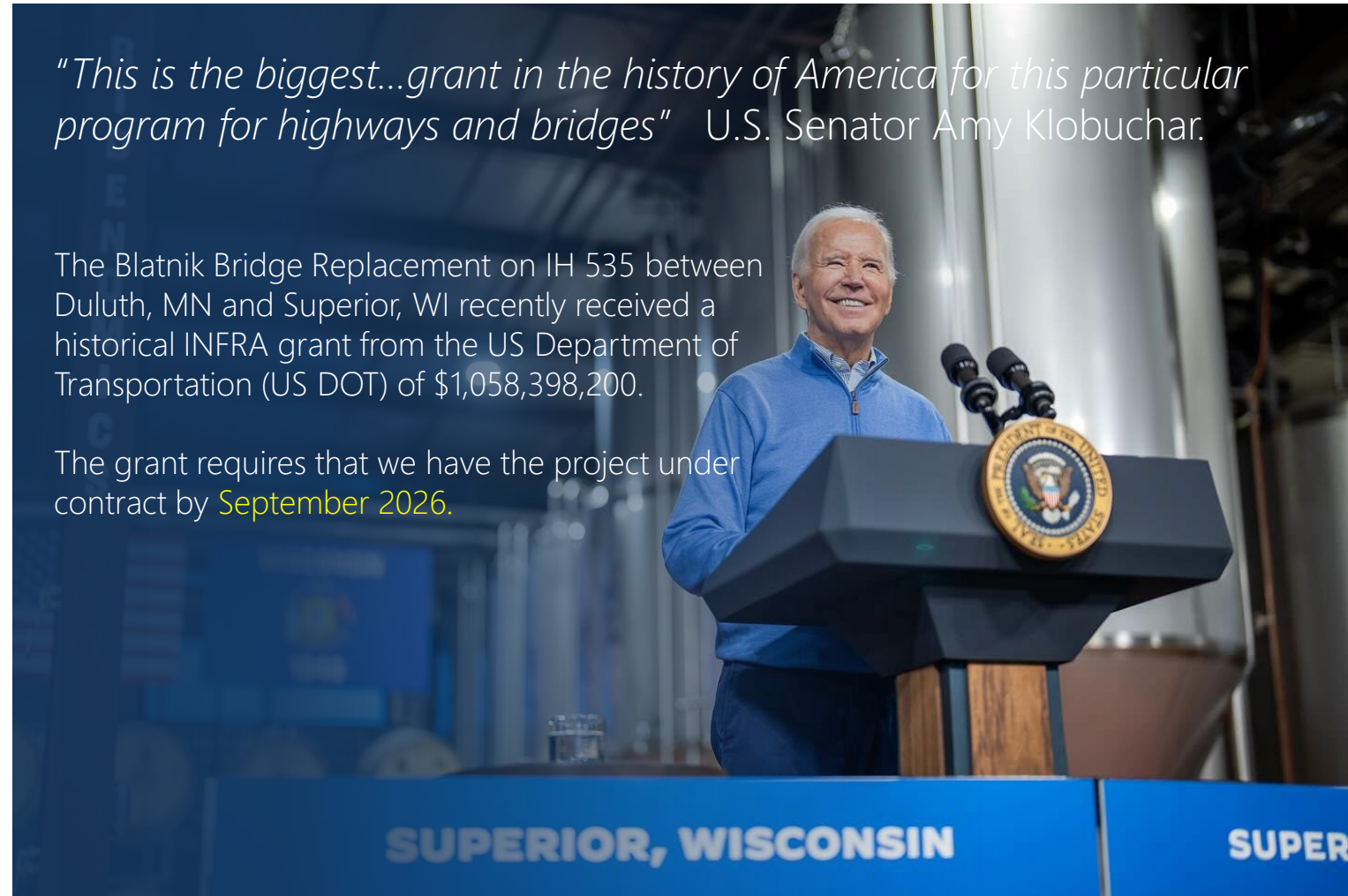
Project Procurement and Schedule

- Largest interstate bridge project between MN and WI
- First Joint D-B project between MN and WI
- Requirement to be under contract by September 2026
- WI currently D-B program in pilot stage.

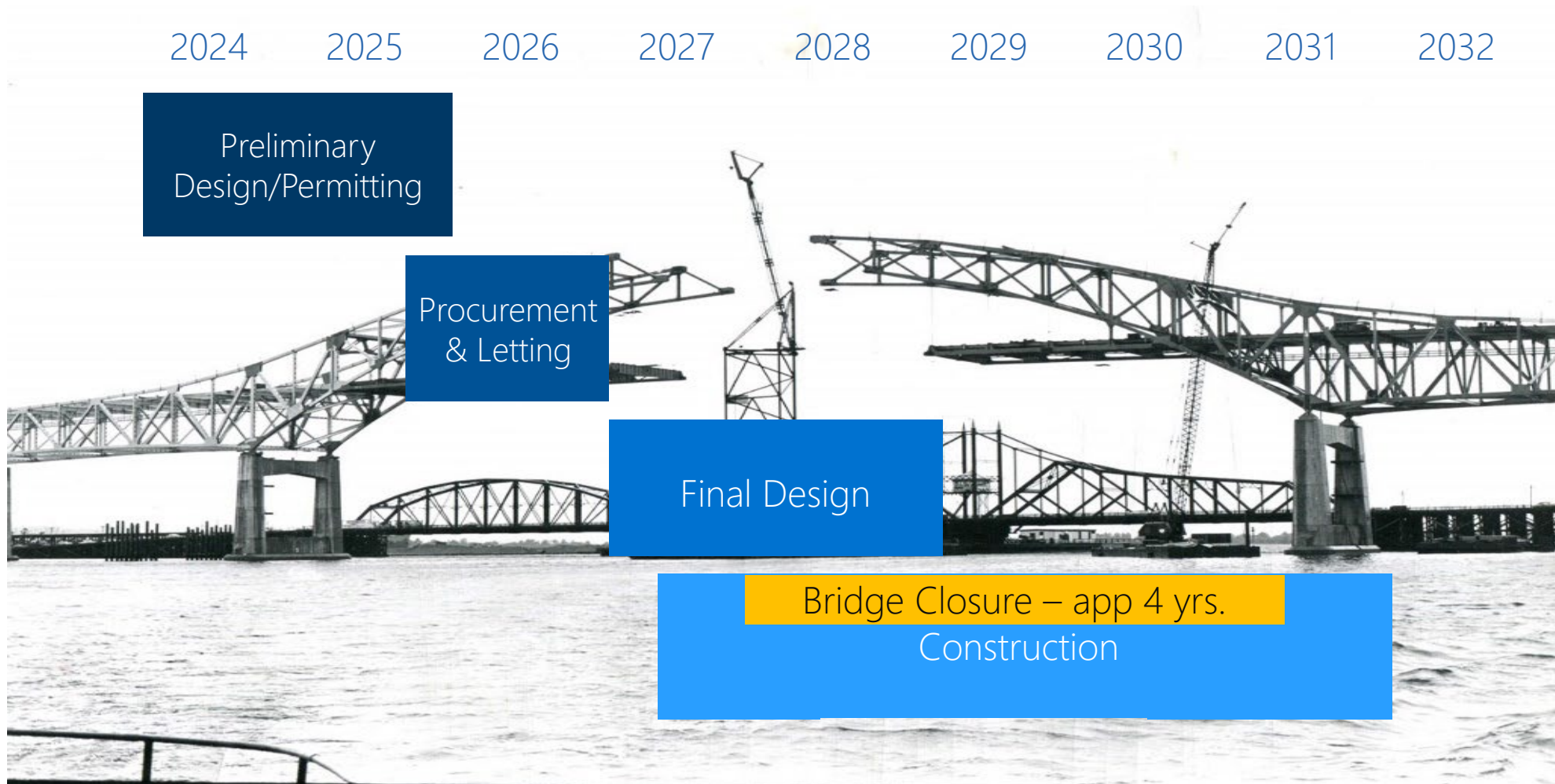
"This is the biggest...grant in the history of America for this particular program for highways and bridges" U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar.

The Blatnik Bridge Replacement on IH 535 between Duluth, MN and Superior, WI recently received a historical INFRA grant from the US Department of Transportation (US DOT) of \$1,058,398,200.

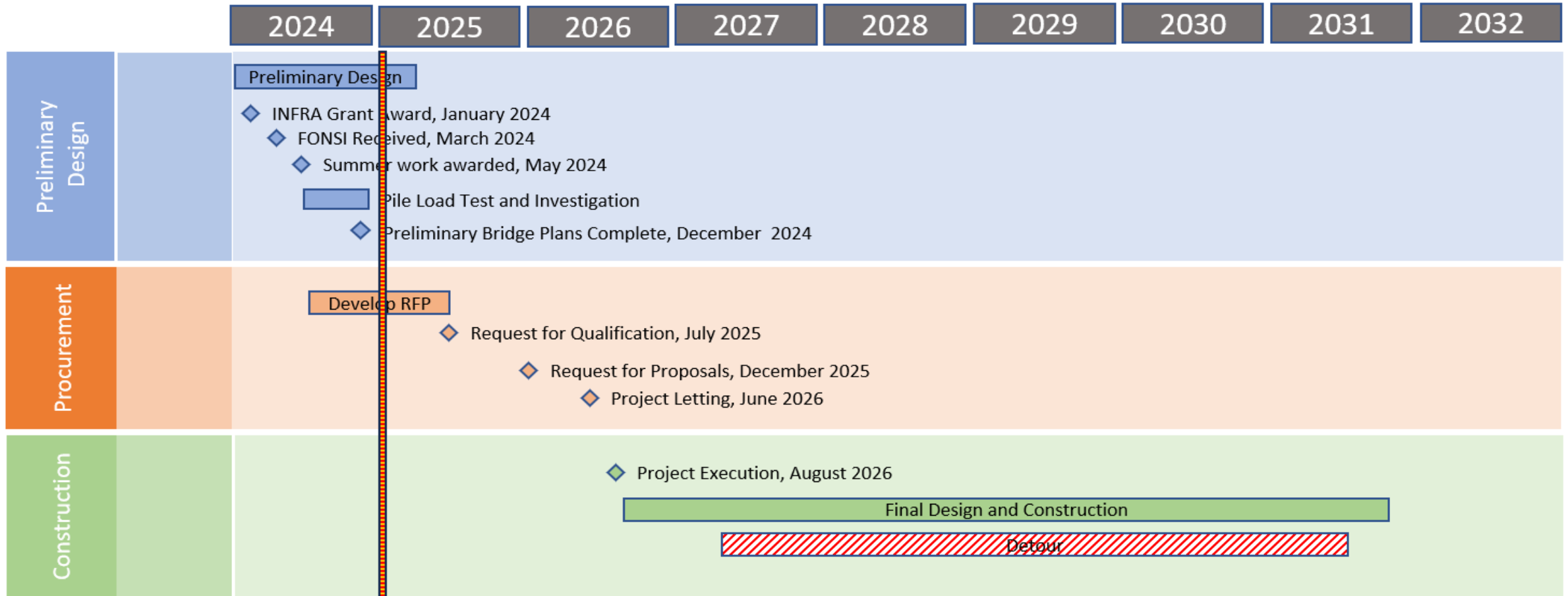
The grant requires that we have the project under contract by **September 2026**.



Project Schedule



Project Schedule



Blatnik Bridge Replacement Project

Design Build



Design-Build Method

Why was this method chosen for the Blatnik Bridge project?

- Efficient coordination between the design team and the construction team is especially important for the unique portions of the project (large bridge, shipping channel, etc.)
- Design-Build projects typically result in lower cost growth after construction begins, fewer construction claims, and less delays.
- Allows for alternative design and construction innovation.
- Other recent Design-Build projects at major river crossings:
 - I-35W Mississippi River Bridge (St. Anthony Falls)
 - Hastings Bridge Replacement
 - I-35W Minnesota River Bridge



Design-Build Method

DBE/Small Businesses

How are DBEs Required in a Design-Build Contract?

- Percentage set similarly to "normal" Bid-Build prior to letting
- Scope partially known: no quantities
- Open-Ended Performance Plans (OEPPs)
- DBE/Small Business plan/narrative
- Continued coordination for entire life of project

- Best-Value Scoring
 - OEPP narrative
 - Small business/contract criteria? (Example: MN IH 494)
 - Only possibilities: no decisions made



Design-Build Method

DBE/Small Businesses

DBE and Small Business Involvement

- Shortlisting: teams known
- Pairing of contractor and consultant
- RFP Kickoff/DBE Meet and Greet
- Teams highly interested in confidentiality
- May ask high-priority questions during advertisement
- DBEs encouraged to investigate DB subcontract structures



Typical DBE Opportunities

We are a few years away from major construction. At this point, what do you foresee as the biggest DBE opportunities with this project?

While we're a few years away from construction on the bridge, the project team will be looking for opportunities to increase opportunities for DBEs. The project team is currently discussing how to develop the DBE plan for this project. In terms of opportunities during construction, the team is currently identifying the following areas:

SUBS

- Ironworkers
- Concrete Pumping
- Erosion Control
- Trucking
- Electrical
- Design

SUPPLIERS

- Rebar Supplier
- Structural Metals (bearings, railing, expansion joints.)



Stay Connected

- Sign up for email updates on the project website
- Click "Sign up for project email updates"

I-535 Blatnik Bridge

Duluth, Minn. and Superior, Wis.

[Project Home](#) [Accessibility](#) [Meetings](#) [History](#) [Contacts](#)

About this project

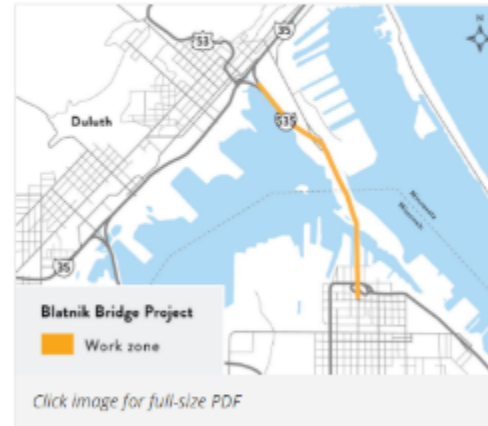
MnDOT is working toward a future project to address concerns about the John A. Blatnik Bridge, one of two bridges that connects Duluth, Minn., to Superior, Wis. Carrying I-535 over the St. Louis Bay, the Blatnik is an important freight and commercial connection between the Twin Ports.

Jointly owned and managed by MnDOT and WisDOT, it is Minnesota's second longest bridge and serves an average of 33,021 cars traveling between the two cities each day. MnDOT will lead the project, which will address aging infrastructure, improve safety and better accommodate oversize/overweight loads.

For more information on the bridge, [click here](#).

Project purpose

- Significant deterioration in truss elements



Schedule

- 2020 to 2024: Preferred Alternative Selection and Environmental Documentation
- 2024 to 2026: Preliminary Design
- 2026 to 2028: Final Design
- 2028 to 2031: Construction

Location

- I-535 over the St. Louis Bay between Duluth, Minn., and Superior, Wis.



Benefits

- Improve safety
- Better accommodate oversize/overweight loads

Cost

- Unknown at this time

Connect with us

-  Sign up for project email updates
-  Follow us on Facebook

Stay Connected

- Under questions select "Yes" to the "Are you a consultant and/or work in an industry"

The screenshot shows the MNDOT Department of Transportation subscriber preferences page. At the top, there is a banner with the MNDOT logo and a photo of a road construction site with a 'ROAD CLOSED' sign. Below the banner, the user is logged in as paul.conlin@dot.wi.gov. The page has three tabs: 'Subscriptions', 'Preferences', and 'Questions'. The 'Questions' section contains two questions. The first question is 'Are you a business that will be impacted by MnDOT construction? (you will be notified of emails involving detour routes, closures, and other resources)' with radio button options for 'Yes, I will be impacted' and 'No impact'. The second question, 'Are you a consultant and/or work in an industry that is interested in receiving emails about MnDOT advertised highway construction and maintenance projects for bid letting?', is highlighted with a red rectangular box. The 'Yes' radio button for this question is selected. At the bottom of the form are 'Submit' and 'Cancel' buttons. A footer contains a privacy notice and links to 'Privacy Policy | Cookie Statement | Help'.

m DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Welcome paul.conlin@dot.wi.gov (Sign Out)

Subscriber Preferences

Subscriptions Preferences Questions

Questions

Are you a business that will be impacted by MnDOT construction? (you will be notified of emails involving detour routes, closures, and other resources)

Yes, I will be impacted

No impact

Are you a consultant and/or work in an industry that is interested in receiving emails about MnDOT advertised highway construction and maintenance projects for bid letting?

Yes

Submit Cancel

Your contact information is used to deliver requested updates or to access your subscriber preferences.

Privacy Policy | Cookie Statement | Help

Stay Connected

- MnDOT's Design-Build Program webpage:

Here we are!!! →

Design-Build

[Home](#) [About](#) [Projects](#) [Resources](#) [Contacts](#)

[Design-Build project information public site](#): Ask the [Design-Build contact](#) for permanent access.

Projects

Potential future projects

- [Blatnik Bridge Project](#)
SP 6981-26, Letting Summer 2026

Projects currently in procurement

Projects under construction

- [Statewide Pedestrian Bridge](#)
SP 8816-3427, May 8, 2024
- [I-494 Airport to Hwy 169](#)
SP 2785-424, Letting Jan. 18, 2023
- [I-90 Unbonded Overlay from Hwy 169 to 22](#)
SP 2280-143, Letting Oct. 12, 2022



The Hastings Bridge replacement Main Span was constructed off-site and lifted into place from barges in the river.

Thank You!



Blatnik Bridge Replacement Team

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**Don't forget to fill out
the evaluation for this session.**

These evaluations help shape future events.

THANK YOU