



## APWA MINNESOTA CHAPTER PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT OF THE YEAR NOMINATION FORM

Return to: Sarah Lloyd  
Bolton & Menk, Inc.  
12224 Nicollet Avenue  
Burnsville, MN 55337

Phone: 952-890-0509 ext. 2417  
Email: [sarah.lloyd@bolton-menk.com](mailto:sarah.lloyd@bolton-menk.com)

**Submission Deadline: October 1, 2019**

**All nomination and supporting data are to be submitted as a PDF to Sarah at [sarah.lloyd@bolton-menk.com](mailto:sarah.lloyd@bolton-menk.com) with a maximum page size of 5 pages, including photos.**

### Project Nominated:

Managing Agency: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Design Firm: \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Construction Administration Firm: \_\_\_\_\_  
Project General Contractor: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Making Nomination: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

### Criteria for Nomination

- Project must be substantially completed by October 31, 2019.
- Includes use of innovative construction management techniques and completion of the project on schedule.
- Maintained excellent safety performance and safety program throughout construction.
- Evidence of strong community relations during all project phases.
- Consideration given to the environment. Sustainable design techniques involved.
- Unusual accomplishments given adverse conditions.
- Provides future value to the public works profession and perception by the public.
- Additional considerations such as value engineering, innovative project financing, multi-agency coordination and participation.

**Reasons for Nomination:** Describe the project with the aspects and features of the project that fulfilled any of the applicable criteria listed. (Include description on a separate page.)

# APWA Minnesota Chapter

## PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT OF THE YEAR



### Project Overview

The Fallon Avenue Overpass project is known in Monticello as a bridge that connects the community. Situated along both sides of I-94, Monticello is a fast-growing community with development occurring on both sides of the Interstate. Fallon Overpass serves as a major local connection in the city that improves transportation, economic development opportunities and public safety.

The project included the construction of the Fallon Avenue bridge over I-94, three roundabouts located at the intersections of Fallon Avenue and Chelsea Road, Fallon Avenue and 7th Street, and 7th Street and Washington Street and pedestrian and streetscape improvements.

The project was conceived over two decades ago as the City's vision was to provide a local gateway for growth and economic development for the community. The overpass was identified in the City's 1994 Comprehensive Plan and during the 2004 CSAH

18/I-94 interchange project, the construction of a local thoroughfare was highly recommended by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and MnDOT as a vital link to the City's transportation system and to address future growth. Since 1994, the city of Monticello has experienced significant growth and development, and the Fallon Avenue Overpass provides a critical alternative crossing over I-94 to alleviate heavy traffic on Trunk Highway 25, which has approximately 40,000 vehicles per day, and CSAH 18. As a result, improved travel times and reduction in delays have occurred not only for local residents, but also businesses, school buses, emergency services and commuter traffic accessing I-94.

The over \$9 million project included several project partners and required coordination with partner agencies, local businesses, residents, contractors and city staff.



## Innovative Construction Management Techniques & Completion of Project on Schedule

### MANAGING TIMELINES

The project included some significant right of way acquisition negotiations that spanned several years. The right of way acquisition process, as well as the agency review time were critical in determining the project construction schedule. The project delivery had a compressed timeline with a bid letting in May 2018. Construction began in June and the bridge was open to traffic on November 21, the day before Thanksgiving. Planning for cold weather paving, mitigating traffic closures and back-ups, acquiring funding, right of way acquisitions and communicating with residents and business owners all played a role in the success of this project.

Often private utility relocations can delay construction activities. This was not the case for the project as a concerted effort was made to partner with utility companies to begin the relocation work in 2017, one year prior to the contractor beginning roadway reconstruction. Seasoned construction management and inspection personnel and collaboration with MnDOT construction managers, also contributed to the project success.

## Excellent Safety Performance and Safety Program

### TIMING OF CLOSURES

Construction on the project began in June 2018 and there were no injuries reported throughout the entirety of the project. Originally, I-94 lane closures occurred

during day hours and sometimes during peak traffic hours. When the project team realized the back-ups that were occurring during the initial lane closures, they worked closely with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to remedy the issue. Rather than having closures during peak travel times, closures occurred overnight for the remainder of the project.

The City's adjacent collector roadways were closed in segments to restrict the traveling public from driving through the corridor and construction zone. By limiting the closure area, it allowed the contractor to maintain a tight perimeter around the construction area, for improved safety for the traveling public and the construction workers.

## Strong Community Relations

Communication was key in the success of this project. Frequent communication between the project team, city, contractor, businesses and residents was necessary. The City of Monticello worked diligently to ensure the public was kept well-informed of the project and created a robust communications plan that would inform all involved audiences. Detours were the word of the year in Monticello. City staff understood that construction to the size and scale of Fallon Avenue was going to be particularly challenging to residents, but the payoff would be worth it.

### From concept to reality

The city began the process of concept planning in 2011 and vetted the project with the city council from planning through design. Eight alignment concepts were initially discussed with one selected in 2015. Impacted property owners were included in

planning, as well as the City's Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC included local business owners, industrial and economic development committee members, city staff and city council members.

From an economic development standpoint, there was a lot of support for the project. The City's Economic Development Authority believed in the project because it promoted their mission of creating jobs and spurring future commercial and residential development in the surrounding area. Currently, the city has received multiple development proposals adjacent to the project.

### **Combining traditional and modern communication tactics**

The City used several communication tools during construction to reach audiences in different ways including a public open house, project website, social media, regular email communications, MnDOT website communications, local newspaper articles, flyers, city hall, library and chamber of commerce displays. Additionally, direct mailings were sent to property owners along the corridor to ensure they were kept well-informed of project schedule in addition to field personnel providing frequent communications. Since there were several project partners and stakeholders involved in the project, the City hosted both a groundbreaking and ribbon-cutting ceremony to symbolize the beginning and completion of the project, highlighting its significance for Monticello. The groundbreaking was well attended by elected officials.

### **A lasting impact**

The connection of the two halves of the city was transformative. Whether it was local drivers moving across town, pedestrians and bikers enjoying the connections to the pathway system, or emergency services utilizing the new route to help citizens, the bridge is an essential thoroughfare for Monticello.

## **Sustainable Design Techniques**

### **A BRIDGE MODELED AFTER MONTICELLO**

The Fallon Overpass bridge is a focal point of the city and because of this, city staff wanted to ensure this bridge not only functional, but reflected the brand, environment and character of the city. The bridge was designed to incorporate local art that could be switched out for flexibility in the future.



Additionally, the arches were designed to mimic the curves of the Mississippi River. The colored concrete and a limestone façade represented local natural resources. Since the bridge is not tied to a major interchange, most bridge use would come from local traffic in addition to I-94 motorists viewing it daily. Being intentional about creating a sense of pride for Monticello was important.

### **An intentional streetscape**

The City of Monticello has invested heavily in creating beautiful and intentional public spaces. Several plazas in the city, landscaping and wayfinding signs were aesthetically developed and these consistent colors and features were carried throughout the Fallon Overpass Project corridor. Significant attention was paid to the type of rock and how these aesthetic elements can create connections throughout the city.

### **Using roundabouts to manage traffic and improve safety**

Including three roundabouts is a unique traffic control design technique in any project. Due to the need of improved intersection flow with the addition of the overpass, in addition to the projected increase in development in the areas surrounding the project

area, it was the City's desire to make the corridor pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle-friendly. The project reduced and improved pedestrian crossings on 7th Street between residential areas and the school. Additionally, roundabouts are a more sustainable solution to traffic control and transportation design and with this project, reduced impacts to adjacent properties compared to traditional sign systems with turn lanes. Studies have shown that roundabouts result in lower fuel consumption, a decrease in emissions, decrease in impervious areas effected and landscaping opportunities.

### **A unique approach to stormwater management**

In many cases, central islands of roundabouts are reserved for native landscaping and aesthetic features. During preliminary design, the team was looking for areas to create ponds. Challenges with right of way limited the available space surrounding the project, as well as topographic issues. Working with a hydraulic group, the team pursued placing the underground water treatment chambers in the center island of the roundabouts. The water is routed through the central island and into the city's water treatment chambers without any additional effects on surrounding property.

## **Unusual Accomplishments Given Adverse Conditions**

### **ACQUIRING RIGHT OF WAY | A 20-YEAR PROCESS**

A major challenge that could've prevented the entire project from happening was securing necessary right of way. Coordination with the railroad to open the area near 7th street for redevelopment and negotiating with the railroad came first. Eventually, the team showed the railroad alternative options and the right of way was secured.

The most challenging aspect of the project was securing right of way from a local church. The city eventually purchased the right of way from the church after several negotiations that escalated up the chain of command. Several attorneys, negotiations and conversations led to the purchase of the land necessary to build the Fallon Avenue Overpass. Throughout the entire process, the city remained focused on their end goal and took all the steps necessary, although challenging at many times, to ensure this project was possible.

## **Combating Cold Weather**

The fall of 2018 was unusually cold and unexpected. The cold weather was preventing the contractor from pouring concrete and pavement. The team worked closely with MnDOT's bituminous office to ensure it was safe to pour the concrete and pavement. This collaboration allowed the project to stay within the project schedule and timeline – a huge priority for a city that was already riddled with detours and closures. When paving in cold weather, it's important to remember that the Time Available for Compaction (TAC) is dramatically reduced. Knowing mix temperature is critical to achieving compaction and knowing that there is less time to compact in cold weather is a big variable when performing cold weather paving.

## **Future Value to the Public Works Professional and Public Perception**

A large interstate running through the middle of a community can be perceived as barrier to connecting the community. Although access to transportation is essential for economic development, the placement almost acts as a divider. Creating pathways that form a symbolic and physical connection to both sides of the city was incredibly important. The pathway connections and streetscape elements of the project supported the City's vision of connecting the community to the City's downtown, parks and pathway system and places of work and shopping. The city's public works department provided considerable input in developing the streetscape design to be attractive yet maintainable.

Additionally, the project improved response time for public safety providers such as the Wright County Sheriff's Department, fire department and ambulance services for the Monticello-Big Lake hospital located in the city. The Monticello school district also benefited from the project with improved connection for the elementary schools on the south side of I-94 and the middle school located on the north side of I-94 along the project corridor.

The City has received positive feedback from the community with an improved quality of life due to reduced travel times and less traffic congestion, in addition to aesthetic improvements and a symbolic connection of the City.

## Additional Considerations – Innovative Project Funding and Multi-Agency Coordination

The Fallon Avenue Overpass project was recommended for award of \$2,100,000 in federal funds by the MnDOT Region 7W TAC meeting in February 2017. The region had \$3,168,000 available to fund road and bridge projects as part of the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Local Surface Transportation Program (STP) Program. There were nine projects that applied for funding totaling \$18 million.

Only two road and bridge projects were selected out of the nine submissions. The Fallon Ave overpass was recommended to receive \$2.1 million of the over \$3 million available funds.

This was highly competitive process, all with viable transportation projects submitted. In previous years, four to eight projects submitted funding requests. 2017 was an unprecedented year with nine projects applying.

Region 7W consists of Wright County, Sherburne County, Stearns County, Benton County and all cities within these counties vying for funding their projects. District 3 MnDOT transportation planning staff reviewed all nine project applications and ranked the projects based on seven different criteria including: Access and Mobility, System Connectivity, Multimodal, System Condition, Safety, Economic Vitality, Cost Justification and Equity.

In the end, this was not a slam dunk for the City of Monticello, although the project ranked high. A combination of a good application, pre-planning and discussions with MnDOT planning staff resulted in a minor functional class change making the Fallon project eligible, the project presentation to the Region 7W TAC and the City staff advocating for this project at the meeting, resulted in the award of funds. In addition, support letters from stakeholders, such as the Monticello School District, Monticello Economic Development Authority, and the Highway 25 Coalition were included with the award submittal.

This was the largest amount of funding to be received for a transportation project in the City's history.



## TIMELINE

- 1994**  
The overpass was identified in the City's transportation plan
- 1998**  
7th Street Construction occurred and the overpass right of way was platted
- 2004**  
The CSAH 18/I-94 Interchange was approved. This approval strengthened the need for the Fallon Overpass to address future growth and reduce congestion on TH 25
- 2011**  
Concept Planning, Stakeholder meetings and TAC meetings occurred
- 2015**  
Concept alignment approved
- DECEMBER 2016**  
Church right of way acquisition
- 2017-2018**  
Preliminary Design, right of way acquisition, environmental and final design occurred
- APRIL 2018**  
Agency plan approval
- MAY 7, 2018**  
Bid Letting
- MAY 23, 2018**  
MnDOT clearance to begin construction
- JUNE 2018**  
Construction begins
- NOVEMBER 2018**  
Bridge opens to drivers and pedestrians
- JUNE 2019**  
Final project completion (landscaping)