



APWA MINNESOTA CHAPTER PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT OF THE YEAR NOMINATION FORM

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Submission Deadline: October 1, 2022

All nomination and supporting data are to be submitted as a PDF to Sarah at 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: _____
Email: _____

Project Design Firm: _____
Project Construction Administration Firm: _____
Project General Contractor: _____



Name of Person Making Nomination: _____
Phone Number: _____
Email: _____

Criteria for Nomination

- Project must be substantially completed by October 31, 2021 or October 31, 2022.
- 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.)

35@94: Downtown to Crosstown

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), Metro Transit, Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis jointly submit the [35@94: Downtown to Crosstown](#) project for consideration as the Public Works Project of the Year. The following write-up will demonstrate how this project meets, and exceeds, the criteria for consideration.

This project realizes the culmination of decades worth of planning, engagement, study, analysis, collaboration, partnership, design, construction and community building. It represents a true collaboration between the community and multiple governmental agencies to deliver a transportation project that fits within the urban context of the intersection of I-35W and Lake Street and that contributes to a vibrant, safe and healthy community. The project is the nexus of many forms of transportation to create a truly multimodal project that connects people along, across, and through the area by walking, rolling, biking, taking transit, or by driving. The project was closely coordinated with the [METRO Orange Line](#), a service connecting 121,000 residents to 198,000 job opportunities including 56,000 jobs outside of downtown Minneapolis. Benefits of the project include improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities and connections, enhanced transit facilities and advantages, improved access to the Lake Street Business District, improved safety and mobility for people and goods, and the repair of aging infrastructure.

Project must be substantially completed by October 31, 2021 or October 31, 2022

Planning for the project began in 1999 and had progressed to concept approval, but with an estimated cost of over \$500 million, substantial right of way and community impacts, and no accommodation for transit, the concept was shelved. The project was resurrected in 2007 with direction from elected officials to develop a *fiscally responsible plan* which was to include a high quality inside lane multi-modal bus rapid transit (BRT) station at Lake Street, a high quality connection to the Midtown Greenway and access to Lake Street. Many years of project planning and community engagement followed. Municipal Consent was granted in May of 2016 and the project moved into final design. Construction began in 2018 and was substantially complete by October 2021 with the Lake Street transit station opening to passengers in December of 2021.

Includes use of innovative construction management techniques and completion of the project on schedule

This project received approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for the use of a special experimental process to utilize Best Value selection. This included a requirement that the contractor provide responses to specific areas of concern that were important to the project and the community. This differs from Design-Bid-Build as the responses by the contractor as part of the best value process become contractual. The project is selected upon the best value provided and not purely low bid. The elements scored included minimum time of closure for multiple stages of construction, improved administration of workforce with a focus on developing and enhancing job opportunities for under-represented and under-served communities, Disenfranchised Business Enterprise (DBE) goals, and project quality.

Maintained excellent safety performance and safety program throughout construction

I-35W serves over 210,000 vehicles per day and experiences congestion in the AM and PM peak periods. Capacity during construction was reduced by 50% and local access to and from the corridor was limited.



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Impacts of the construction were experienced by those who travel I-35W including those commuting to and from their jobs, who live along or utilize the city streets that were impacted by traffic diverting from I-35W, and those that live or work directly along the project area. This was a primary concern during project development. A lot of planning was directed to the management of traffic, including provisions for emergency service, transit service, overall operations and safety. Weekly meetings were held throughout construction to review the traffic provisions and any need for changes. Overall, the traffic flow and safety performance during construction was exceptional.

Evidence of strong community relations during all project phases

[Community engagement](#) played a strong role in planning, designing and constructing this project. The engagement effort was designed to not only identify and solve complex issues related to planning, design and construction but to also communicate and celebrate the successes and benefits of the project. During the design phase this included regular meetings, over the course of several years, of a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) comprised of community representatives from the adjacent neighborhoods, business leaders and other stakeholders. The PAC helped to shape the many components of the project and their support for the project was formalized in a [letter to elected officials dated March 26, 2015](#). The project utilized many different means of engaging with the community from traditional open houses, door knocking, informal meetings with concerned residents, attending regular Neighborhood Organization meetings, radio shows, flyers, digital engagement, community conversations, [events at the bridges](#) in the project area, bus and bike tours and STEM opportunities with local youth and more. [Engagement Summaries](#)
<https://hdr.wistia.com/medias/3on2ep04de>

Topics of particular interest to the PAC and community stakeholders included the design of the [Lake Street transit station](#) and in particular the under-bridge area along Lake Street. I-35W carries over Lake Street on three separate bridges, one for the northbound lanes, one for the southbound lanes and one for the transit station. The transit station is designed as an in-line transit station along I-35W and includes 3 levels, the interstate level serving the METRO Orange Line and other express routes along I-35W, the Lake Street level serving local bus routes and the future METRO B Line, and the Midtown Greenway level ensuring connection to a high quality pedestrian and bicycle facility as well as future transit service in the Greenway. The PAC and community stakeholders were looking for an iconic transit station that fit within the context of the community, that would be accessible, safe and comfortable to use, that would make non-motorized and transit connections east, west, north and south and that would improve the under-bridge area that was previously dark, narrow and felt unsafe to walk through. The newly designed under-bridge area has a much-improved pedestrian realm including natural light, achieved by designing the bridges over Lake with separation between them as recommended by the PAC. [Public art](#) in the form of a wave pattern along the walls that support the bridges is a nod to the identity of the community as the “City of Lakes”.

The PAC was also particularly interested in the redesign of the two [pedestrian bridges](#) over I-35W. The existing bridges were narrow cages that felt very unsafe to travel across. These bridges were important elements to maintaining, and improving, connections across the interstate, an important consideration as the interstate is a barrier to neighborhood destinations such as parks and schools. The interstate also results from past decisions to construct the corridor through neighborhoods that were home to low-

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income and minority populations, further exacerbating social and economic barriers. The redesigned pedestrian bridges are wide, with enhanced railings, public art, pedestrian scale lighting and are fully accessible by walking, rolling or bicycling.

Consideration given to the environment, sustainable design techniques involved

Maintenance and preservation of the environment was a primary concern for the development and administration of the project. During [construction](#), MnDOT modified the specification for the base material so that the old pavement that was removed could be crushed on-site and reused, reducing the need to mine new materials on this and future projects. The contractor also located a concrete plant on-site thereby lessening the environmental impact of the project by reusing materials and by reducing trips made by construction vehicles on adjacent local roadways. Approximately 422,414 square yards of pavement were removed with this project; if the average pavement thickness was 10 inches, that equates to approximately 9,750 dump truck loads of material that mostly remained on site to be recycled and reused. Approximately 335,500 cubic yards of concrete pavement and structural concrete were poured on the project, equating to approximately 33,500 full cement truck loads. Additionally, the project will treat all stormwater discharge prior to distribution into protected waters of the State. It will also control the rate of run-off to address concerns with drainage tunnels that are currently overtaxed including the installation of a drainage storage facility to minimize the risk of flooding on I-35W.

Unusual accomplishments given adverse conditions

The project is located in south Minneapolis, is surrounded by ten neighborhoods and is home to several public service and community facilities and large employment centers. I-35W carries more than 210,000 vehicles per day, making it the busiest highway in Minnesota. This volume exceeded the capacity for the interstate and crash rates were found to be substantially higher than the statewide average. Working on such a massive project in such close proximity to people's residences and businesses was a huge task that required a very delicate balance to ensure the project was done as quickly as possible while minimizing and mitigating the impacts to people's lives. During some of the biggest traffic impacts, crews worked 24 hours a day. The contractor had special nighttime provisions that encouraged quieter work, such as traffic patterns that didn't require backing up.

The project area included a designated Historic District, both nationally and locally, called the [Healy Block](#). The district contains 14 houses designed and built by Theron Potter who has been nicknamed the "King of the Queen Ann style" in Minneapolis. Residents of the Healy Block, which is directly adjacent to the northbound lanes of I-35W, were particularly concerned about impacts to their homes both as a result of any redesign of the interstate and of construction activities. To facilitate the addition of an in-line transit station, just one block north of where the Healy Block is, the interstate needed to become wider. This was deemed unacceptable by the Healy Block stakeholders and they protested, using their voice on the PAC, by writing their elected officials and by raising large signs in their front yards that were visible from the interstate saying "Save our homes, Stop this project".

<https://www.facebook.com/Stop35W> The design team worked very hard to find a solution that would be acceptable to the Healy Block and was able to develop and implement a design alternative that shifted the interstate away from the Healy Block without negatively impacting properties on the west side of the corridor. The Healy Block ultimately supported the project, a major achievement by the project team. During construction, extra attention was paid to these historic homes by assessing pre-

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construction condition and monitoring the homes for any damage as a result of construction activities. Communication staff from the project were in frequent contact with these neighbors to address their concerns.

The project was under construction in 2020 when the global pandemic began and when the murder of George Floyd occurred followed by a period of civil unrest. The project intersected with Lake Street, which was a focal point of the civil unrest. The project saw some damage from the civil unrest; surrounding businesses saw significant damage. It was imperative that the project team had a communication strategy that acknowledged the multiple impacts these businesses were dealing with.

Provides future value to the public works profession and perception by the public

The project included a significant workforce program to recruit and employ people of color who lived near the project to work on the project. The program, carried out by the contractor, used events and promotions such as job fairs in the nearby community to attract and connect people with job openings on the project.

The project also included a STEAM component during construction. The project team gave presentations and tours to a wide array of groups from elementary school students at nearby Greene Central Elementary to civil engineering students at the University of Minnesota. In particular, the project team built a strong partnership with the Justice Page Middle School STEAM program providing students with tours, activities during STEAM nights, in class hands on activities, and presentations.

Additional considerations such as value engineering, innovative project financing, multi-agency coordination and participation

The 35@94: Downtown to Crosstown project was a collaborative effort between multiple governmental agencies and the community that was decades in the making. Hennepin County was the lead agency for planning and project development, in partnership with MnDOT, Metro Transit, FHWA, the Federal Transit Authority (FTA), the City of Minneapolis and the public. MnDOT took over the lead role for final design and construction of the project. The project consisted of the following:

- full reconstruction of I-35W between the I-94 Commons and approximately 42nd St S; and
- an in-line transit station at Lake Street; and
- a high quality connection between the transit station and the Midtown Greenway including public art elements; and
- a new exit ramp from NB I-35W to 28th Street providing direct access to the many medical facilities located in the Phillips neighborhood, and a new exit ramp from SB I-35W to Lake Street providing direct access to the Lake Street Business District; and
- the replacement of all bridges north of 32nd St S, including the TH65 bridges in the I-94 Commons area and the rehabilitation of the Portland Ave bridge over I-94; and
- the replacement of all noise walls in the I-94 Commons area and along I-35W to approximately 35th St S and the installation of an additional noise wall along the east side of I-35W between approximately Lake Street and the Midtown Greenway; and
- the completion of EZ-PASS, which also serves transit, into and out of downtown Minneapolis; and

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- auxiliary lanes, reconfiguration of the ramp from NB I-35W to WB I-94, and the reconfiguration of SB I-35W at the I-94 interchange to improve both mobility and safety in the corridor; and
- full replacement of the 24th St and 40th St pedestrian bridges including public art; and
- the re-decking of the 38th St S bridge with geometric improvements to widen sidewalks, improve pedestrian accessibility, add pedestrian scale lighting and replace the railing; and
- full reconstruction of Lake Street between Blaisdell Ave and 5th Ave S including enhanced streetscape; and
- local street improvements on 2nd Ave S, Stevens Ave S, 3rd Ave S, 4th Ave S and other short segments adjacent to the interstate including bicycle facilities on 26th and 28th Streets; and
- upgraded pedestrian facilities to be ADA compliant throughout the project area; and
- coordination with Metro Transit's Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project.

The project had a complex financing plan with multiple funding sources including demonstration funding, funding administered through FHWA, funding administered through FTA, funding allocated through the Regional Solicitation, local funding via bonded debt and special assessments, municipal and county state aid, federal funding and state bonding.

As previously stated, the concept development for this project was decades in the making. Early iterations of the project had cost estimates exceeding \$500M, substantial right of way and community impacts, and no accommodation for transit which was a critical element for the local agencies and traveling public. The resurrected project was initiated with elected officials calling for a *fiscally responsible plan*. The project team worked to develop a project that fit this mold and utilized a cost risk assessment and value engineering (CRAVE) exercise to conduct a thorough review and analysis of the project, apply principles and practices of value engineering, improve the value of the project through innovative measures aimed at improving the performance while reducing costs of the project, and identify high risk areas in delivering the project and perform a cost risk assessment on both the baseline design and the value-engineered recommended design.

The overall project cost, at the time of bidding, was estimated at \$303M and final costs came in at \$297M. Project change orders during construction totaled only \$4.8M, just 2% of the total project cost.

The project reconstructed aging infrastructure that was beyond its useful life and addressed the barriers that the interstate created. I-35W divides south Minneapolis, impacting communities of color, and the historic harms from its construction are still evident today. Additionally, when constructed, the interchange at Lake Street was a partial interchange that separated important diverse commercial hubs from the region.

There are approximately 38,800 residents and 27,700 jobs in the vicinity of I-35W and Lake Street. The project significantly improves pedestrian and bicycle crossings of I-35W and provides access to high quality transit service in an area of the city where many residents are transit reliant. The project also improves access to the redeveloping business district along Lake Street and to the medical facilities located in the adjacent neighborhoods.

