



Fiscal Year 2015 Report on the

Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account

December 2015



Prepared by

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Cover:

Artist's depiction of the future bike and pedestrian bridge.

Contents

Contents 3

Legislative Request..... 4

Summary..... 5

 Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan..... 5

 Stillwater Lift Bridge Conversion Project 5

 Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account 6

 Related Activities 6

 Revenues 6

 Next Steps..... 7

Legislative Request

This report is issued to comply with [Minn. Stat. 165.15, subd. 8.](#)

165.15 Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account.

Subd. 8. Reports required.

The commissioner of transportation shall report annually to the chair and ranking minority member of each legislative committee with jurisdiction over transportation on the endowment account. At a minimum, the report must include detailed revenue and expenditure information.

The cost of preparing this report is under \$5,000.

Summary

Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan

The Stillwater Lift Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is also a Section 4(f) resource under the USDOT Act of 1966. Once the St. Croix River Crossing is opened, the Stillwater Lift Bridge will be converted from a bridge carrying vehicles across the river to a bicycle and pedestrian crossing connecting up to a new trail system. Its conversion to a bicycle and pedestrian crossing has been documented during the St. Croix River Crossing Project in letters of agreement between the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the city of Stillwater.

The Stillwater Lift Bridge is one of 24 bridges MnDOT identified for long-term preservation as part of the agency's 2006 Historic Bridges Management Plan and 2008 Historic Bridge Section 106 Programmatic Agreement. The [Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan](#) is a required document listed in the 2006 amended Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement for the St. Croix River Crossing Project and is a key piece directing the long-term preservation of the lift bridge.

MnDOT's Bridge Office, Cultural Resources Unit, and Metro District worked with a consultant team and the Stillwater Bridge Advisory Committee to survey and assess the condition of the bridge and its deck. The assessment was used to create the Operations and Maintenance Manual for the lift bridge, which helped in the development of the Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan.

The Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan was completed in 2009. It describes how the Stillwater Lift Bridge will be overseen before and after construction is complete on the St. Croix River Crossing Project. The Management Plan lays out the conditions necessary to preserve the bridge's structural and historical integrity for its current and future use. During the construction of the St. Croix River Crossing, the lift bridge will still be used by vehicles to cross the river. Once construction is complete on the new crossing and it is opened to traffic, the lift bridge will be transformed to a pedestrian and bicycle trail. The Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan is vital to preserving the lift bridge but is also an integral part in successfully implementing the activities necessary for preserving the other 23 historical bridges throughout the state.

Stillwater Lift Bridge Conversion Project

As part of the Memorandum of Agreement and Statewide Historic Bridge Management Plan, MnDOT committed to rehabilitating and converting the Stillwater Lift Bridge. Although endowment funds cannot be used to convert the lift bridge, the renovation of the lift bridge from one that carries vehicular traffic to a pedestrian and bicycle trail will begin within one year of opening the St. Croix Crossing. MnDOT and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation will cover the cost of the lift bridge renovation.

In September 2015, MnDOT announced that the completion date for the new St. Croix Crossing Bridge, just downstream from the lift bridge, was being delayed from its previously scheduled

opening in 2016. In January 2016, MnDOT announced the new bridge will be open to traffic by fall 2017. MnDOT plans to put the lift bridge conversion project out for bids in May 2017.

Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account

The MOA for the St. Croix River Crossing Project contained the condition that “prior to the opening of the new river crossing, MnDOT and WisDOT will deposit no less than \$3 million in the endowment fund”. The endowment fund will cover the routine operations and maintenance costs after the Stillwater Lift Bridge is converted to a bicycle and pedestrian crossing.

In order to establish a Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account, legislation was necessary to provide the appropriate authority. The 2009 Minnesota Legislature passed HF 1309, which established the Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account within [Minn. Stat. 165.15](#).

The Lift Bridge Endowment Account legislation was revised on May 20, 2014. The language of subdivision 2 modified the use of funds in the account and includes language on trunk highway fund transfers.

Related Activities

Since 2009, MnDOT has started planning work based on recommendations made in the Stillwater Lift Bridge Management Plan. Work includes developing environmental documents for two lift bridge projects. The first environmental document was for a rehabilitation and maintenance project. The second set of environmental documents was for the conversion project planned following the completion of the St. Croix Crossing Project.

Crews completed the Stillwater Lift Bridge rehabilitation and maintenance project in December 2012. This project was necessary to safely maintain vehicular traffic on the lift bridge and included steel and concrete repairs, electrical system updates and mechanical repairs.

For a complete status on the upcoming Stillwater Lift Bridge Conversion Project, visit the project website at: [Stillwater Lift Bridge Project Pages](#).

Revenues

MnDOT deposited \$3 million into the Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account on June 30, 2014. WisDOT deposited \$1.5 million into the endowment account on Oct. 9, 2014. MnDOT deposited another \$3 million in February 2015 to bring the total to \$7.5 million.

The State Board of Investment, in consultation with the commissioner of transportation, invested those funds in the endowment account, in accordance with Minn. Stat. 165.15 as amended.

The purpose of the endowment account is to cover the operating and maintenance costs of the bridge once it is converted to a bicycle and pedestrian use bridge. MnDOT established an interest account and, as of September 2015, there was over \$34,200 in the account.

Figure 1: Stillwater Lift Bridge Account Interest Earnings

**Stillwater Lift Bridge Endowment Account:
Interest Earnings**

Year	Appropriation Name	Estimated Revenue Amount	Collected Amount
2014	Stillwater Lift Bridge ITC	\$37.76	\$37.76
2015	Stillwater Lift Bridge ITC	\$27,114.42	\$27,114.42
2016	Stillwater Lift Bridge ITC	\$69,000.00	\$7,058.55
TOTAL		\$96,152.18	\$34,210.73

*The collected amount total is through September 2015.

**The collected amount is substantially below the estimated amount due to very low interest rates

Expenditures

At this time, none of the funds in the interest account have been spent on the lift bridge and the account balance stands at slightly over \$7.5 million.

Next Steps

MnDOT will perform the necessary routine maintenance and operation work on the lift bridge once it is converted to a bicycle/pedestrian facility, sometime after the estimated 2019 completion date.