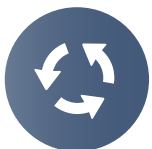




US Highway 8 Reconstruction Project

Submitted by Chisago County, Minnesota

PROJECT READINESS



Safety



Mobility



Multimodal/ADA



Wildlife



Drainage



Fiber Optics

Project Name **US Highway 8 Reconstruction Project**

Project Type **Rural Capital - Road, Repair/Rehabilitation**

Total Eligible Cost **\$80.5M**

2023 RAISE Funds Requested **\$20M**

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Supporting Information can be found at:

<https://www.srfconsulting.com/chisago-county-mn-us-hwy-8-raise/>



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROJECT READINESS1

 Project Schedule1

 Environmental Permits and Review1

 Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies2

 Technical Capacity3

Supporting Documents 3

FIGURES

Figure 1 Proposed Project Schedule1

PROJECT READINESS

Project Schedule

The US 8 Reconstruction Project (herein known as the Project) was reinitiated in 2019 and has steadily maintained its major milestones as per the project schedule. Project planning activities including public engagement, traffic analysis, environmental documentation, and preliminary design have either been completed or are close to completion.

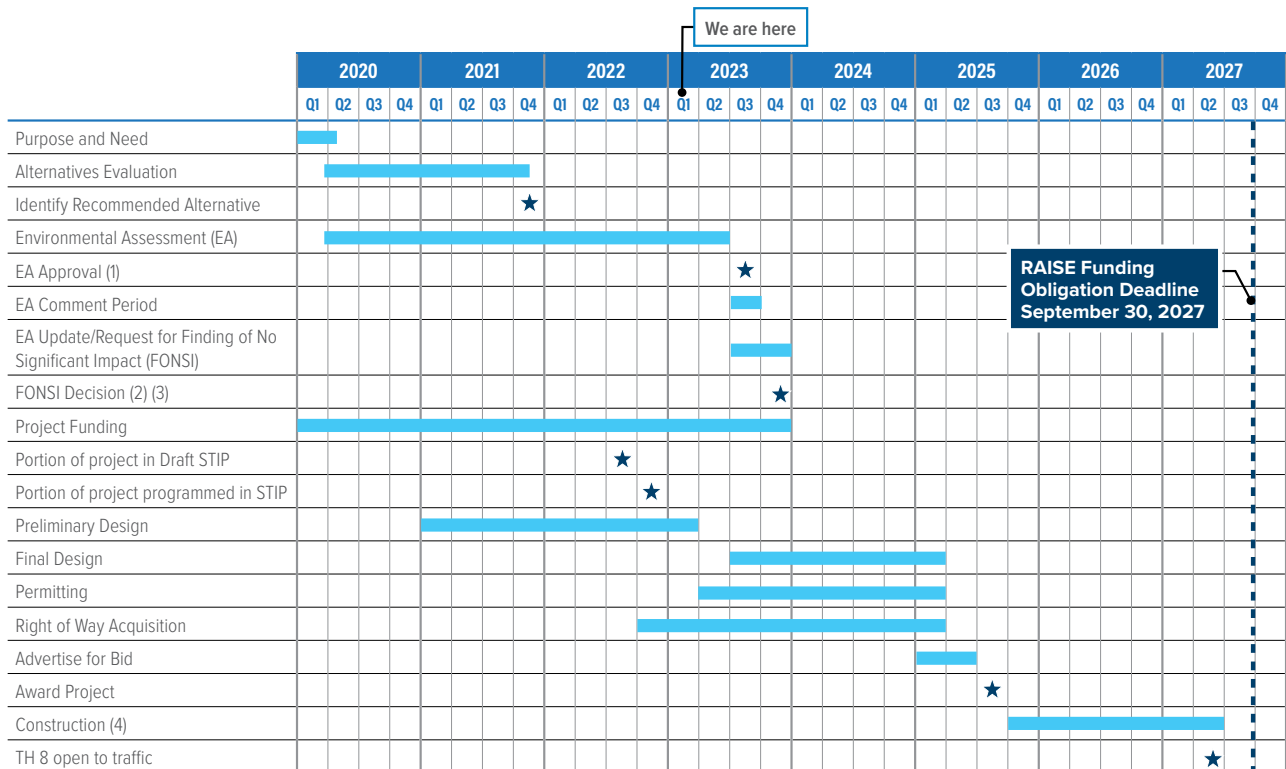
Chisago County guarantees that all necessary activities will be completed to allow FY23 RAISE funds to be obligated sufficiently in advance of the statutory deadline (September 30, 2027). The state non-federal match and other federal funds allocated to the Project is programmed in Minnesota Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The Project is currently in preliminary engineering design phase. The project layout was approved in October 2022. The current cost estimates are based on 30 percent engineering design. Public engagement for the Project was initiated in 2019 and is planned to occur until construction starts.

All property and right-of-way (ROW) acquisition will be completed in accordance with 49 CFR Part 24 and other Federal regulations by March 2025. The County has experienced ROW acquisition staff who have been actively involved in the project development process. Figure 1 illustrates the project schedule. Construction is anticipated to begin Fall of 2025 and will be completed by Summer of 2027.

Environmental Permits and Review

Chisago County has closely coordinated with federal, state, and local partners throughout the preliminary design phase of the Project. As a result of this coordination, the Project is expected to achieve all approvals necessary to begin construction in Fall 2025.

The Project is in the NEPA stage of the project development process. An [Environmental Assessment Worksheet \(EAW\)](#) was completed in May 2013 in accordance with Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410. The Project is being reviewed as a Class III action under NEPA (Environmental Assessment, EA).



Notes:

- (1) FHWA cannot sign an Environmental Assessment (EA) until a portion of the project (e.g., first anticipated construction phase) is in a draft STIP.
- (2) Assumed outcome of NEPA process.
- (3) FHWA cannot issue a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) decision until a portion of the project is programmed in the STIP. FONSI decision could be made earlier depending on timing of STIP programming.
- (4) Assumes 2 construction seasons.

Figure 1 [Proposed Project Schedule](#)

The EA process was initiated in Spring 2020 and approval is anticipated in Fall 2023 with a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) decision anticipated for by December 2023. The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) fiscal constraint policy prohibits approval of NEPA documents prior to a project's listing in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The County has met with FHWA Minnesota Division Office on several occasions, and FHWA staff have agreed to participate in the current NEPA and will be engaged throughout the Project.

Due to the size of the Project and number of aquatic resources nearby, it is expected that more than five acres of wetlands will be impacted. Therefore, a Section 404 Individual Permit (IP) authorization will be required from the USACE prior to construction. The County is taking proactive measures to coordinate with wetland regulatory agencies, including USACE, DNR, Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), and Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) local government units (LGUs). A 401-water quality certification from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) will also be required. The County will resolve and mitigate any issues early in project development, avoiding costly delays in permitting. All wetlands have been field delineated within the construction limits as per USACE and WCA requirements. Wetland boundaries will be reviewed with the Technical Evaluation Panel (TEP).

Further, MPCA's NPDES permit will be required due to the amount of disturbance created by the Project. The new impervious surfaces created by the Project will require a combination of pond and ditch improvements for stormwater management. Stormwater management requires a significant amount of agency resources. Thus, early coordination will occur with the Watershed District, MnDOT, and Cities to verify that standards and stormwater management requirements are understood and mutually accepted.

A Phase I archaeology survey was previously completed for the Project in 2013 with the EAW. Additional archaeological surveys will be completed for Project areas as part of the current NEPA review. MnDOT Cultural Resources Unit (CRU) will prepare the Section 106 finding for the Project and coordinate with SHPO as necessary. The County will prepare an updated Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) as required by MPCA for liability assurances in conjunction with right-of-way acquisition.

Right-of-Way Acquisition Plans

Right-of-way acquisition is a risk to cost and schedule. The estimate includes significant contingency for acquisition costs. The vision for the

Project focused on utilizing the existing ROW, owned by the County and MnDOT, to serve the various users of the corridor (pedestrians, bicyclists, business owners, residents, and vehicular traffic including oversized truck loads). The Project is currently identifying all remaining ROW needs and has initiated negotiations with impacted landowners. The County will exercise eminent domain if necessary, to gain access to the property to construct the Project within the required schedule constraints. The Project will maintain access to business and residents throughout the construction phase and will minimally disrupt communities, thereby, maintaining community cohesion.

State and Local Approvals

The Project is consistent with the State, regional, and local plans. Although the Project is not currently a part of the State Transportation Investment Program (STIP), the Project will be included prior to obligation. All required State and Local approvals will be obtained prior to construction:

- Municipal Consent from the Cities of Wyoming and Chisago
- Watershed District Permit from the Comfort Lake Forest Lake Watershed District
- Local Governmental Unit from the Wetland Conservation Act (Outside MnDOT right-of-way)
- Temporary Occupancy Approval from Washington County

Assessment of Project Risks and Mitigation Strategies

As with most construction projects, negative externalities could occur; however, proactive mitigation measures and early collaboration with all project partners will be implemented to minimize impacts. The County will evaluate all risks during Final Design including environmental uncertainties, needed legislative approvals, engineering and design risks, alternative financial structures needed to advance the Project, and adequacy of financial sources. A Transportation Management Plan will be prepared for the Project and will organize strategies for managing project work-zone impacts and include construction traffic operation controls and public information components.

The adequacy of local funding obligations will be determined by State and local agencies and is a continued conversation between the County and those entities. MnDOT has already committed funding, however, additional resources are needed for construction. The County will consider its funding resources through existing special taxes and fees, as well as continue to work very closely with MnDOT, the State Legislature and Governor's office, and other local partners to ensure that funding is in place following a grant award.

Technical Capacity

Chisago County is prepared to deliver the Project in accordance with the project schedule. Additional analysis of project readiness factors is provided below, but in summary, the County assesses minimal project delivery risks for the following reasons:

- **Chisago County is substantially through the Project's preliminary engineering phase.** Design and environmental work done to-date lowers uncertainty around scope, impact, and cost. The Project layout was approved by MnDOT in October 2022. The environmental documentation is substantially complete. The issuance of the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) certificate is expected by December 2023.
- **Project limits are established.** The Project footprint is substantially within Chisago County and MnDOT right of way and negotiations with impacted landowners are to begin soon.
- **A detailed cost estimate has been prepared based on final Project layout** which accounts for appropriate contingency and inflation levels and lowers the uncertainty in Project costs.
- **The Project is noncontroversial and supported by Project partners and the local community.** Chisago County has maintained ongoing coordination with FHWA, MnDOT, the City of Forest Lake, the City of Chisago City, and the City of Wyoming. The County has been collaborating with local agencies and the community to develop a project that meets the needs of all involved partners including the residents and visitors of Chisago County.
- **Chisago County has secured funding sufficient to cover 45 percent of project costs** and is committed to secure another 30 percent through various other funding sources.

The County has successfully delivered several large-scale projects completed through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. The selected alternative will be advanced to begin construction in late 2025 and will conform to all current USDOT, American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), and MnDOT standards for roadway design and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant pedestrian infrastructure. [Preliminary design layout and typical sections](#) have been approved for the Project, which demonstrate the Project can be designed effectively to meet the needs of the corridor and surrounding communities and can advance to construction well within the USDOT's obligation deadline.

The County has extensive experience with procuring and developing transportation improvement projects using federally awarded funds. Additionally, Chisago County, as a recipient of federal financial assistance, complies with [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), 49 CFR Part 21 (Department of Transportation Regulations for the Implementation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964), [Buy America provisions](#), ADA regulations, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS), and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR), and 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/chisago-county-mn-us-hwy-8-raise/>