

**Important Updates:**

- The I-90 Bridge The June 6, 2011 Resolution of the LAPC and community action resulted in an order by the Federal Highway Administration for MnDOT to complete an analysis of Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation on the Dresbach Bridge. This work has been ongoing since August. We estimate we have over 2000 hours invested as a workgroup, logged over 3000 miles and had more than 100 meetings.

That analysis resulted in 3 main schemes and several variations which were shared, by MnDOT, in late September with their request that no one establish a preferred alternative until additional study could be completed. To date, in advance of the completion of the EAW (Environmental Assessment Worksheet), no stakeholders have been asked to offer opinion, the PAC has not been reconvened and the public has not been engaged.

**There has been no public involvement on the assessment of “need” and no request for the needs analysis that has been prepared by the workgroup.** None of the letters which contain substantive comments from the heads of Stakeholder Groups have been shared with the other agencies including the Fish and Wildlife Service or the Corps of Engineers. While the engineering alternatives were being developed we could have been engaging in discussion of need. We have now spent the money to have consultants design alternatives yet there has been no public vetting of preferred alternatives. Time has been squandered and neither the NEPA tests of Public Engagement nor the issues raised in the LAPC resolution (attached) have been satisfied.

**The topic of ‘need’ must be addressed. There has never been a discussion with MnDOT discussing the following material...nor any Public Vetting of MnDOT’s assessment of need.**

- It should be sufficient to establish need that the Transportation Plan approved by the LAPC and accepted by the FHWA includes the I-90 link between Dresbach and Highway 53/35 as a future bike pedestrian corridor.
- It should be sufficient to establish need that the MnDOT’s own analysis (material obtained by FOIA—Freedom of Information) in 2007, and again in 2008 and again in 2009 called this link vital and critical.
- It should be sufficient to establish need that user groups and stakeholders have offered substantive testimony on likely use rates and available methodologies.
- It should be sufficient to establish need that MnDOT’s own methodology on the MRT (Mississippi River Trail starting at Lake Itaska) says use depends on promotion and can not be predetermined.
- It should be sufficient to know that if we do not include accommodation in the bridge design we have precluded the connection that is in our LAPC plan for a time into the future that is longer than the period of time that we have had motor cars on roads! [The selected design has a 100 year design life and with rehab could last considerably longer than 100 years.]
- It should be sufficient to understand our opportunity to review the example from the Quad Cities I-74 (attached) which shows the very on deck solution that is the adopted preferred alternative by the work group. This example celebrates the 5<sup>th</sup> largest river, The Mississippi, and educates people on its environmental importance and its sensitivity to damage.
- It should be sufficient to recognize the tourism dollars, health benefits, connection to the fastest growing City in the State of Wisconsin (Holmen) that will be lost without this link.
- It should be sufficient to understand need by completing any of several recognized methodologies which we have available and scored.

**Where does this leave us?**

MnDOT is questioning why they should do anything on the Dresbach Bridge when the connection to a logical terminus on the Wisconsin side of the river does not now exist and the bridges over Round Lake and French Sough may not be reconstructed until 2030. This seems a long time yet it is only 14 years from the completion of the Dresbach Bridge and assumes there is not an earlier replacement of these bridges who’s insufficiencies would have closed the Interstate had predictive flood levels been reached last spring.

**This is difficult. It requires vision.** It requires our communities to seize the opportunity, not settle for a currently nonexistent link to the South that has little likelihood of completion prior to the 14 years that the Dresbach link might require.

**Surly we have learned that never again we will permit preliminary and final design to be presented to our communities at the same time. Surely we have learned that public engagement means just that.** Review the I-74 Website <http://www.iowadot.gov/I74corridor/Overview/quick.htm> and their process of public engagement that surly would have us in a different situation.

Political leaders are prepared to support our communities. Stakeholders are prepared to support the proper outcome. The workgroup is prepared to assist with satisfaction of the need, understanding the nuances of the rules and in organizing the support. On

November 16<sup>th</sup>, the LAPC board removed the Bridge from the TIP, one imagines that this was intended to temporarily interrupt-the-process and show huge displeasure.

**It is fortunate that we were successful in getting FHWA to require MnDOT to uphold the NEPA process and design the six alternatives; it is *unfortunate* that MnDOT has stopped short of sharing the concepts widely or seeking definitive response.** This requires the LAPC to take immediate action to voice their concerns about MnDOT's selection of a preferred alternative. The workgroup has gone on record favoring the on-the-deck solution. And the LAPC director voiced a similar preference. **Without a strong action by the LAPC demanding the EA not be published until there is a real discussion of the alternatives; and/or demanding a preferred on-the-deck alternative, we do not have what is required to move this issue forward.**

The MnDOT had more questions than answers in their presentation on November 16<sup>th</sup>. Many 'what if's', concerns and questions were raised. All have answers. For example we are confident the concerns of the FSW (Fish and Wildlife) can be answered. By narrowing the trail from 14 feet to 12 it can be constructed in the existing right of way. Wetlands can be mitigated. Each concern has an answer.

It is believed that MnDOT's reluctance for a proper design stems from having a final design and not wanting to redesign the bridge because of potential cost and delay—a situation of their own creation. There is no question if the Visioning Process, now touted by MnDOT, had been in place this bridge, and eventually this entire I-90 corridor would be home to a trail and a multimodal connection serving people not just automobiles would be achieved.

The question we are asked most is "Why does MnDOT not want to provide an adequate connection between 5 trail systems and 2 States?" One wonders. The better question is "shall their blind spot control our local destiny?"

The questions that define our vision remain: A barrier or a bridge? Are we constructing a connection for cars or a connection for people and communities? It is sad if ours is the last bridge to be built over the Mississippi River without real bicycle and pedestrian accommodation.

- The Houston County trails: the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), a federal agency, has been acquiring wetland reserve easements along the Root River. Work is being done to provide information to property owners to keep the railroad bed out of the easement because the easements prohibit trails forever more. The committees are working strategic plans and all work group meeting will be held December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1:00 at the Hokah Fire Department.
- City Beautification: Priorities and plans are being determined for upcoming grants to support pedestrian scaping, plaza development, discussion of plantings that include the ash trees and how to address possible future issues, and Main street entrance.
- Park and Recreation Plan Update: kick off meeting was held November 3<sup>rd</sup> with Hoisington Koegler for the update to the City's Comprehensive Park and Recreation plan. The scope and process for the update to the park plan was reviewed, information was presented regarding societal changes and active living components. SWOT analysis was conducted of the La Crescent Park system.

#### ➤ **Youth Physical Activity**

- Lifelong Fitness Coalition: A partnership has been developed with Run to the Edge committee to support Lifelong Fitness in the schools; the purpose is to create a sustainable funding source to support the purchase of lifelong fitness resources for the school, Boys and Girls Club and the community. Ben Barton is seeking interested staff and parents to be on the steering committee to design the mission and structure of the Coalition so that funding is used as it was intended. Contact Sue for further information and to get involved.
- Fit for Life Challenge: Staff and committee members are being gathered to begin developing goals and activities to achieve an all school focus on fitness and the importance that being active plays in learning, academic achievement and health.
- Peaceful Playground: Nicole Garbers, Jane Schwartzhoff and a handful of volunteers have successfully completed all paintings for activities on the larger playground. The kids are utilizing and enjoying the activities. The smaller playground will be completed early next spring as weather permits.

#### ➤ **Safe Routes to School.**

- Weekly Walking School Bus Program: in collaboration with the Leadership High school class weekly walking school buses continue to be held every Tuesday from four area locations: Kistler Park, Old Hickory Park and Abnet Field, and Methodist Parking Lot. There will be one HS student at each location for a six-week rotation. Each "leader" has a drawstring bag with safety tips, a map of the designated route to take, attendance/participation sheet, poncho, punch cards, and a hole punch. Elementary students will receive a "punch" each week they participate with opportunities to receive shoe tokens and other prizes after 5 punches. Participation has been steady and over 160 trips have been logged with the Walking School Buses. We are looking into news ways to continue promoting the program throughout the school year.
- Walk to school Week/Coulee Region Golden Shoe Challenge: Crucifixion School won the Golden Shoe award for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row with 92% participation! The Coulee Region Childhood Obesity Coalition presented the award on Wed, October 19<sup>th</sup>. La Crescent Elementary School had over 49% participation. Classroom winners in both schools were awarded with a Smoothie Party made on the Blender Bike!

- Brain Booster Program – work continues in partnership with La Crosse County Health Department and their Safe Routes to School personnel. The goals of the program are to increase activity time with in the classroom targeting the teacher’s awareness, provide information, resources, and accountability. The mission is physical activity saves time by improving concentration, energy and mood all of which increase productivity and learning in the classroom. A tentative budget has been set and materials are finished to present to Julie B and Gail T soon. We would like to pilot the program starting in the beginning of second semester in January.
- Fire Up Your Feet: An interactive website where families can log their minutes of activity was presented to the Elementary School. Difficulties in communication caused misunderstanding about the program and it was not used.
- Ready Bus: Has been contacted seeking more information about the bussing system in La Crescent, data, and also possible collaboration during Walk to School days to help include students that ride the bus. Waiting for a response.

➤ **Marketing Tools**

- AL messages in Schools: have been placed in opportunistic places that individuals will be most likely to see; restrooms, drinking fountains, stairwells, etc. These messages are periodically replaced to accommodate change of seasons and educational breaks.
- AL Photographs: Crucifixion, public elementary and the middle school all have professional pictures depicting Active Living principles hung in their school hallways. We have received numerous compliments and positive feedback indicating that the students, parents and staff are noticing them and are becoming engaged.
- Bi-monthly HCN Ads: Active Living ads continue in the Houston County News paper. If you have any comments or hear feedback from community regarding these messages please forward on to staff.
- Bulletin Boards at Elementary School: The 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers at La Crescent Elementary school are allowing Active Living to use a bulletin board in the hallway. Jane and Abby decorated the board with lots of fun pictures and information. It will be used to promote Active Living principles and promote activities and events.

➤ **Active Living Business:**

- Contract: 2012 Contract from BCBS should be arriving shortly; all 2012 goals, work accomplished and estimated 2012 budget has been submitted for review and approval. Also, employee contracts will be shared with the HCP board and submitted for approval; all information has stayed the same as in 2011 for hours and wages.
- Budget: the final 2011 dollars are winding down for 2011. Attached you will find most recent update of expenditures.
- Board Meeting Times: After much discussion, based on the core group of people that have been in attendance at the Active Living meetings a new conducive time for all to meet was determined to be on the second Thursday of the month, 8:30 am, at La Crescent City Hall (back conference room). The meetings will be approximately 90 minutes in length, or shorter if agenda and work load permit. Future dates of meeting times are as follows:  
 Thursday, December, 8<sup>th</sup>  
 Thursday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
 Thursday, February 9<sup>th</sup>  
 Thursday, March 8<sup>th</sup>  
 Thursday, April 12<sup>th</sup>  
 Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup>  
 Thursday, June 14<sup>th</sup>  
 Thursday, July 12<sup>th</sup>  
 Thursday, August 9<sup>th</sup>  
 Thursday, Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>  
 Thursday, October 11<sup>th</sup>  
 Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>

**Next Active Living LaCrescent meeting: December 8<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 am at LaCrescent City Hall**



I-74/Mississippi River



I-74/Mississippi River



## RESOLUTION 5 – 2011

**WHEREAS**, the La Crosse Area Planning Committee (LAPC) approved the *2035 Coulee Region Bicycle Plan* on May 19, 2010, a component of the La Crosse and La Crescent Area *Metropolitan Transportation Plan*; and

**WHEREAS**, said bicycle plan has specific recommendations for bicycle facilities throughout the metropolitan planning area, including the following for the I-90 Dresbach Bridge replacement project known as the “Dresbach Crossing”:

“Because facilities in this corridor have a 50- to 100-year design life, design the capacity for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations into all projects within the I-90 corridor between the Minnesota MRT and USH 53/STH 35 (Exit 3), including the Dresbach Bridge project and its interchange,”

;and

**WHEREAS**, since the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) is planning significant maintenance and upgrade projects in the I-90 Corridor between the Dresbach Bridge and Exit 3, action by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) to prepare for future bicycle and pedestrian accommodations and facilities would give the WisDOT more rationale for providing similar accommodations and facilities in Wisconsin; and

**WHEREAS**, the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) and the Great River Road National Scenic Byway are both 10-State designations and exist on both sides of the Mississippi River in Wisconsin and Minnesota within the planning area, and a bicycle facility within the I-90 Corridor would connect these national facilities, as well as improve a connection to the Wisconsin State Trail system and other federally funded bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Wisconsin; and

**WHEREAS**, Mn/DOT after having agreed to include engineering for future accommodation for bicycle and pedestrian use announced, in a letter dated January 21, 2011, without any public meetings or process, that they had decided to NOT include engineering for future bike/pedestrian accommodation sighting, among other refutable matters, ‘cost’ (when it was well within MnDOTs standard of cost for consideration) and “that it was not part of the transportation plan” (which is erroneous), and

**WHEREAS**, both Minnesota and Wisconsin have adopted state laws regarding Complete Streets and since 1991 the U.S. Department of Transportation has clearly articulated that the transportation system be multimodal in nature; and

**WHEREAS**, the project has a design life of 75 years and decisions being made in 2011 will affect multiple generations and decisions being made for the Dresbach Crossing project are already affecting the decision process for the remainder of the I-90 Corridor in Wisconsin to Exit 3; and

**WHEREAS**, the LAPC considers that the public outreach requirements inadequate as part of the Environmental Assessment process for the Dresbach Crossing has been marked by insufficient public meetings and notification as demonstrated by the fact that no public meeting has been held since November 2008 and adequate public participation being the hallmark of the NEPA process and paramount for a project of this magnitude; and

**WHEREAS**, MnDOT has chosen to pursue *final bridge design* prior to publicly sharing the *preliminary design* in a fast tract process referred to as ‘risky’ (by MnDOT staff) at the 4-11-2011 Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting and without first completing the EA (environmental analysis) and subjecting its findings to public scrutiny and input; and

**WHEREAS**, all federally funded projects including the Dresbach Crossing project must be included in the LAPC Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the LAPC hereby formally requests that the Minnesota Department of Transportation adhere to the *2035 Coulee Region Bicycle Plan* by designing the capacity for future bicycle and pedestrian accommodations into the final design for the replacement Dresbach Bridge.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the LAPC requests that the FHWA review and certify that all aspects of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Environmental Assessment process have been adhered to in the Dresbach Crossing project, and that Mn/DOT and WisDOT adhere to the *2035 Coulee Region Bicycle Plan* for this project and for all future I-90 Corridor Projects as outlined in the *2035 Coulee Region Bicycle Plan*.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Executive Director communicate with area legislators, local and county officials in Minnesota and Wisconsin, the Governors of Minnesota and Wisconsin, the Minnesota Transportation Commissioner, the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, the FHWA national and regional staff in Minnesota and Wisconsin, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Minnesota DOT District 6 officials, and the Minnesota and Wisconsin State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinators that the LAPC expects that Mn/DOT include the design for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in the Dresbach Crossing project and that MnDOT involve improve its public participation process and involve the public early and often and insure that public participation as required by NEPA for the Dresbach Crossing project is fully adhered to and that the LAPC transportation plans be followed as approved.

#### LA CROSSE AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

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Chairperson

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Tom Faella, Executive Director

Unanimously Adopted: *June 6, 2011*