

# FINDINGS OF FACT and CONCLUSIONS

I-694/ I-494/ I-94 Interchange Improvements

State Project No. 8286-81

Prepared by:  
Minnesota Department of Transportation



July, 2018



# CONTENTS

1.0 STATEMENT OF ISSUE.....	2
2.0 ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUND .....	2
3.0 FINDINGS OF FACT.....	3
3.1 Project Description.....	3
3.2 Additional Information Regarding Items Discussed in the EAW Since It Was Published .....	4
3.3 Findings Regarding Criteria for Determining the Potential for Significant Environmental Effects .....	4
4.0 CONCLUSIONS .....	7
5.0 APPENDIX A: Agency and Public Comments and Summary of Public Involvement.....	
Summary of Public Involvement.....	
6.0 APPENDIX B: Amended Figures and Exhibits.....	



# FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS

## I-694/ I-494/ I-94 Interchange Improvements

Located in:

Cities: Oakdale and Woodbury

County: Washington

### 1.0 STATEMENT OF ISSUE

The project includes concrete pavement on northbound and southbound I-694/ I-494 between 10th St. and Tamarack Rd, replacement and widening of northbound and southbound bridges over I-94, reconstruction of all loops in the I-694/ I-494/ I-94 interchange, construction of southbound auxiliary lane between 10th St and the I-94 interchange and between the Tamarack Road interchange and the I-94 interchange.

Preparation of an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is required for this project under Minnesota Rules 4410.4300, Subpart 22.B for construction of an auxiliary lane over one mile in length. MnDOT is the project proposer and Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) for review of this project, as per Minnesota Rules 4410.4300, Subpart 22.B.

MnDOT's decision in this matter shall be either a negative or a positive declaration of the need for an environmental impact statement. MnDOT must order an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project if it determines the project has the potential for significant environmental effects.

Based upon the information in the record, which comprises the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) for the proposed project, related studies referenced in the EAW, written comments received, and other supporting documents included in this Findings of Fact and Conclusions document, MnDOT makes the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions:

### 2.0 ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is the Proposer and Responsible Governmental Unit for state environmental review of this project. An Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) has been prepared for this project in accordance with Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410. The EAW was developed to assess the impacts of the project and other circumstances in order to determine if an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is indicated.
- 2.2 The EAW was filed with the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) and circulated for review and comments to the required EAW distribution list. A "Notice of Availability" was published in the EQB Monitor on April 30, 2018. A press release was distributed to local

news media on May 3, 2018. These notices provided a brief description of the project and information on where copies of the EAW were available and invited the public to provide comments that would be used in determining the need for an EIS on the proposed project.

- 2.3 The EAW was made available for public review at six locations: R.H. Stafford Public Library (Woodbury, MN), Oakdale Public Library (Oakdale, MN), Sun Ray Public Library (Saint Paul, MN), Minneapolis Central Library (Minneapolis, MN), MnDOT Metro District Office (Roseville) and the MnDOT Library (St. Paul). The EAW was also posted for review on the project website. Comments were received through May 30, 2018.
- 2.4 Three agency comment letters were received during the EAW comment period; one from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) dated May 30, 2018, one from the Metropolitan Council, also dated May 30, 2018 and one from the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District (RWMWD) dated May 24, 2018. All comments received during the EAW comment period were considered in determining the potential for significant environmental impacts.

Two public comments were received at the open house held May 24, 2018. The comment letters are provided in Appendix A. Issues discussed in detail in the agency letters and public comments are addressed in Appendix A.

## 3.0 FINDINGS OF FACT

### 3.1 Project Description

- 3.1.1 Existing Conditions: The proposed project is located in the Cities of Oakdale and Woodbury, Minnesota, which are eastern suburbs of the Twin Cities Metro Area. The project includes I-694 from the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Interchange south to I-94 and I-494 from the Tamarack Road Interchange north to I-94. Figures 1 and 2 in Appendix B provide a location of the proposed project in the metropolitan area. In this area, I-694 is a 4-lane east-west auxiliary Interstate Highway. I-694 comprises the northern and northeastern portions of a beltway around the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. This four-lane section of I-694 within the project limits was the last section of I-694 completed in the late 60's. The segment of I-494 in the project area is a six-lane auxiliary loop route making up part of a southern Twin Cities beltway of I-94, circling through the southern and western portions of the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The I-694/I-494/I-94 Interchange is a full cloverleaf major system interchange in the eastern Twin Cities Metropolitan Area that serves approximately 190,000 vehicles per day of which approximately 7.1% is truck traffic.
- 3.1.2 Proposed Project: The project proposes to construct concrete pavement on northbound and southbound I-694/ I-494 between 10th St. and Tamarack Rd, replace and widen northbound and southbound bridges over I-94, reconstruct all loops in the I-694/ I-494/ I-94 interchange, construct one southbound auxiliary lane between 10th St and the I-94 interchange and one southbound auxiliary lane between Tamarack Road interchange and the I-94 interchange. Proposed work north of I-94 is in Oakdale, MN and work proposed south of I-94 is in Woodbury, MN. All work is in Washington County on the eastern side of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The work will include stormwater infiltration areas

within the I-94 interchange. Noise studies conducted for this proposed project demonstrated that no noise walls were warranted.

### 3.2 Additional Information Regarding Items Discussed in the EAW Since It Was Published

Since the EAW was published, the following information pertaining to the project has been added or updated:

**Noise.** The following errors occurred in the noise section of the EAW, summarized as follows:

- A reference was made to the MnDOT **2015** Noise Policy. The reference should be to the MnDOT **2017** Noise Policy.
- A reference was made pertaining to the construction cost of noise barriers. The EAW stated \$20/ square foot for noise barriers. The correct figure should be \$36/ square foot.
- The hypothetical 10 foot high noise wall modeled in the EAW (Noise Barrier Wall 1) is described in the EAW as being 262 feet in length. The actual length of the modeled wall is 672 feet in length.

Noise studies conducted for this proposed project demonstrated that no noise walls were warranted.

### 3.3 Findings Regarding Criteria for Determining the Potential for Significant Environmental Effects

Minnesota Rules 4410.1700 provides that an environmental impact statement shall be ordered for projects that have the potential for significant environmental effects. In deciding whether a project has the potential for significant environmental effects, the following four factors described in Minnesota Rules 4410.1700, Subp.7 shall be considered:

- A. Type, extent, and reversibility of environmental effects;
- B. Cumulative potential effects. The RGU shall consider the following factors: whether the cumulative potential effect is significant; whether the contribution from the project is significant when viewed in connection with other contributions to the cumulative potential effect; the degree to which the project complies with approved mitigation measures specifically designed to address the cumulative potential effect; and the efforts of the proposer to minimize the contributions from the project;
- C. The extent to which the environmental effects are subject to mitigation by ongoing public regulatory authority. The RGU may rely only on mitigation measures that are specific and that can be reasonably expected to effectively mitigate the identified environmental impacts of the project; and
- D. The extent to which environmental effects can be anticipated and controlled as a result of other available environmental studies undertaken by public agencies or the project proposer, including other EISs.

MnDOT's key findings with respect to each of these criteria are set forth below:

### 3.3.1 Type, Extent, and Reversibility of Impacts

MnDOT finds that the analysis completed during the EAW process is adequate to determine whether the project has the potential for significant environmental effects. The EAW describes the type and extent of impacts anticipated to result from the proposed project. In addition to the information in the EAW, the additional information described in Section 3.2 of this Findings of Fact and Conclusions document as well as the public/agency comments received during the public comment period (see Appendix A) were taken into account in considering the type, extent and reversibility of project impacts. Following are the key findings regarding potential environmental impacts of the proposed project and the design features included to avoid, minimize, and mitigate these impacts:

- 3.3.1.1 Noise: Noise modeling was completed in the project area and the report summarizing findings was included as Appendix D in the EAW. The modeling effort revealed that no noise barriers were warranted as a result of the proposed roadway improvement.
- 3.3.1.2 Stormwater: The project will add 11-12 acres of new and reconstructed impervious surface. Stormwater runoff volume and water quality will be treated in compliance with relevant regulatory requirements, including the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction Stormwater Permit. MnDOT will treat runoff with infiltration areas that are proposed to be adjacent to existing detention/ retention ponds.
- 3.3.1.3 Wetlands: The proposed roadway improvement would require 0.20 acres of wetland impacts and 0.12 acres of impacts to ditches with wetlands; however, as design proceeds, impacts could change. Impacts to wetlands and perhaps impacts to ditch wetlands would require mitigation per the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) and the Army Corps of Engineers. Exact mitigation requirements will be determined based on agency coordination and permitting requirements. Typically the mitigation ratio (mitigated : impacted) is in the range of 2.0 to 2.5. MnDOT proposes to use wetland bank credits within Bank Service Area (BSA) # 7 to offset the wetland impacts. In some cases, ditch wetlands may be considered by the Army Corps of Engineers to be self-mitigating if the proposed ditch will be moved a few feet from the existing ditch.
- 3.3.1.4 Summary finding with respect to these criteria: MnDOT finds that the project, as it is proposed, does not have the potential for significant environmental effects based on the type, extent, and reversibility of impacts to the resources evaluated in the EAW and in the Findings summary above. Project impacts will be mitigated as described in the EAW and in the Findings above.

### 3.3.2 Cumulative Potential Effects of Related or Reasonably Foreseeable Future Projects

EAW Item 19 identified the following proposed projects and commercial zoning within approximately one mile of the proposed subject roadway improvement:

- The Helmo Avenue North Residential Development
- MN Hwy 120 from I-94 north to Woodland Drive (Maplewood, MN)
- Various commercial zoning areas within the cities of Oakdale and Woodbury
- Washington County Hwy 13 (Inwood Avenue/ Radio Drive) Pedestrian Bridge
- Gateway Corridor/ Gold Line BRT

In consideration of these reasonably foreseeable future projects, no potentially significant cumulative effects from the proposed project and other reasonably foreseeable future actions were identified. This project is not believed to cause any anticipated adverse environmental impacts that cannot be mitigated as described in the EAW and this Findings document. Future projects in the area of this proposed project will be required to meet all applicable regulations and permits.

3.3.3 Extent to Which the Environmental Effects are Subject to Mitigation by Ongoing Public Regulatory Authority

3.3.3.1 The mitigation of environmental impacts will be designed and implemented in coordination with regulatory agencies and will be subject to the plan approval and permitting processes. Permits and approvals that have been obtained or may be required prior to project construction include those listed in **Table 1**.

3.3.3.2 The permits listed in **Table 1** include general and specific requirements for mitigation of environmental effects of the project. Therefore, MnDOT finds that the environmental effects of the project are subject to mitigation by ongoing regulatory authority.

**Table 1: Agency Approvals and Permits**

Unit of government	Type of application	Current Status		
		To be requested	Requested	Completed
<b>Federal</b>				
FHWA	Categorical Exclusion determination	X		
MnDOT CRU on behalf of FHWA	Section 106 (Historic / Archeological) determination			X
MnDOT OES on behalf of FHWA	Endangered Species Act Section 7 determination			X
U.S. Corps of Engineers	Section 404 permit	X		
<b>State</b>				

Unit of government	Type of application	Current Status		
		To be requested	Requested	Completed
MnDOT	Environmental Assessment Worksheet document			X
MnDOT	EIS Need Decision		X	
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) - Construction Storm Water Phase II Permit  MPCA 401 Certification	X		
MnDOT	Wetland Conservation Act - (Replacement Plan)	X		
<b>Local</b>				
Ramsey – Washington Metro Watershed District	Watershed District Permit	X		

3.3.4 Extent to Which Environmental Effects can be Anticipated and Controlled as a Result of Other Environmental Studies

3.3.4.1 MnDOT has extensive experience in roadway construction. Many similar projects have been designed and constructed throughout the area. Design and construction staff is familiar with the project area.

3.3.4.2 No problems are anticipated which MnDOT staff have not encountered and successfully solved many times on similar projects in or near the project area. MnDOT finds that the environmental effects of the project can be anticipated and controlled as a result of the assessment of potential issues during the environmental review process and MnDOT’s experience in addressing similar issues on previous projects.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

1. The Minnesota Department of Transportation has jurisdiction in determining the need for an environmental impact statement on this project.

2. All requirements for environmental review of the proposed project have been met.
3. The EAW and the permit development processes to date related to the project have generated information which is adequate to determine whether the project has the potential for significant environmental effects.
4. Areas where potential environmental effects have been identified will be addressed during final design of the project. Mitigation will be provided where impacts are expected to result from project construction, operation, or maintenance. Mitigative measures will be incorporated into project design, and have been or will be coordinated with local, state and federal agencies during the permit processes.
5. Based on the criteria in Minnesota Rules part 4410.1700, subp. 7, the project does not have the potential for significant environmental effects.
6. An Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the I-694/ I-494/ I-94 Interchange Improvement Project.
7. Any findings that might properly be termed conclusions and any conclusions that might properly be called findings are hereby adopted as such.

Based on the Findings of Fact and Conclusions contained herein and on the entire record:

The Minnesota Department of Transportation hereby determines that the I-694/ I-494/ I-94 Interchange Improvement Project will not result in significant environmental impacts, and that the project does not require the preparation of an environmental impact statement.

For Minnesota Department of Transportation



Lynn P Clarkowski, PE  
MnDOT Chief Environmental Officer

