

East Grand Forks-Grand Forks Regional Bridge Crossing(s)

Planning for Improved Mobility, Equity, Sustainability, and
Economic Competitiveness

PROJECT READINESS

FY 2025 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Program



Project Name: East Grand Forks-Grand Forks Regional Bridge Crossing(s) Planning for Improved Mobility, Equity, Sustainability, and Economic Competitiveness

Project Type: Rural Planning Project

Future Eligible Project Costs: \$7.5 million

2025 RAISE Funds Requested: \$7.5 million

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Supporting Information can be found at:

https://www.srfconsulting.com/grand_forks-east_grand_forks/





East Grand Forks-Grand Forks Regional Bridge Crossing(s)

Submitted by City of East Grand Forks, MN

FY 2025 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) Program

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PROJECT READINESS

1. PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTABILITY

The City of East Grand Forks, MN along with project partners, the City of Grand Forks, ND, Polk County, MN, and Grand Forks County, ND, is submitting this 2025 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program request for \$7.5 million in planning funds. The East Grand Forks-Grand Forks Regional Bridge Crossing(s) Planning for Improved Mobility, Equity, Sustainability, and Economic Competitiveness Project (herein known as the Project) will include a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study, preliminary design, and NEPA environmental documentation to identify and evaluate potential transportation corridor improvements including bridge crossing location(s), across the Red River.

The City recognizes and has championed the need for new river crossing(s) within the Grand Forks-East Grand Forks Metropolitan Area to accommodate the fast growth in the population, traffic, and economy of the region. The City will lead this planning project in a manner which adheres to all local, state, and federal requirements. The project will be added to the States Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) upon grant award notification.

2. PROPOSED SCHEDULE

A project schedule identifying major project milestones is presented below. All planning agreements, permitting, review periods, public engagement activities, and approvals will be acquired through the project development process as per the requirements of the parties involved. The planning activities will commence upon signing of the grant agreement or upon written pre-authorization, much in advance of the RAISE obligation deadline of September 30, 2029. All RAISE funds will be expended before September 30, 2034 to complete the planned activities.

Figure 1 Project Schedule



The City of East Grand Forks anticipates that the Project will be awarded in June 2025 and that the grant agreement with the USDOT will be fully executed by late Spring 2026. Upon signing of the grant agreement, the City will hire Engineering and Environmental consultants to conduct a PEL study, planned to occur over 24 months (Fall 2026 to Summer 2028). The completed PEL Study will feed directly into the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) environmental documentation and preliminary design processes, planned to initiate right after the completion of the PEL study. Following the completion of this Project, the City and project partners will initiate the final design phase, right-of-way acquisition, and subsequently construction of the selected transportation corridor and river crossing(s).

3. NEPA AND PERMITTING

Per the NOFO, an environmental risk assessment is not required for planning projects. Nonetheless, the City of East Grand Forks emphasizes that it will coordinate with all local, state, and federal partners throughout the planning process. Planning efforts will start by conducting the PEL study conforming to all Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT), Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR), North Dakota Department of Water Resources (NDDWR), U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) requirements. The results of the PEL Study will provide a transparent, collaborative, and orderly transfer of environmental and preliminary design engineering data directly into the NEPA environmental document. The NEPA class of action will be determined as planning progresses. As a result of this coordination, the Project is expected to achieve all approvals necessary to continue the final design and eventual construction of the associated Capital Project in a timely manner.

4. PROJECT SUPPORT

The Project will initiate a broad and multifaceted public engagement effort, including fulfilling all requirements and guidelines over the course of the PEL study and NEPA processes. The need for improved cross-river connection(s) within the Project Area has been recognized by the local and regional communities for decades. This necessity has been documented in numerous community-led plans and studies, including the area's adopted [Metropolitan Transportation Plan](#), [Future Bridge Traffic Impact Study](#), [Merrifield Road and I-29 Interchange Justification Report](#), and [Merrifield Road Red River Bridge Feasibility Study](#). Each of these documents included wide-ranging and diverse public engagement and stakeholder review. However, the planning for the transportation corridor improvement and new river crossing(s) must establish a streamlined process of alternative development and evaluation in order to determine the preferred alternative selection through the NEPA environmental documentation process. Therefore, a robust and meaningful public engagement is planned to occur in both the PEL and NEPA environmental documentation phases of this Project. Planned public engagement and stakeholder outreach will include:

- Residents including disadvantaged communities
- Intermodal Carriers
- Transportation Management Organizations
- Active Transportation Users
- School Districts
- Agricultural Businesses
- Business Owners
- Emergency Responders
- Other Identified Stakeholders

The Project's PEL and NEPA activities will conform to all local, state, and federal guidelines and requirements and will be conducted in close coordination with FHWA-MN, FHWA-ND, MnDOT and NDDOT, and US Army Corps of Engineers. The PEL process will follow a detailed scope of work, abbreviated below:

- PEL study scope of work review with DOTs and FHWA Division Offices (Concurrence Point 1)
- Develop a Purpose and Need Statement and Evaluation Criteria (Concurrence Point 2)
- Alternatives Development and Analysis (Concurrence Point 3)

- Generate a short list of alternatives that will be carried into the environmental review and NEPA process (Concurrence Point 4)
- Develop a final PEL report.

The Project is the result of a coordinated and sustained partnership between local governments, the local community, and regional stakeholders. There is a broad base of state and local support for the project, as shown by the Letters of Support submitted for this application.

5. RISKS AND MITIGATION

The City of East Grand Forks and project partners maintain a deep understanding of local environmental conditions and have a successful history of implementing large-scale planning and construction projects within the Project Area. The City retains a full-time planning and construction staff with deep knowledge and understanding of multi-jurisdictional planning and design processes and compliance with complex stakeholder engagement, environmental review, and construction requirements. The City also intends to hire Engineering and Environmental consultants to provide technical expertise and planning process skills to provide additional capacity in these planning efforts.

In addition, the contingency costs identified as a part of the total project cost estimate will be sufficient to cover the identified risks and associated cost overruns, if any. With the proactive approach taken, the City does not anticipate any of the identified risks to significantly alter the schedule or costs. These factors significantly lower the risks associated with procurement delays and other foreseeable uncertainties. The City and project partners intend to commence the project soon after the grant obligation.

6. TECHNICAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

The City of East Grand Forks, along with project partners, has extensive experience in initiating large-scale planning and construction efforts. The City retains a full-time professional staff with extensive experience obtaining, administering, and reporting large grants across a range of federal, state, and local programs. All activities undertaken throughout the Project, including the PEL study, NEPA environmental documentation, and preliminary design processes, will be compliant with all applicable Title VI Civil Rights requirements, Buy America provisions, the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act, and the Davis Bacon Act.

- **The Project is supported by project partners and the community.**
- The City and project partners have **experience delivering transportation improvement projects of similar nature in partnership with MnDOT and NDDOT.** In the past five years, the City and project partners have received and managed complex grants for large transportation projects including the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), Transportation Alternatives (TA), Safe Routes to School (SRTS), Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

(CARES), Urban Regional Secondary Roads Program, Rural National Highway Program, and the Governor's Main Street Initiative.

- As a recipient of federal funds, the City and project partners **will comply with all federal regulations and standards**, including but not limited to Buy America, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations, Civil Rights requirements, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS), the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR), and other related statutes and regulations.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Links to supporting documents are included throughout this narrative. All supporting documents and the RAISE grant application narrative are available to view at the following webpage:

https://www.srfconsulting.com/grand_forks-east_grand_forks/