

Technical Memorandum 1

US 52 Safety, Access, and Interchange Location Study Project Framework

South Limits of Cannon Falls to Hader
Goodhue County, Minnesota
S.P. 2506-66

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Prepared For:



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Introduction

The *US 52 Safety, Access and Interchange Location Study* is a collaborative effort lead by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and Goodhue County, with input from the adjoining townships (Cannon Falls and Leon) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The project area is located within a segment of US 52 categorized by MnDOT as a high priority Interregional Corridor (IRC), connecting two regional trade centers (Twin Cities and Rochester). The one-mile wide project area is a 10-mile corridor along US 52, extending from the southern limits of Cannon Falls in Goodhue County at the junction of Highview Road and US 52 to south of County Road (CR) 50 (near Hader). The project area is shown Figure 1.

The purpose of the US 52 Safety, Access and Interchange Location Study is to address the severe safety issues along US 52 within the project area and to implement the vision for US 52. The long-term vision (Vision 52) is for US 52 to be developed as a fully access-controlled freeway facility between I-90 and I-494. It is MnDOT's goal to remove all at grade intersections and signals on this segment of US 52, which is identified as a high priority IRC. For over a decade, various planning studies have been completed for the US 52 corridor, focusing on at improving safety. The *US 52 Corridor Management and Safety Plan* in 2000, concluded with a recommendation that an interchange be constructed in the vicinity of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 9 or CSAH 1.

The current study will identify US 52 safety improvements between the City of Cannon Falls and Hader (an unincorporated community). It will determine a recommended location for an interchange along US 52 in the vicinity of CSAH 1 and/or CSAH 9. The study will also include related roadway network and access management improvements, such as a potential realignment of CSAH 14 on the north and new access roads to maintain system connectivity due to closed access points. Implementation of project recommendations will provide enhanced connectivity between US 52 and the supporting roadway network and vastly improve traffic safety.

Project Frame Work Memorandum Purpose

The purpose of this technical memorandum is to introduce the following elements, which collectively comprise the framework for this study:

- A. Project Goals and Objectives
- B. Project Work Plan and Key Tasks
- C. Public Involvement Plan
- D. Decision-Making Framework

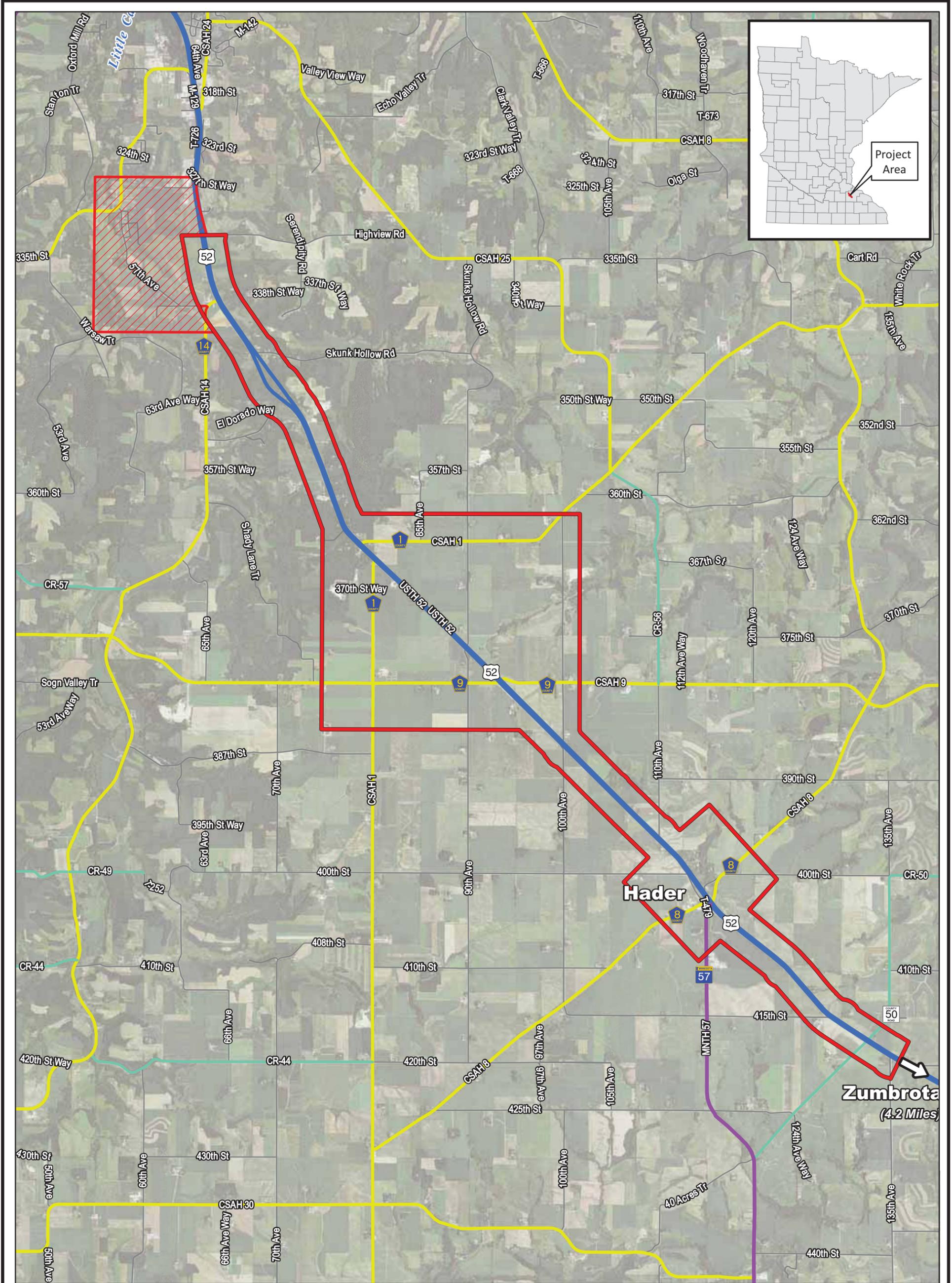
A. Project Goals and Objectives

A range of project goals and objectives were established by the Project Management Team (PMT) to guide the proposed project and to ensure that proposed solutions address critical project issues and needs. The proposed project goals and objectives are described below.

GOAL 1: *Enhance the safety of the traveling public along US 52 in the project corridor.*

Objectives:

- Reduce the crash rate and severity rate throughout the corridor, particularly at high crash intersections.
- Improve roadway geometry and /or sight distance.
- Reduce or eliminate variations in traffic speed caused by merging/diverging traffic.

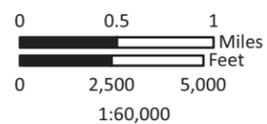


**FIGURE 1
PROJECT AREA MAP**

**US 52 Safety, Access, and
Interchange Location Study**

Goodhue County, Minnesota

- US 52 Project Study Area
- CSAH 14 Subarea
- Corporate Boundaries
- US Highway
- Minnesota Highway
- County State Aid Highway
- County Road



GOAL 2: *Identify access management improvements along US 52 within the project area.*

Objectives:

- Develop an implementation plan for interim and long term access management which removes all at-grade access and intersections within the project area.
- Develop efficient means to provide replacement access to affected properties and local roadways which is consistent with the regional transportation system.

GOAL 3: *Enhance mobility and connectivity along US 52 and throughout the supporting roadway network within the project area.*

Objectives:

- Develop improvements to maintain and/or enhance the mobility on US 52, in accordance with high priority IRC performance goals and the findings of previous US 52 corridor safety and planning studies.
- Provide efficient regional roadway connections that ensure functionality, mobility, accessibility and connectivity within the regional transportation systems and to US 52.
- Provide efficient local and neighborhood roadway connections that ensure functionality, mobility, accessibility and connectivity to regional transportation systems.
- Allow improvements at low impact intersection which will likely remain for many years due to low return on investment.

GOAL 4: *Minimize social, economic, and environmental impacts to the study corridor while improving the safety, access and mobility of the local and regional transportation system.*

Objectives:

- Minimize adverse impacts to the social environment which could include travel time, farmland, and right of way.
- Reduce and/or minimize impacts to the natural environment which could include wetlands, water resources, floodplains, and natural habitat.

GOAL 5: *Maximize cost effectiveness of the overall system vision, as well as its flexibility to be implemented over time.*

Objectives:

- Implement cost effective solutions.
- Provide beneficial returns on investment.
- Allow interim improvements which can be staged over time, in accordance with the ultimate improvement project.

B. Project Work Plan

The project work plan is divided into three phases in order to efficiently address the identification, evaluation/justification and development of safety improvements along US 52 and the supporting roadway network. The three project phases are:

1. *Phase I* –Includes the identification of issues and opportunities within the study area, key stakeholder concerns, and the goals and objectives necessary to develop and evaluate alternatives. A series of brief technical memos will be created to facilitate project direction, as well as other

study documentation to identify recommended alternatives to improve safety along this segment of US 52.

2. *Phase II* – Consists of completing the appropriate environmental documentation (assumed to be a Planning and Environmental Linkages Memorandum), a design memorandum, and staff approved preliminary study layout.
3. *Phase III* - Includes the development of a phasing and implementation plan for recommended alternatives and improvements.

Within the three project phases described above a number of tasks will be completed. A summary of key tasks comprising the project work is listed below.

Phase I Tasks

- *Project Management* – Manage the project to deliver quality products on schedule and on budget, as well as foster a cooperative spirit through a strong and continuous communications and coordination process. The project management task will be ongoing throughout the duration of the project, spanning all three phases.
- *Establish Project Framework* – Define the project framework, which includes developing high-level study goals, preparing a Public Involvement Plan and establishing the decision-making framework. This task results in the development of Technical Memorandum #1.
- *Data Collection* – Assemble relevant background information necessary to identify community, transportation, social, economic, environmental, and energy issues and constraints within the US 52 Safety, Access and Interchange Location Study area. This task results in the development of Technical Memorandum #2.
- *Analyze Data, Confirm Issues, Goals, Problems, and Needs* – Summarize the key elements including community and regional goals and issues; consistency of transportation functions with land use and community plans; transportation deficiencies and needs; multimodal considerations, impact of alternative interchange configurations and network connections; and social, economic, and environmental issues in the study. This task initiates the public and agency involvement process, including meetings with the Project Management Team (PMT), elected officials, and the general public. This task results in the development of Technical Memorandum #3.
- *Additional Data Collection* – After completing the analysis of available data and obtaining feedback from the initial public and agency meetings, additional data may be necessary to address all project issues. This task results in the amendment of Technical Memorandum #2 to incorporate a general description of additional data as needed.
- *Identify Initial Alternatives* – Develop a range of preliminary interchange alternatives (including a no build alternative) for CSAH 1 and CSAH 9, as well as supporting roadway network improvements such as a CSAH 14 extension and potential local roadway improvements. The initial interchange and roadway network alternatives will be screened to narrow interchange and roadway network alternatives for further study. This task establishes the preliminary screening criteria and results in the development of Technical Memorandum # 4.
- *Traffic Forecasts* – Review the *US 52 Corridor Management and Safety Plan (2000)*, the *Goodhue County Transportation Plan (2004)*, and the recently completed documentation for the adjacent US 52 Cannon Falls project for relevant traffic projections. Prepare traffic projections at an appropriate level of detail and scope to address the alternatives under consideration. This task results in the development of Technical Memorandum #5.
- *Screen Alternatives and Prepare Preliminary Study Layout and Profiles for Recommended Alternative* – Complete a preliminary screening of the initial alternatives to determine which

alternatives best address project issues, problems, and needs and that are consistent with the overall study goals. Present details of initial alternatives at a PMT meeting to seek stakeholder input/feedback. This task will result in the development of Technical Memorandum #6 will include an evaluation as to which alternatives best satisfy the purpose and need of this project. The recommended alternative identified in this memorandum will be utilized in the preparation of a preliminary environmental document. This memorandum will utilize information from the previously developed technical memorandums to construct a comprehensive record of key issues, alternatives, events and decisions.

- *Develop and Evaluate Detailed Alternatives* – Perform a detailed evaluation to provide the rationale for a recommended alternative. Present details of the advanced alternatives at a public meeting to seek input in order to verify/confirm the recommended alternative. Prepare preliminary study layouts and profiles for the recommended alternative and a preliminary environmental review of potential impacts.
- *Visualization* – Develop visual representations of the proposed project to assist with the public involvement process and build stakeholder acceptance. Results will be displayed in two renderings for each location (CSAH 1/CSAH9).

Phase II Tasks

- *Environmental Documentation* – Identify and complete the necessary environmental documentation required to initiate the National Environmental Pollution Agency (NEPA) requirements for this project. This will result in the preparation of a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) memorandum which will serve as the framework for future environmental documentation.
- *Design Memorandum* – Prepare a design memorandum to document the project design standards and any design exceptions being requested.
- *Prepare Preliminary Study Layout and Construction Limits for Interchange Area* – Complete a preliminary study layout and profiles of the recommended alternative. Based on the proposed roadway geometry and profiles.

Phase III Tasks

- *Project Phasing and Implementation* – Prepare an estimate of project costs and construction phasing based upon the final preliminary study layout.
- *Official Map Documents* – Prepare official map plats and documents for the recommended alternative to document anticipated future right-of-way needs and controlled access locations, as deemed appropriate by the PMT.
- *Design Surveys* – Conduct field surveys as necessary to supplement State provided Aerial Mapping. Incorporate this data into a digital terrain model and base mapping.

C. Public Involvement Framework

Public involvement is critical for the successful implementation of any plan or project. Successful public involvement includes fostering cooperation among a wide range of stakeholders to develop common goals and objectives, solutions that accomplish stated goals, and consensus about the eventual outcome. In order to facilitate meaningful public engagement, a project public involvement framework was created, based on *MnDOT's Hear Every Voice* Guide. This framework was developed to be flexible enough to respond to changing directions and will be adjusted continually as issues arise. Further, the proposed public involvement framework is tailored to include a wide range of stakeholders, including agency staff,

elected officials, business owners, local interest groups, and Goodhue County residents. The public involvement plan for the proposed project is summarized below.

Public Involvement Techniques

Various public involvement techniques such as public open houses, neighborhood meetings, newsletters, and electronic communications are proposed to accommodate different stakeholder groups and project tasks.

- *Public Meetings* – Up to five public open houses will be held between April 2010 and February 2013. These meetings will be held at the Urland Lutheran Church near the project area. The open houses will engage a wide range of stakeholders, including Goodhue County residents, businesses owners, elected officials, local interest groups, and interested agencies. The objective of the first open house is to gain input on project goals, issues, and needs. This information will be used to develop alternatives for the proposed improvements. During the second open house, participants will give input on these alternatives and the evaluation and screening criteria. At the third open house, the public will be informed of the results of the conceptual alternatives screening evaluation process and give their input on the final conceptual designs. A public meeting will also be held in Summer/Fall 2012 during the environmental review process to obtain input concerning the environmental documentation for the recommended safety improvement alternatives along the corridor.
- *Neighborhood Meetings* – Neighborhood meetings and workshops will be held to engage key stakeholders throughout the public involvement process for a variety of purposes. These meetings will be held to develop consensus around a potential project location areas and to develop a range of potential design alternatives for the project. Workshops will be used to review the preliminary screening evaluations and to develop consensus on recommended conceptual design alternatives.
- *Communications* – A project website will be established that will include meeting minutes, project reports, and updates at project milestones. The website will be used to notify people of upcoming open houses and other project meetings. In addition to the project website, a newsletter will be distributed through the Goodhue County website after key project milestones.

D. Decision Making Framework

Many decisions will need to be made throughout the course of the project across all levels of government. These decisions will range from policy-level decisions on how access might be treated to technical level decisions on interchange and roadway design. A study process has been developed to encourage agency participation and stakeholder input throughout the process. The intent of this process is to foster support of selection of a recommended alternative, preliminary design, and approval of any required environmental documentation. As shown in Figure 2, there are three main levels to the decision-making process including staff level decisions, Project Management Team meetings, and Policy Makers. These level are described below

Staff Decisions:

Staff meetings will be held with key technical staff from various agencies impacted by the project (MnDOT, Goodhue County, etc.). The intent of these meetings is to address the many technical issues that will arise during the process. Many of these decisions can be made at the staff level and won't be elevated to the PMT. An example of these issues might be how to coordinate data collection, technical design assumptions or preferences, and administrative issues. Notes will be recorded for these meetings on action items (work that needs to be done), decisions that are made, and information that will be elevated to the PMT.

Project Management Team Meetings:

The PMT is a larger group of both policy and technical staff. This group represents agencies and key stakeholders affected by the project, including representatives from MnDOT, Goodhue County, Cannon Falls and Leon Townships. This group will guide the overall project and determine project direction, provide guidance at key decision points, participate in development/evaluation of alternatives, and develop study recommendations. Key recommendations from this body will advance to individual governmental policy bodies for approval. Notes will be recorded for these meetings on action items and decisions that are made.

Policy Makers:

There are several agencies involved in this project who are part of the decision making process. This necessitates inter-agency cooperation to develop a common solution. These policy bodies include MnDOT, FHWA, Goodhue County, and Cannon Falls and Leon Townships. In addition, several environmental organizations such as watersheds and the State Historic Preservation Office may have roles to play as well. Policy bodies will be asked to approve study recommendations and project designs for improvements in their respective jurisdictions.

E. PMT Approval of Project Framework

Technical Memorandum 1 – Project Framework was presented to the PMT on January 6, 2012 for discussion and comments. After review and comment, the memorandum was amended and reissued for PMT approval on February 8, 2012. Final approval of Technical Memorandum 1 was received on May 4, 2012.

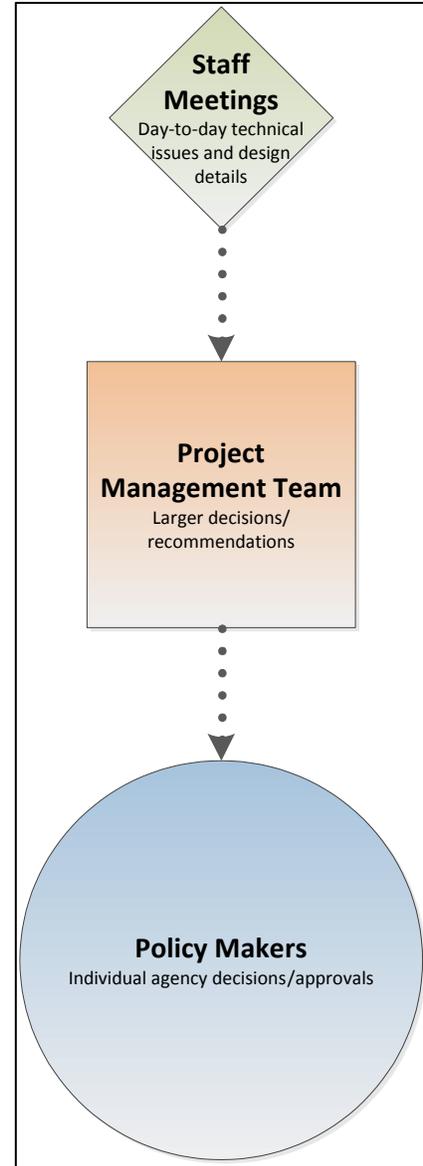


Figure 2: Decision Making Framework