More Than a Bridge: The Challenges in Developing an International Border Crossing Project

2018 ITE Joint Western & Texas District Annual Meeting

Stantec
Agenda

- Location, History, & Need
- Project Challenges
- Communications
Background

- International border bridge located over the Rainy River on Minnesota Trunk Highway 72 and Ontario Provincial Highway 11
- This route provides access between the United States and Canada as well as full-service, 24-hour Ports of Entry
- Next usable crossing about 70 miles away
Issues/Constraints
- Ports of Entry
- Regional Airport
- CNRR Bridge
- Wetlands
- Gravesites
- City Park
- Baudette River
- Stormwater
- Power Sub-Station
- Treatment Ponds
Challenges

Merging English and metric units of measurement wasn’t the only challenge. We needed to balance:

- Environmental studies
- Design criteria
- Public involvement processes
- State/provincial/national regulations and requirements
- Historic issues
- Border security concerns
Initial Issues

- Ports of Entry
  - No impacts to operations, road closures limited to 15 minute maximum
- No detours available nearby
- Split ownership of bridge
- Not a typical project
  - Only 3 international crossings in MN
  - No “manual” or “how-to” guides
Start-Up

- Initial discussions considered each partner building their half and meet at the center of the river
- Agency meeting in Duluth, MN 2013
- Who leads, who decides?
- Developing an Inter-Agency Agreement
Challenges

1 Bridge, 2 Perspectives

“There may only be one bridge, but that doesn’t mean we all see it the same way.”
Environmental
Historic/Cultural Issues
Challenges

Non-traditional Agencies

“We have to contact who? Does anyone have an idea of how we find who we are supposed to talk to?”
United States

• State Department
• Customs and Border Protection
• Coast Guard
• General Services Administration (GSA)

Canada

• Consulate General
• Canada Border Services Agency
• Transport Canada
• Global Affairs Canada
• Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
Legal

• Presidential Permit
• International Joint Commission
• Government to Government Agreement
• State Department involvement on agreements
• Buy America
Challenges

Avoid Surprises

“I’m worried that we are going to get ambushed by something we didn’t even know we had to do.”
**Permit Flow Chart for Baudette-Rainy River International Bridge**

**Timeline:**
- **2015:**
  - **Aug:** Preparation of Preferred Plan
  - **Sep:** MnDOT Design Memo
  - **Nov:** Geometric Layout
  - **Dec:** Planning & Preliminary Design Report
  - **Jan:** Utility Identification/Coordination
  - **Feb:** Hydraulics Memo
  - **Mar:** Waterway Analysis
  - **Apr:** Hydraulic Report
  - **May:** Bridge Meetings (6)
  - **Jun:** Preferred Bridge & Alignment
  - **Jul:** Structure Studies (MTO & MnDOT)
  - **Aug:** 401 Process & Documentation
  - **Sep:** Environmental Assessment (MnDOT)
  - **Oct:** Environmental Assessment (MTO)
  - **Nov:** GAA Project Initiation & Review

- **2016:**
  - **Jan:** Application of Federal Funds
  - **Feb:** HA Approval
  - **Mar:** Waterbodies License for Non-Federal Use of Federal Property
  - **Apr:** Section 401 Waterbodies
  - **May:** Section 812 Authorization
  - **Jun:** FIA 1660-1
  - **Jul:** Agreement Approvals
  - **Aug:** Permit In Public Waters Permit
  - **Sep:** NAIC Permit
  - **Oct:** Section 7 Consultation
  - **Nov:** Municipal Concerns
  - **Dec:** Environmental Permit

- **2017:**
  - **Jan:** Letter of Receipt Approval
  - **Feb:** Waterbody Agreements
  - **Mar:** Access permits
  - **Apr:** Endangered Species Act "Works in scheduled waterways"
  - **May:** Miscellaneous Endangered Species Act
  - **Jun:** Local Environmental Assessment Act
  - **Jul:** Civil Enf for Preconstruction "Works in Water"
  - **Aug:** Civil Enf for Preconstruction "Works in Water"
  - **Sep:** Endangered Species Act Permit
  - **Oct:** Hydropower Act Permit
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- **Mar:** ODOT (1 month)
- **Apr:** ODOT (2 months)
- **May:** ODOT (3 months)
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- **Oct:** ODOT (8 months)
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**During Design:**
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Challenges

Communications

“I don’t think we can tell too many people about this project too many times.”
Project Communications

- Guide was developed early in the project
- Keeping management up-to-speed
- Agency involvement
- Reaching out to other states and provinces
- A number of “spin-off” meetings were held with impacted stakeholders
- Public meetings were coordinated on both sides of the border
Project Communications

- TAC was formed
  - Monthly meetings, alternating venues
  - Border protection agencies were invited to participate as regular TAC members
- Decision Request and Record
- Risk Analysis
- Value Engineering—not just about saving $$ but also for collecting ideas
- Public Advisory Committee was formed
Contractor Communications

• International Laws and requirements may be new to otherwise qualified contractors
• Contractor Information Guide
• Educational Workshops
Questions?