

# Highway 25 Coalition

Next Steps Recommendation 2019

## Where We've Been

Highway 25 Coalition initiated based on the premise of “a unified effort for the purposes of joint planning and funding for transportation improvements.”

- Developed a series of initial goals, many of which are transportation-related.
- Developed joint powers agreement with organization and funding principles in place.

## What We've Accomplished

### Created a foundation:

- Formation of the Coalition established a collaboration among jurisdictions for the benefit of the region.
- Developed commitment amongst policymakers.
- Created an understanding of the transportation issues impacting the region.
- Created an understanding of the importance of the connection and opportunity represented by TH25, US10, I-94 and the rail line corridors.

## What We've Accomplished

- Initial work focus for the Coalition was transportation related, in accordance with the Highway 25 Coalition goal: **“Conduct traffic studies defining and identifying priority improvements.”**
- Transportation Study commenced in April 2017:
  - Yielded clear, usable data on traffic and level of service.
  - Provided data to solidify assumptions.
  - Developed a recommendation for a second river crossing as a necessary future long-term improvement based on the data.

## Where the Coalition Paused

- Transportation Study required the 5 identified river crossing alternatives to be narrowed to complete the study components.
  - Sherburne County jurisdictions recognized need to remain unified and progress forward.
  - Wright County jurisdictions recognized need to remain unified but disagreed on next step due to concerns regarding land use compatibility.
  - Coalition agreed to allow research on the potential for an economic analysis on each of the 5 river crossing locations as a next step.

## What We've Learned

- Intent was to develop scope for an economic development study
- Need to understand what would and would not be covered in the environmental review in order to avoid duplication
- Consulted with Federal Highway Administration to better understand NEPA process
- Consulted with MnDOT on similar processes; led to TH41 case study
  - Only signed Tier 1 EIS in Minnesota
- Consulted with MnDOT's third party facilitator on TH41 process

## What We've Learned

Discussion and research on selection of a river crossing location revealed that **transportation factors alone should not** drive a bridge location decision.

- Transportation supports land use growth and land use goals.
- NEPA does not consider the weight of social, land use and economic factors as primary screening criteria in a purpose and need statement - foundation for EIS.
- **Land use, social and economic factors are critical to accomplishing the goals of the respective communities.**
- Transportation impacts of desired land uses and land use goals need to be considered to a greater extent.

## What We've Learned

The environmental process is time-consuming, expensive and will consider all location options, including those not identified in the Highway 25 transportation study.

Before entering into the environmental review process, it is recommended that the partners unite on a regional land use plan to avoid a costly and time-consuming process resulting in a no-progress scenario.



## Where Do We Go From Here?

- FHWA supports bringing in a third party facilitator to work through common goals and issues.
- What does a facilitator do:
  - Leads process/meetings to reduce tension and navigate issues
  - Creates a unified story and consensus among the group
- The facilitator will help the group move forward **together** on a process to include:
  - Shared goals for the region
  - Regional land use plan
- The product of working with the third party facilitator will be the necessary groundwork needed for the regional land use and development plan.
  - Joint powers agreement review

Where Do  
We Go From  
Here?

Regional Land Use Planning



2 years

Tier One EIS



2 – 4 years

Tier Two EIS



1 – 4 years

Physical Construction

## Where Will This Lead?

- Regional land use and development plan will be developed based on shared goals and agreed-upon criteria.
  - Will engage stakeholders beyond the Coalition members
- Transportation solutions will come out of the process.
- Stop and complete the Transportation Study at present state with all data provided to Coalition for use in the land use effort.
- Facilitator remains on-board during the regional land use and development planning process.
  - River Crossing Implementation Collaborative
  - Scoping Document

## What Will This cost?

- Initiative Foundation has funding to support this effort in 2019 and 2020.
- Third Party Facilitator: \$40-50K for 6 month process
  - Estimate \$25K from Initiative Foundation
- Regional Planning Effort: \$150,00-\$200,00
  - Estimate \$75,000 from Initiative Foundation

## Why is this Important?

Utilize the initial premise of the Coalition organization and its first identified goal:

- Coalition initiated based on the premise of a **unified** effort for the **purposes of joint planning** and funding for transportation improvements.
- Coalition and community stakeholders need to own the regional vision and adopt the process to **create commitment and success.**

## Why Is this Important?

- There is a need to look at this area as a region – not just separate communities with separate land use assumptions.
- Maintains a unified effort that will help the group be successful now and as it moves to the environmental process.
- Without concurrence, plans based on transportation factors alone will not provide enough basis to continue.

## What and When?

- June 2019 - Prepare IF application/RFO to select a facilitator to help navigate the regional land use planning process
- July 2019 – Sign contract with selected facilitator consultant
- August 2019 – Prepare a RFO to select a regional land use planner.
- September 2019 – Sign contract with regional land use planning consultant.
- September 2019 to Mid-2020 – Regional land use plan creation.
- 2020 – Adopt regional land use plan
- Late 2020 – Identify river crossing locations consistent with regional land use plan.
- 2021– Enter NEPA with the goal of selecting a crossing route to move forward with official mapping and securing funding for improvements.

**“Coming together is  
a beginning.  
Keeping together is  
progress. Working  
together is success.”**

Henry Ford