



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. BOX 8952 • MADISON, WI 53708

July 8, 2008

Frank Busalacchi, Secretary
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
4802 Sheboygan Ave.
P.O. Box 7910
Madison, WI 53707-7910

Re: St. Croix River Crossing
Stillwater Bridge Financial Consultant and Project Funding

Dear Secretary Busalacchi:

As legislators representing the residents of the area, we are writing to bring to your attention recent developments relating to the Stillwater Bridge and express our support for the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) to take action that reaffirms our state's support for this vital project.

On June 16, 2008 the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) released their Ten Year Bridge Program and updates to their Statewide Transportation Plan. The Stillwater Bridge is included within MNDOT's new bridge program and has been identified as one of the highest priority "Tier One" projects. Most notably, under this plan MNDOT advances the Stillwater Bridge construction start date to 2013 from their previous start date of 2024 and commits to its share of the funding with the new expedited timetable.

This is wonderful news to thousands of our residents; a new Stillwater Bridge is long overdue. MNDOT should be commended for recognizing the importance of moving this project forward. According to MNDOT, the Stillwater Bridge is categorized as both a "fracture critical" and "structurally deficient" bridge, deeming it necessary to move the project eleven years ahead of the previously scheduled timeline.

In addition, the St. Croix Valley and western Wisconsin have been growing rapidly; the critical need for infrastructure enhancements to accommodate this growth has been documented by your department in the West Center Regional Freeway System Study. This area has suffered with this transportation corridor bottleneck for decades.

It is Wisconsin's time to step up to the plate. Throughout this lengthy process our DOT has stated Wisconsin's share of the funding for this bridge would be available when necessary. We are urging the DOT move forward in concert with Minnesota, committing to a 2013 start date and the funding necessary to accomplish that timetable.

We recognize that a project of this magnitude presents challenges to the department. In the case of a bi-state project, with the complexity and history of the St. Croix River Crossing, it is even more difficult. This is why the legislature passed and the Governor accepted the provision in the state budget last year

to hire a financial consultant to work solely on the Stillwater Bridge in order to assist the two state Departments of Transportation. The budget specified that this expert would be contracted utilizing already appropriated federal dollars and would be charged with analyzing all plans for funding in a creative and most cost-efficient manner. It is our understanding that MNDOT, the Federal Highway Administration and the other members of our team are in agreement that bringing on board this consultant is a necessary and beneficial step.

To date, it appears no action has occurred at our DOT in regard to following through in hiring this consultant. With the question of funding now upon us, we respectfully ask your office to release a Request for Proposal and hire a consultant to implement this statutory requirement to move the project forward.

Thank you for your attention to the St. Croix Valley's transportation needs. We look forward to your response as well as working with you to bring this important project to fruition. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Kitty Rhoades
State Representative
30th Assembly District



John Murtha
State Representative
29th Assembly District



Ann Hrachuck
State Representative
28th Assembly District



Sheila Harsdorf
State Senator
10th Senate District