

APPENDIX B

CORRESPONDENCE



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Office of Environmental Services
395 John Ireland Boulevard, MS 620
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

January 23, 2007

Christine Paulu
SRF Consulting Group, Inc.
Attention: Nancy Frick
One Carlson Parkway North
Plymouth, MN 55447



Fax: 651/ 284-3754
Phone: 651/ 284-3750

RE: No Effect Determination (Federal Threatened and Endangered Species)
S.P. 2722-68, 27-596-02, Trunk Highway 55
Roadway Expansion
Hennepin County

Dear Ms. Paulu:

In response to your request, the proposed action has been reviewed for potential effects to federally-listed threatened and endangered (T&E) species, candidate species and listed critical habitat. As a result of this review, a determination of no effect has been made. However, because the letting date has yet to be established and since there is a strong likelihood that the project will not be built for several years, it is recommended that this action be re-evaluated for impacts to federally-listed species, candidate species and listed critical habitat closer to construction.

If a Federal agency authorizes, funds, or carries out a proposed action, the responsible Federal agency, or its delegated agent, is required to evaluate whether the proposed action "may affect" listed species. If it is determined that the action "may affect" a listed species, then the responsible Federal agency shall request Section 7 consultation with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If the consultation shows "no effect" on the listed species, further consultation is not necessary.

Scope of Action

The proposed action involves expansion of Trunk Highway 55 from 4 to 6 lanes in the City of Plymouth and from 2 to 4 lanes in western Hennepin County.

Listed Species

According to the County Distribution of Minnesota's Federally-Listed Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species list maintained by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Hennepin County is within the distribution range of the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and the Higgins eye pearl mussel (*Lampsilis higginsii*), both federally-listed species.

Critical Habitat

There is no designated critical habitat within the action area.

Known Occurrences

According to the information provided by the Natural Heritage Database (updated 11-28-06) maintained by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Twin Cities ES Field Office), there are no known occurrences of federally-listed T&E or candidate species within the action area. As such, the proposed action has little to no potential to have any measurable influence on federally-listed T&E species, candidate species or on the habitat for which they depend.

If modifications are made or new information becomes available which indicates that listed species may be affected, please contact this office. This review was completed for federally-listed T&E and candidate species only. For information on state-listed T&E species, contact the Endangered Species Environmental Review Coordinator, Natural Heritage and Nongame Research Program, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (651) 259-5107.

Sincerely,

Jason Alcott
Natural Resource Specialist, Senior

cc: Gerry Larson
An equal opportunity employer

file



elm creek Watershed Management Commission

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December 20, 2007

James N. Grube, PE
Director of Transportation and County Engineer
Hennepin County Transportation Department
1600 Prairie Drive
Medina, MN 55340-5421

Re: CSAH 101/Sioux Drive at TH 55
Elm Creek project 2007-058

Dear Mr. Grube:

The Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission has received your letter of November 28, 2007 requesting comment on three conceptual options regarding realignment of the Elm Creek channel as part of future improvements to TH 55 between Plymouth and Rockford.

Your letter was reviewed at the Commission's December 12, 2007 meeting and the following comments were received:

1. While none of the options are favored, the Commissioners find Option 1 and Option 2 to be least desirable.
2. The natural resources value of the open creek channel must be maintained to the fullest extent possible. Any design should recognize that Elm Creek is, first, a natural resource, not only a stormwater conveyance channel, and must be preserved as an open channel for wildlife habitat and travel corridor. These values need to be restored in the design by leaving as much open channel as is feasibly possible.

This comment is in line with Policy C.3 of the Commission's second generation *Watershed Management Plan* that states: "The Commission will work with and support to the maximum extent practical the efforts of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the US Corps of Engineers, the US Environmental Protection Agency, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Hennepin Conservation District, and Three Rivers Park District and other appropriate agencies in promoting public enjoyment and protecting fish, wildlife, and recreational resource values in the watershed."

3. Flood elevations should not be increased by the relocation of the creek and any lost flood storage must be replaced. Any proposed changes to the creek will be subject to the active rules and policies of the Commission at the time the application is received. Any floodway encroachment would require DNR approval and a FEMA map revision.



elm creek Watershed Management Commission

James N. Grube, PE
December 20, 2007
Page 2

Thank you for the opportunity to provide preliminary comments on this project. We request that Hennepin County DOT continue to keep the Commission "in the loop" as they move forward.

Sincerely,



Judie A. Anderson
Administrator

JAA:tim

Cc: Troy Erickson, SRF Consulting Group
John Griffith, MnDOT
Rick Brown, SRF Consulting Group
Ali Durgunoğlu, HCDES

elm creek & pioneer-sarah creek Watershed Management Commissions

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November 7, 2006

Ms. Christine Paulu
SRF Consulting Group, Inc.
One Carlson Parkway North
Plymouth, MN 55447



SUBJECT: TH 55 Environmental Assessment (EA)

Dear Ms. Paulu:

This is a joint response by the Elm Creek Watershed Management Commission (ECWMC) and the Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission (PSCWMC) to your request for comments on the TH 55 EA. The following issues may be important for this project.

Watershed Jurisdictions:

Most of the TH 55 alignment from Co Rd 101 in Plymouth to Corcoran-Greenfield border lies within the ECWMC legal boundaries. A short stretch in Medina between Willow Drive and the west side of Rolling Hills Road, and the south half of the road along the Corcoran-Medina border are within PSCWMC. The entire alignment within the City of Greenfield is in PSCWMC.

Floodplains and Floodways:

Within ECWMC, Elm Creek and its tributaries cross TH 55 several times. There are floodplains and floodways along these streams, within the TH 55 right-of-way. Within PSCWMC, there are floodplains near Peter Lake in Medina, and near Sarah Lake in Greenfield. Depending where the project ends, there may be floodplain and floodway issues near Crow River in Rockford. Both Watersheds have floodplain management policies and standards.

Stormwater Management:

Both ECWMC and PSCWMC require rate and quality management for runoff originating from new impervious surfaces. The Watersheds have adopted a "non-degradation" policy for stormwater management.

Grading, Erosion & Sediment Control, SWPPP:

Both Watersheds would require a complete plan for grading, erosion & sediment control, and a SWPP.

Wetlands:

ECWMC and the PSCWMC are the LGUs administering the WCA in Corcoran and Greenfield, respectively. Medina and Plymouth are their own LGUs for the WCA. Most, if not all, of the wetland impacts associated with this project might qualify under the "BWSR Local Government Roads Wetland Replacement Program." The County would be responsible for all wetland delineations, applications and notices. Please refer to BWSR web page: <http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/wetlands/wcamanual/wcamanual02.pdf>

Thanks you for the opportunity to comment on this project. Should you have any questions please contact Ali Durgunoglu or me at your convenience.

Sincerely

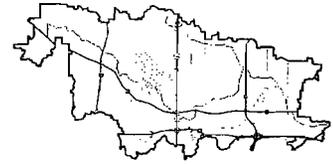


James C. Kujawa
Technical Advisor to the Commission's

cc Ali Durgunoglu, ECWMC
Judie Anderson, Executive Secretary

Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

www.bassettcreekwmo.org



• Crystal • Golden Valley • Medicine Lake • Minneapolis • Minnetonka • New Hope • Plymouth • Robbinsdale • St. Louis Park

November 22, 2006

Mr. James Grube
Hennepin County
1600 Prairie Drive
Medina MN 55340-5421

Re: Trunk Highway 55 Environmental Assessment

Dear Mr. Grube:

Thank you for providing the Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission (BCWMC) with the opportunity to comment on the upcoming Environmental Assessment (EA) for the possible future expansion of Trunk Highway (TH) 55. The BCWMC reviewed the proposed EA at its November 16, 2006 meeting and offers the following comments:

General/Background

The portion of the study area located in the Bassett Creek watershed generally extends from Xenium Lane in Plymouth to the BCWMC's western boundary, roughly 1,800 feet northwest of TH 101. The segment between Vicksburg Lane and County Road 9 is outside the Bassett Creek watershed. Stormwater runoff from the study area within the Bassett Creek watershed discharges to Medicine Lake, which is the largest water body managed by the BCWMC and is on the MPCA's impaired waters list for excess nutrients (i.e., phosphorus) and mercury.

Businesses, taxpayers, homeowners, and private organizations have worked diligently to monitor and improve water quality in Medicine

Lake. The BCWMC and its member cities are incurring significant ongoing expenditures to improve water quality throughout the Bassett Creek watershed, and in the Medicine Lake watershed in particular. Because Medicine Lake is impaired, every effort must be made to improve, not just maintain, the lake's water quality. The BCWMC expects the TH 55 project design to include stormwater treatment and erosion control measures that will reduce the amount of phosphorus and sediment carried by stormwater runoff to Medicine Lake. The BCWMC also expects the county to consider measures to minimize the amount of increased impervious surfaces resulting from the TH 55 project.

Additional pollutants of concern to the BCWMC include fuel, oils, and metals from the construction site and/or construction vehicles, which could enter storm drains and downstream water resources if mobilized by stormwater

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runoff. To prevent stormwater pollution during the construction period, the project must include measures to prevent polluted runoff from exiting construction sites.

Floodplain Issues

Plymouth Creek crosses TH 55 3,000 feet east of County Road 101/Peony Lane. The BCWMC-adopted 100-year floodplain elevation along Plymouth Creek is 982.5 upstream (south) of TH 55 and 982.0 downstream (north) of TH 55. The BCWMC will generally not allow filling within the BCWMC-established floodplain. Proposals to fill within the floodplain must obtain BCWMC approval and provide compensating storage and/or channel modifications so that the flood level is not increased at any point along the trunk systems due to fill. Floodplain management policies are listed in Section 5.2.2.2 of the BCWMC's 2004 Watershed Management Plan (available at <http://www.bassettcreekwmo.org>, see link to "Second Generation Plan").

Runoff and Rate Control

The BCWMC regulates stormwater runoff discharges and volumes to minimize flood problems, flood damages, and future costs of stormwater management systems. Expansion of TH 55 has the potential to significantly increase the amount of impervious surface, which will result in increased runoff rates if not controlled. Best management practices must be implemented to maintain runoff rates at existing levels and ensure flood profiles are not increased along Plymouth Creek.

Water Quality

The BCWMC and its member cities have committed significant resources to the improvement of the quality of stormwater runoff reaching the Mississippi River, by reducing nonpoint source pollution carried as stormwater runoff. Studies have shown that highway runoff is a primary contributor of phosphorus and contaminants to water resources. The BCWMC strongly encourages the County to implement best management practices to treat Trunk Highway 55 runoff to ensure that the expansion of the highway does not increase pollutant-loading to adjacent water bodies. The BCWMC's water quality policies are listed in Section 4.2 of the Watershed Management Plan.

Maintenance

Maintenance of stormwater management (water quality and flood control) features is critical to ensure proper operation. The EA should describe the maintenance measures the county proposes to undertake to ensure the efficacy of stormwater management features. The EA should also identify the parties responsible for inspections, the parties responsible for maintenance, and the inspection and maintenance schedules. The BCWMC is concerned that if these operation and maintenance responsibilities are not clearly laid out, the responsibility will fall on the member cities or BCWMC to perform the duties.

Erosion Control

The BCWMC goal is to prevent erosion and sedimentation to the greatest extent possible to protect the BCWMC's water resources from increased sediment loading and associated water quality problems. Temporary and permanent best management practices must be implemented to control construction and post-development runoff from the site and erosion. Erosion and sediment control policies are listed in Section 6.2 of the Watershed Management Plan.

Wetland Management

The BCWMC wetland goal is to achieve no net loss of wetlands in the Bassett Creek Watershed in conformance to the MN Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) and associated rules (Minnesota rules 8420). Plymouth is the local

governmental unit (LGU) responsible for administering the WCA. Wetland management policies are listed in Section 8.0 of the Watershed Management Plan.

The BCWMC's submittal and design requirements for projects (*Requirements for Improvements and Development Proposals*) and the Watershed Management Plan can be downloaded from the BCWMC website www.bassettcreekwmo.org.

The BCWMC understands that as the population in the western suburbs increases, so does the need to expand the highways. The BCWMC looks forward to working with you to restore and protect the health of the BCWMC's water resources. The BCWMC appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments early in the process. If you have questions, please contact Jim Herbert or Len Kremer, engineers for the BCWMC at 952-832-2600, or me at 612-385-6885.



Michael Welch
Chair
Bassett Creek Watershed Management Commission

c: Doran Cote, City of Plymouth
John Griffith, Mn/DOT
Christine Paulu, SRF Consulting Group, Inc.
Jim Herbert, Barr Engineering Co.



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
State Historic Preservation Office

April 26, 2006

Ms. Elizabeth Abel
Cultural Resource Unit
MN Dept. of Transportation
Transportation Building, MS 620
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Re: S.P. 8606-53
T.H. 55 expansion, I-494 to 500 feet NW of CSAH 5 in Annandale
Hennepin and Wright Counties
SHPO number: 2006-1447

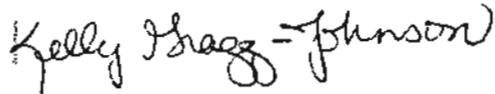
Dear Ms. Abel:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the above project. It has been reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given the State Historic Preservation Officer by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (36CFR800), and to the responsibilities given the Minnesota Historical Society by the Minnesota Historic Sites Act and the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act.

We have reviewed the report of the survey of the project area. We have also recently reviewed the statewide farmstead evaluation/planning study completed by MnDOT. We have some questions related to the methodology of this project survey vis-à-vis the general approach to evaluation suggested in the broader study. Perhaps the best means of resolving these issues would be to schedule a consultation meeting. I would suggest including Susan Roth of our staff and myself in that meeting.

We look forward to working with you to complete this review.

Sincerely,


 Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs & Compliance Officer



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Transportation Building
395 John Ireland Boulevard
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

September 22, 2006

Direct Line: (651) 284-3244
Mail Stop 620

Mr. Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs & Compliance Officer
State Historic Preservation Office
Minnesota Historical Society
345 Kellogg Blvd. W,
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: SP 8606-53 (TH 55 expansion, I-494 to 500 feet NW of CSAH 5 in Annandale)
Hennepin and Wright Counties
Mn/DOT Agreement 86560
OSA License Nos. 04-076, 05-053, 05-054, 05-055, 05-056 and 05-057
SHPO No. 2006-1447

Dear Mr. Gimmestad:

Thank you for your letter of April 26, 2006, regarding Mn/DOT's architectural history survey of the above-referenced project. Your letter indicated that you had "some questions related to the methodology of this project survey vis-à-vis the general approach to evaluation" suggested by the statewide farmstead study completed for Mn/DOT by Gemini Research. Following receipt of your letter, I had a discussion with Susan Roth concerning some of those questions. As I recall our conversation, she expressed some concerns related to the vigor of the research design/methodology and to the assessment of the potential eligibility of individual barns within the survey area.

As I indicated to Susan during our conversation, Mn/DOT's statewide farmstead study was not used during the TH 55 survey as it was not yet available to our consultants. Mead & Hunt carried out the TH 55 architectural history work during late 2004 and early 2005, several months prior to Mn/DOT's receipt of the complete draft of the statewide study in June 2005. It then took several months for our staff to thoroughly review the draft study and determine what changes were required before Mn/DOT could begin to implement its recommendations. The methods and recommendations of the TH 55 survey meet the standards of previous work completed by Mn/DOT and reviewed by your office, and we believe it represents a good-faith effort to identify historic properties.

Enclosed please find photos of the surveyed barns that were not included in the Phase I report. The statewide farmstead study recommends that single animal husbandry elements should not be considered individually eligible for the National Register under Criterion C unless they are "especially distinctive, extensive, large, well-developed, or otherwise outstanding" (Granger and Kelly, 2005 draft). None of the surveyed barns meet these requirements. These barns reflect a predominance of diversified dairying and are typical of the area and their common type is not complemented by an illustrative farmstead. Therefore, our determination that none of the surveyed barns is individually eligible for the National Register remains appropriate.

We have had no previous correspondence with your office regarding the archaeological investigations completed for this project. Enclosed for your review please find one copy each of the final reports *Phase I Cultural Resources and Phase II Architecture/History Investigation for the Proposed Trunk Highway 55 Expansion, Hennepin and Wright Counties, Minnesota*, (Volumes I and II), and *Phase I Survey at Site 21HE356, and Phase II Archaeological Evaluations of Four Sites Along TH 55, Hennepin and Wright Counties, Minnesota*, submitted to Mn/DOT by Mead & Hunt, Inc., and Foth & Van Dyke and Associates, Inc. As the project is currently in the preliminary development stage, the archaeological survey addressed a 500-foot wide corridor centered on the existing TH 55 centerline (250 feet on either side of the centerline). This preliminary area of potential effects (APE) will encompass most project construction activities while allowing for some flexibility in roadway design. Construction will not extend beyond the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks; therefore, where the tracks are within 250 feet of the in-place TH 55 centerline, they formed the outer boundary of the archaeology APE.

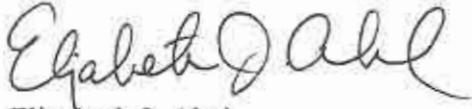
The Phase I archaeological survey identified 1 previously recorded and 16 new precontact sites within the project APE. Foth & Van Dyke recommended that five sites warranted Phase II evaluation under National Register Criterion D. One of these five sites is not likely to be impacted by roadway reconstruction and was not evaluated. The following is a brief summary of the results of the archaeological investigations.

- Based on the results of the Phase I survey, Foth & Van Dyke recommended that sites **21HE358, 21HE359, 21WR150, 21WR151, 21WR154, 21WR152, 21WR157, 21WR158, 21WR159, 21HE263, 21HE356, and 04MO94-14¹** are not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. We concur with the consultant's recommendations.
- Following Phase II evaluation, Foth & Van Dyke recommended that sites **21HE357, 21WR148, 21WR153 and 21WR155** are not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. We concur with the consultant's recommendations.
- The fifth site Foth & Van Dyke recommended potentially eligible and warranting Phase II National Register evaluation is Site **21WR152**. This site is located at the northern limits of the project APE and is separated from the in-place TH 55 roadway by the St. Timothy Cemetery (see Figure 25 of the Phase I report [Squitieri and Trocki 2006]). As it is unlikely that roadway reconstruction will extend beyond the cemetery limits, Mn/DOT did not conduct a National Register evaluation of site 21WR152. If the project does include work beyond the cemetery limits in the direction of 21WR152, Mn/DOT will complete a Phase II National Register evaluation of the site.

The project APE includes four historic properties: (1) the **Soo Line Railway** (currently Canadian Pacific) line between Minneapolis and North Dakota, identified during a previous Mn/DOT review; (2) the **Dickinson Spring Roadside Parking Area** (WR-RKT-006), located along TH 55 and identified during Mn/DOT's study of historic roadside development properties; (3) the **Wandersee farmstead** (WR-RKC-009) within the City of Rockford, identified during the present survey; and (4) the **Thayer Hotel** (WR-ANC-001) in Annandale, currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The effects of the proposed undertaking on these four properties cannot yet be determined. Currently, it appears that **Site 21WR152** is unlikely to be affected by proposed roadway reconstruction. We look

forward to consulting with you further when project design has progressed sufficiently for us to begin to determine effects to historic properties.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth J. Abel
Historical Archaeologist/Historian
Cultural Resources Unit

encls.

cc: Scott Anfinson, State Archaeologist
Claudia Dumont, Mn/DOT District 3
John Griffith, Mn/DOT Metro District
Daniel Rowe, Mn/DOT Metro District
Amy Squitieri, Mead & Hunt
Patricia Trocki, Foth & Van Dyke

Joe Hudak, Mn/DOT CRU
[Mn/DOT CRU Project File](#)
Mn/DOT CO Files
Minnesota Legislative Reference Library

¹ Field site 04MO94-14 consisted of cultural materials recovered from imported fill and was not assigned a state site number.



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
State Historic Preservation Office



October 30, 2006

Ms. Elizabeth Abel
Cultural Resources Unit
MN Dept. of Transportation
Transportation Building, MS 620
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Re: S.P. 8606-53, T.H. 55 expansion, I-494 to 500 feet NW of CSAH 5 in Annandale
Hennepin and Wright Counties
SHPO Number: 2006-1447

Dear Ms. Abel:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the above project. It has been reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given the State Historic Preservation Officer by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (36CFR800), and to the responsibilities given the Minnesota Historical Society by the Minnesota Historic Sites Act and the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act.

We concur with your conclusion that, with one exception, the archaeological sites that were identified in the project area do not meet National Register criteria. The exception is 21WR0152. This site currently lies outside the area of potential effect. Should there be any changes in this area of the project, additional consultation should take place.

We look forward to consulting with you further with regard to project effects on other properties. Contact us at 651-296-5462 with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs & Compliance Officer



Minnesota Department of Transportation

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June 29, 2007

Direct Line: (651) 366-3604
Mail Stop 620

Mr. Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs & Compliance Officer
State Historic Preservation Office
Minnesota Historical Society
345 Kellogg Boulevard W.
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: S.P. 2722-68 & 27-596-02 (TH 55 expansion, I-494 to west Hennepin County line)
Hennepin County
SHPO No. Pending

Dear Mr. Gimmestad:

We have reviewed the above-referenced undertaking pursuant to our FHWA-delegated responsibilities for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (36 CFR 800), and as per the terms of the June 2005 Programmatic Agreement (PA) between the FHWA and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Our office began review of this project under S.P. 8606-53 (SHPO File No. 2006-1447), which included potential expansion of Trunk Highway (TH) 55 from Interstate 494 (I-494) in Hennepin County to 500 feet NW of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 5 in Annandale, Wright County. Since we initiated our review the undertaking has been split into two separate projects, a Hennepin County portion and a Wright County portion. This letter addresses our review of the Hennepin County project, which begins at I-494 and ends at the county line. The project has been allocated funding for right of way preservation and Mn/DOT is preparing an Environmental Assessment for this undertaking.

Enclosed please find preliminary concept design drawings (sheets 1-3) from SRF Consulting Group, Inc., dated June 13, 2007, showing the work proposed. The project includes reconstruction of intersections, access revisions, and upgrading existing two-lane sections of the roadway to four lanes. There will be little change in the roadway's horizontal or vertical alignments. Additional right of way will be required. Please note that our review on behalf of the FHWA does not include potential future construction planned by local municipalities and shown in the concept drawings. These are locally proposed projects that are not dependent on TH 55 reconstruction. The project area of potential effects (APE) for architecture/history properties was determined to extend 500 feet on either side of the existing TH 55 centerline in rural areas and 250 feet in urban areas. In Plymouth, the APE was widened to encompass residential properties that may be affected by new traffic patterns at the intersection of Niagara Lane/Plymouth Drive and TH 55. For archaeological resources, the project APE extended 250 feet on either side of the current TH 55 centerline in rural areas and varied in urban areas. In Plymouth, the archaeology APE included only the current right of way, as construction will not extend beyond this limit. In addition, since proposed construction will not extend beyond the Canadian Pacific Railway right of way (r/w), this boundary was used to define the extent of the APE where it came nearer than 250 feet from the current TH 55 centerline.

Mn/DOT has completed Phase I and II archaeological and architecture/history surveys for the project and has consulted with your office regarding the National Register eligibility of identified historic properties (SHPO File No. 2006-1447). The Mn/DOT surveys identified no archaeological sites listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places within the project APE.

There is one architecture/history property eligible for the National Register within the project APE. The APE includes a portion of the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie (Soo Line) Railway mainline (now operated by the Canadian Pacific Railway) where it crosses TH 55. The rail line was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by our office in a previous review (S.P. 2722-XX; SHPO File No. 2003-2546). The basis for our determination of eligibility and the property's period of significance are detailed in my July 23, 2003, letter to you (please see copy enclosed). Mn/DOT has recently completed the final draft of the *Railroads in Minnesota, 1962-1956*, Multiple Property Documentation Form, which I referred to in reaffirming my 2003 determination. The MPDF supports our determination that the Soo Line main line running between Minneapolis and Boynton, North Dakota, is a railroad corridor historic district eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The portion of the railroad corridor within the project APE is still in operation and retains its historically significant features; therefore, it is a contributing portion of the historic district. Bridge 5847 carrying the rail line over TH 55 will be replaced (please see enclosed concept sheet #3). Bridge 5847 was built in 1940 and post-dates the railroad corridor historic district's period of significance (1886-1906). The bridge is not eligible for the National Register as an individual property. Bridge 5847 is a 110-foot long span. In order to cross TH 55 and potential frontage roads, the replacement bridge will measure approximately 256 feet in length. A temporary shoo-fly will be built to carry the rail line during roadway construction. The project will impact a very limited segment of the railroad corridor historic district by removing a non-contributing bridge and small portions of the adjoining grade to accommodate a new, longer bridge. No right of way will be acquired from the railroad and the rail line will retain its existing alignment. The rail line within the historic district will remain active.

Therefore, it is the determination of this office that the proposed project will have **no adverse effect** on historic properties. As per the terms of the 2005 PA, please provide your comments on this project within 30 days of receipt. If the project scope changes, we will conduct an additional review.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth J. Abel
Historical Archaeologist/Historian
Cultural Resources Unit (CRU)

encs.

cc: Scott Anfinson, State Archaeologist
Nancy Frick, SRF Consulting Group
Joe Hudak, Mn/DOT CRU
Mn/DOT CRU Project File
Mn/DOT CO File



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
State Historic Preservation Office



August 17, 2007

Ms. Elizabeth Abel
Cultural Resources Unit
MN Dept. of Transportation
Transportation Building, MS 620
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Re: S.P. 2722-68 & 27-596-02, T.H. 55
T.H. 55 expansion from I-494 to west Hennepin County line
Hennepin County
SHPO Number: 2007-2515

Dear Ms. Abel:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the above project. It has been reviewed pursuant to the responsibilities given the State Historic Preservation Officer by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and the Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (36CFR800), and to the responsibilities given the Minnesota Historical Society by the Minnesota Historic Sites Act and the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act.

We have two comments on this project review:

1. We note that this project has been allocated funding for corridor preservation. Certainly, it is sound planning to complete a cultural resource survey at the time of corridor planning; we also recognize that the road design at this point is at the concept level. Is there an anticipated construction schedule for the project at this time? Perhaps the Section 106 process should not conclude with a finding of effect until the plans are more fully developed, and the construction process is nearer. Or, alternatively, a Programmatic Agreement could be written that recognizes the need for more detailed review of identification activities and project plans at a later date. We would be happy to discuss this issue with you further.

2. We concur with the determination that the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie (Soo Line) Railroad meets National Register criteria. Your transmittal indicates a period of significance for this line from 1886-1906. It would seem that this rail line might have exerted a significant influence over the route through central Minnesota for a longer period into the 20th century, which could make Bridge 5847 a contributing element of the line. Again, we would be happy to discuss this issue with you further.

Contact us at 651-259-3456 with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs & Compliance Officer



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Transportation Building

395 John Ireland Boulevard
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

January 8, 2008

Direct Line: (651) 366-3604
Mail Stop 620

Mr. Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs & Compliance Officer
State Historic Preservation Office
Minnesota Historical Society
345 Kellogg Boulevard W.
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: S.P. 2722-68 & 27-596-02 (TH 55 expansion from I-494 to Hennepin County line)
Hennepin County
SHPO No. 2007-2515

Dear Mr. Gimmestad:

Thank you for your August 17, 2007, letter to me commenting on our review of the above-referenced project.

In answer to your suggestion that perhaps the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie (Soo Line) main line corridor exerted influence over central Minnesota for a longer period of significance than we determined, we note that there were several other rail lines providing service to central Minnesota that predate construction of the Soo Line's main corridor between Minneapolis and Lidgerwood, ND. Like, the Soo Line's main corridor, these lines operated well into the late twentieth century. As outlined on the enclosed detail from the 1930 *Railroad Commissioner's Map of Minnesota*, three Great Northern system lines and one Northern Pacific line provided long-distance rail service to central Minnesota. The two Great Northern lines are located no farther than 18 miles from the Soo's main line. In addition, the Willmar and Sioux Falls Railway (later Great Northern) between St. Cloud and Willmar (1885) and the Northern Pacific's line between Morris and Sauk Center (1882) predate the Soo's main line and provided additional rail service to central Minnesota.

The historical significance of the Soo Line's main line corridor from Minneapolis to Lidgerwood derives from its association with industrial flour milling in Minneapolis. From its inception in 1886 until 1906, the main line was the primary transporter of wheat for the millers that financed and controlled the Soo Line. In 1906, the railway built the "Wheat Line" from Thief River Falls through the Red River Valley to Kenmare, ND. The "Wheat Line" became the primary route within the Soo Line system for transporting wheat from the growers to the Minneapolis mills. However, grain brought in on the "Wheat Line" still required use of the main line corridor between Glenwood and Minneapolis to reach the mills.

The period of significance for the main line may be expanded to include not only the period in which the entire main line corridor (Minneapolis to Lidgerwood, ND) provided the primary route for wheat shipments, but also the period when wheat from the Red River Valley via the "Wheat Line" used the segment of the main line between Glenwood and Minneapolis. Flour milling in Minneapolis declined dramatically beginning in the 1930s and the Minneapolis, St. Paul & Sault Ste. Marie filed for bankruptcy in 1937. The company was reorganized and emerged from receivership in 1943. During the war years, it provided passenger service but was not a significant transporter of military personnel or equipment. The period of significance for the Soo Line's main line corridor between Minneapolis and Lidgerwood, ND, does not extend beyond 1937, the date when the Minneapolis flour mills had declined and the Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie Railway filed for bankruptcy. Bridge 5847 was built by the State Highway Department in 1940 in association with the widening of TH 55. Therefore, our determination that Bridge 5847 post-dates the period of significance for the Soo Line's main line and is a non-contributing element of the Soo Line main line railroad corridor historic district remains appropriate.

Mr. Dennis A. Gimmestad

January 8, 2008

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We appreciate your comments regarding whether a determination of effects by our office is appropriate at this time. The expansion of TH 55 is not currently part of Mn/DOT's 20-year plan, and no funds are available at this time for construction of the preferred alternative. The intent of the EA/EAW is to support the future use of federal funding for right of way protection and to allow for small improvement projects, consistent with the design concept, to be carried out as funding becomes available. Our Section 106 determination of effects would be more appropriate for each of these smaller projects as they are proposed, and the assessment of eligible properties is reviewed and updated, as appropriate, via the NEPA documentation process.

In the interest of providing clarity when further work within the corridor is proposed, I am briefly summarizing our findings regarding SP 2722-68/27-596-02 to date. **Archaeology:** Mn/DOT surveyed the project area of potential effects (APE) in 2005 and 2006. The APE extends 250 feet on either side of the TH 55 centerline, except within the City of Plymouth, where it did not extend beyond the current TH 55 right of way. There are no National Register-eligible archaeological sites within the project APE. **Architecture/History:** Mn/DOT surveyed the project APE in 2005 and 2006. The only National Register-eligible property within the project APE is the Soo Line's main line railroad corridor historic district, between Minneapolis and Lidgerwood, ND. The segment of the corridor district within the project APE is an active rail line and retains its historic integrity; therefore, it is a contributing segment of the railroad corridor historic district. Bridge 5847, carrying the Soo Line over TH 55, post-dates the line's period of significance and is not a contributing element of the railroad corridor historic district.

Again, thank you for providing us with your comments regarding this review. We look forward to further consultation with your office as individual projects within the corridor are proposed.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth J. Abel

Historical Archaeologist/Historian
Cultural Resources Unit (CRU)

enc.

cc: Nancy Frick, SRF
Joe Hudak, Mn/DOT CRU
Mn/DOT CRU Project File
Mn/DOT CO File



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

State Historic Preservation Office



January 23, 2008

Ms. Elizabeth Abel
Cultural Resources Unit
MN Dept. of Transportation
Transportation Building, MS 620
395 John Ireland Boulevard
St. Paul, MN 55155-1899

Re: S.P. 2722-68 & 27-596-02
T.H. 55 expansion from I-494 to Hennepin County line
Hennepin County
SHPO Number: 2007-2515

Dear Ms. Abel:

Thank you for your consideration of our 17 August 2007 comments on the above referenced review.

We look forward to working with your office in the review of various aspects of this project as they are developed. Contact us at 651-259-3456 with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Kelly Haag-Johnson

Dennis A. Gimmestad
Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs & Compliance Officer

**FARMLAND CONVERSION IMPACT RATING
FOR CORRIDOR TYPE PROJECTS**

PART I (To be completed by Federal Agency)		3. Date of Land Evaluation Request 10/29/07	4. Sheet 1 of _____
1. Name of Project Trunk Hwy SS from Plymouth to		5. Federal Agency Involved	
2. Type of Project Highway Corridor Improvements Rockford		6. County and State Hennepin, Minnesota	
PART II (To be completed by NRCS)		1. Date Request Received by NRCS 1-1-07	2. Person Completing Form weike
3. Does the corridor contain prime, unique statewide or local important farmland? (If no, the FPPA does not apply - Do not complete additional parts of this form). YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		4. Acres Irrigated Average Farm Size	
5. Major Crop(s) Corn Soybeans Hay	6. Farmable Land in Government Jurisdiction Acres: 228 400 % 81	7. Amount of Farmland As Defined in FPPA Acres: 181 115 % 79	
8. Name Of Land Evaluation System Used LE Part of LESA	9. Name of Local Site Assessment System	10. Date Land Evaluation Returned by NRCS 12-28-07	

PART III (To be completed by Federal Agency)	Alternative Corridor For Segment			
	Corridor A	Corridor B	Corridor C	Corridor D
A. Total Acres To Be Converted Directly	28.3			
B. Total Acres To Be Converted Indirectly, Or To Receive Services	1.9			
C. Total Acres In Corridor	0 30.2	0	0	0

PART IV (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information				
A. Total Acres Prime And Unique Farmland	20.3			
B. Total Acres Statewide And Local Important Farmland	4.4			
C. Percentage Of Farmland in County Or Local Govt. Unit To Be Converted	000/364			
D. Percentage Of Farmland in Govt. Jurisdiction With Same Or Higher Relative Value	44.3			

PART V (To be completed by NRCS) Land Evaluation Information Criterion Relative value of Farmland to Be Serviced or Converted (Scale of 0 - 100 Points)				
	89.2			

PART VI (To be completed by Federal Agency) Corridor Assessment Criteria (These criteria are explained in 7 CFR 658.5(c))	Maximum Points	Alternative Corridor For Segment			
		Corridor A	Corridor B	Corridor C	Corridor D
1. Area in Nonurban Use	15	9			
2. Perimeter in Nonurban Use	10	5			
3. Percent Of Corridor Being Farmed	20	0			
4. Protection Provided By State And Local Government	20	20			
5. Size of Present Farm Unit Compared To Average	10	9			
6. Creation Of Nonfarmable Farmland	25	0			
7. Availability Of Farm Support Services	5	2			
8. On-Farm Investments	20	4			
9. Effects Of Conversion On Farm Support Services	25	0			
10. Compatibility With Existing Agricultural Use	10	2			
TOTAL CORRIDOR ASSESSMENT POINTS	160	0 51	0	0	0

PART VII (To be completed by Federal Agency)				
Relative Value Of Farmland (From Part V)	100			
Total Corridor Assessment (From Part VI above or a local site assessment)	160	0	0	0
TOTAL POINTS (Total of above 2 lines)	260	0	0	0

1. Corridor Selected:	2. Total Acres of Farmlands to be Converted by Project:	3. Date Of Selection:	4. Was A Local Site Assessment Used? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
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5. Reason For Selection:

Signature of Person Completing this Part: _____ DATE _____

NOTE: Complete a form for each segment with more than one Alternate Corridor