

Economic Impact Of Highway And Bridge: St. Croix River Crossing (Minnesota Hwy 36 And Wisconsin Hwy 64)



Client

Facts

Period 2004

Project Country

By Economic Development Research Group for Minnesota DOT, 2004

The St. Croix River Crossing spans the St. Croix River, connecting Minnesota and Wisconsin parts of the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The Minnesota Department of Transportation and associated agencies were investigating the feasibility of building a new, larger bridge across the St. Croix near Stillwater to accommodate ever-higher volumes of traffic. The proposed bridge raised many questions, some of which this report endeavored to answer.

While the 73-year old lift bridge located at downtown Stillwater (MN) was functionally obsolete (pictured left), it garnered wide attention because of its historic nature. Add to that a "wild and scenic river," an historic downtown district that attracts tourists, and a connector highway that serves regional shopping for residents on both sides of the river – and you get a complex situation with tradeoffs between many environmental, economic and transportation issues.

Since local economic impacts and regional economic development were important considerations, Minnesota DOT and Wisconsin DOT turned to EDR Group (under subcontract to SRF Consultants) to conduct an economic analysis study. The study by EDR Group examined impacts on tourism, shopping and business activity associated with the proposed traffic bypass of downtown. It also examined potential retail business relocation and loss associated with new interchanges and widening of the approach highway straddling Stillwater and Oak Park Heights, MN.

The report is of specific interest because of detailed use of a downtown visitor survey and its detailed analysis of how highway access design can change economic impacts. The new St. Croix bridge is projected to open by 2016.

Contact Persons