

FINDINGS OF FACT and CONCLUSIONS

East Side Corridor (29th Ave Corridor)

State Project No. 074-070-009

**Prepared by:
Steele County Highway Department**



January 22, 2026

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FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS

East Side Corridor (29th Ave Corridor)

Located in:

**City of Owatonna, Owatonna and Clinton Falls Townships, Steele County,
Minnesota**

1.0 STATEMENT OF ISSUE

The proposed Project includes the construction of a new north-south, two-lane county highway between SE 18th St in Owatonna Township to Kenyon Rd in Clinton Falls Township with a bridge over Maple Creek. The Project will realign Claremont Rd to the north to create more space between the new 29th Ave/Claremont Rd intersection and the Canadian Pacific railroad crossing.

Additional improvements include American with Disabilities Act (ADA) elements, intersection control, and stormwater treatment. Trails for pedestrians and bicyclists will be constructed along the new highway between SE 18th St and 26th St NE and portions of SE 18th St and 26th St NE, along with a connection to a trail on Rose St. Portions of 26th St NE, Claremont Rd, and SE 18th St will be reconstructed.

The Project will also reconstruct CSAH 34 (26th St NE) from the new 29th Ave to Kenyon Rd/NE 24th Ave in the city of Owatonna. Reconstruction will include building a trail, making the roadway three lanes (one travel lane in each direction and a center left-turn lane), and making intersection improvements.

Preparation of an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) was required for this Project under Minnesota Rules 4410.4300, Subpart 22. A (Highway Projects): "For construction of a road on a new location over one mile in length that will function as a collector roadway, the DOT or local governmental unit is the RGU."

The Steele County Highway Department's (Steele County) decision in this matter shall be either a negative or a positive declaration of the need for an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Steele County must order an EIS for the Project if it determines the Project has the potential for significant environmental effects.

Based upon the information in the record, which comprises the EAW for the proposed Project, related studies referenced in the EAW, written comments received, responses to the comments, and other supporting documents included in this Findings of Fact and Conclusions (FOFC) document, Steele County makes the following FOFC.

2.0 ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Steele County is the Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) and project proposer for the East Side Corridor (29th Ave Corridor) Project. A State EAW has been prepared for this Project following Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410. The EAW was developed to assess the impacts of the Project and other circumstances to determine if an EIS is necessary.
- 2.2 The EAW was filed with the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) and circulated for review and comments to the required EAW distribution list. A “Notice of Availability” was published in the EQB Monitor on November 18 and November 25, 2025. The Owatonna People’s Press published a press release on November 17, 2025, and a legal notice was also published on November 18, 2025. **Appendix A** contains a copy of each Notice of Availability published in the EQB, an affidavit of publication for the legal notice, and the press release. The EAW and legal notice were also posted on the Project web page (www.eastsidecorridor.com). These notices provided a brief description of the Project and information on where copies of the EAW were available and invited the public to provide comments that would be used in determining the need for an EIS on the Project.
- 2.3 The EAW was made available for public review from November 18th to December 31, 2025 at the Steele County Public Works Facility (3000 Hoffman Dr NW, Owatonna, MN 55060), Owatonna City Hall (540 W Hills Cir, Owatonna, MN 55060), and the Owatonna Public Library (105 N Elm Ave, Owatonna, MN 55060). The document was also posted for review on the Project website listed in Section 2.2. Comments were received through December 31, 2025.
- 2.4 Comment letters or emails were received from three agencies and 67 individuals and one neighborhood group during the EAW comment period. All comments received during the EAW comment period were considered in determining the potential for significant environmental impacts. Comments received during the comment period and responses to substantive comments are provided in **Appendix B**.

3.0 FINDINGS OF FACT

3.1 Project Description

3.1.1 Existing Conditions:

The proposed north-south oriented 29th Ave/East Side Corridor is located in Steele County Minnesota near the eastern most edge of the developed part of the city of Owatonna, and in what is now Owatonna and Clinton Falls Townships.

There is no existing roadway where the approximately 3.4-mile-long 29th Ave/East Side Corridor would extend north to south between CSAH 8/Kenyon Ave and SE 18th St.

East-west roadways in the project area that would intersect with the new roadway are listed in **Table 1**, along with their functional classification, jurisdiction, and average annual daily traffic.

Table 1 – Intersecting Roadways

Roadway Name	Functional Class	Owner	Daily Traffic Volumes*
CSAH 8 (Kenyon Rd)	Major Collector	Steele County	1,760 (2024)
CSAH 34 (NE 26th St) east of CSAH 8	Local	Steele County	189 (2024)
CSAH 35 (Dane Rd)	Minor Collector	Steele County	1,085 (2024)
CSAH 19 (Rose St)	Major Collector	Steele County	1,832 (2024)
School St	Local	Owatonna Township	Not available
CR 180	Minor Collector	Steele County	1,801 (2021)
CR 171 (Havana Rd)	Local	Steele County	265 (2020)
SE 18th St	Local	Owatonna Township	86 (2021)

*Source: MnDOT Traffic Mapping Application

The project area is primarily rural in nature, with a predominance of agricultural fields and rural residences. There are some suburban residential developments within the project area. These developments are located within the city of Owatonna. At the southern terminus of the project, the new Owatonna High School (2023) is located just west of the project near the intersection of SE 18th St and CSAH 48/Bixby Rd. This suburban development is anticipated to continue as the City of Owatonna is growing east into Owatonna and Clinton Falls Townships. The transportation network in the project area includes several east-west roadways (**Table 1**), but no continuous north-south roadways.

The project would include changes to CSAH 34/26th St NE, CR 180/Claremont Rd, and SE 18th St. CSAH 34/26th St NE is characterized by agricultural land uses and emerging suburban, low-density residences. The suburban area is in the western portion of the roadway in the city of Owatonna. SE 18th St is entirely rural in nature with agricultural land uses in the project area, though development, including the Owatonna High School, is directly adjacent to the western limit, across from the CSAH 48/Bixby Rd intersection. CR 180/Claremont Rd is characterized by rural and agricultural land uses.

The only existing trail within the project area is located along the south side of CSAH 34/NE 26th St west of Kenyon Rd.

3.1.2 Proposed Project:

The proposed Project is in Steele County in southeastern Minnesota. This area is located near the eastern edge of the developed part of Owatonna and in Owatonna and Clinton Falls Townships. More details on the Project are provided in the following paragraphs. The right of way (ROW) for the new roadway would be approximately 100 - 150 feet wide.

The proposed Project would include these key elements:

1. **Construct 29th Avenue/East Side Corridor.** Construct a new north-south county highway from SE 18th St to County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 8/Kenyon Rd – an approximately 3.4-mile-long roadway that would tie into existing CSAH 8/Kenyon Rd. The new highway would have two travel lanes for vehicles - one in each direction. A new bridge, approximately 350 feet long, would be constructed over Maple Creek and its associated floodway.

The roadway would include a combination of rural, urban and hybrid (urban west side, rural east side) sections. Rural sections have ditches to move stormwater runoff, and urban sections use curb and gutter and a piped drainage system to collect and move stormwater runoff. The hybrid section uses a combination of rural and urban drainage elements. The hybrid section would be from SE 18th St to School St; the rural section would be from 26th St NE to the connection on Kenyon Rd; and the urban section would go from School St to 26th St NE.

All the sections would include 12-foot driving lanes and 6-foot paved shoulders. The urban sections would have boulevards. The design speed of the new roadway would be 40 miles per hour, which is considered low speed. A 10-foot-wide multiuse trail would be constructed along the west side of the new highway between SE 18th St and 26th St NE with a connection constructed to a trail along Rose St.

2. **Remove Portion of CSAH 8/Kenyon Rd.** Remove a piece of CSAH 8/Kenyon Rd northeast of 26th St NE, making the new north-south roadway the primary travel direction. The piece of the roadway to be removed serves one farmstead. A new connection to this property would be provided via 26th St NE. The old section of Kenyon Road would be terminated with a cul de sac.
3. **Reconstruct CSAH 34/26th St NE.** Construct CSAH 34/26th St NE from CSAH 8/Kenyon Rd to the east, where it would connect to the realigned Kenyon Rd that would become a part of the new 29th Ave (East Side Corridor).

Reconstruct 26th St NE between the new connection and the west to Kenyon Rd/NE 24th Ave. This roadway would primarily be reconstructed as a three-lane roadway (one travel lane in each direction with a center turn lane) with a segment from Deer Trail Ln to 24th Ave as a two-lane urban roadway. There would be a 10-foot-wide multi-use trail on the south side of the road.

- 4. Realign and Reconstruct County Road (CR) 180/Claremont Rd.** Claremont Rd is parallel to the Canadian Pacific/Kansas City Railroad (CPKC). Claremont Rd would be realigned approximately 650 feet north to provide appropriate spacing between the 29th Ave/Claremont Rd intersection and the new railroad crossing location.
- 5. Remove CR 171/Havana Rd SE.** Remove a portion of CR 171/Havana Rd SE between the proposed new 29th Ave/East Side Corridor and CR 180/Claremont Rd. Removing this segment of roadway also eliminates an existing at-grade crossing with the CPKC. The segment of roadway removed is approximately 0.29-mile long.
- 6. Reconstruct SE 18th St.** Reconstruct SE 18th St from 700 feet east of CSAH 48 (Bixby St) to the new 29th Ave/East Side Corridor connection. The road would be converted from a gravel roadway to a paved roadway. The road would have two travel lanes, one in each direction. The travel lanes would be 12 feet wide, and the roadway would have paved shoulders and a boulevard. A 10-foot-wide multiuse trail would be built along the north side of the roadway.
- 7. Construct Multiuse Trails.** The Project would build several 10-foot-wide multiuse trails. As noted previously, a trail would be constructed along the west side of the new 29th Ave/East Side Corridor for its entire length. Additional 10-foot-wide trails would be built on the reconstructed pieces of CSAH 34/26th St NE and SE 18th St.
- 8. Intersection Treatments.** Intersection control (stop signs, roundabouts, left- and right-turn lanes) would be considered at east-west roadways that would intersect with the new roadway (29th Ave/East Side Corridor), including SE 18th St, CR 180 /Claremont Rd, CSAH 19/Rose St, CSAH 35/Dane Rd, and NE 26th St. It is anticipated the Project would include roundabouts at:
 - 29th Ave/East Side Corridor and Rose St
 - 29th Ave/East Side Corridor and CSAH 35/Dane Rd

- 29th Ave/East Side Corridor and extension of 26th St NE
- 26th St NE and CSAH 8/Kenyon Rd

Side-street stops with dedicated left- and right-turn lanes where needed on the new 29th Ave/East Side Corridor and/or connecting roadways.

Lighting will be provided at intersections and will consist of backlit LEDs to mimic natural light.

9. Drainage Culverts. In addition to the bridge over Maple Creek, the Project would likely require the extension of an existing drainage culvert at SE 18th St. The proposed 29th Ave/East Side Corridor and connecting roadways (SE 18th St, CR 180/Claremont Rd, and CSAH 34/26th St NE) cross relatively small local drainage ditches and swales, mostly unnamed and without a judicial status. The preliminary drainage analysis identified the need for the Project to construct nine culverts ranging in size from 15 to 42 inches. Steele County will continue to refine its drainage modeling in final design - final sizes and locations of potential culverts may be slightly modified during this process. A floodplain risk assessment, which is required when culverts are 48 inches in size or larger, would not be needed for the culverts.

10. Drainage Ponds and Ditches. The Project would incorporate ponding and ditches for roadway drainage. Ditches would be constructed along both sides of the new roadway between CSAH 34/26th St NE to the connection with CSAH8/Kenyon Rd and on the east side of the new roadway from SE 18th St to School St.

Construction methods for the Project would consist of excavation and major grading for the construction/reconstruction of the roadway, bridge, trail, and associated drainage. The Project would not include significant demolition, removal, or remodeling of existing structures.

Construction activities are anticipated to start in 2027 and continue through 2028.

3.2 Additional Information Regarding Items Discussed in the EAW Since It Was Published

Since the EAW was published, the following information pertaining to the Project has been added or updated. Comment letters referenced below are included in **Appendix B.**

3.2.1 Project Description

The following clarifications have been made to the project description provided in **Section 3.1.2** compared to the project description in the EAW:

- The design speed of the new roadway would be 40 miles per hour, which is considered low speed.
- Lighting will be provided at roundabout intersections and will consist of backlit LEDs to mimic natural light and minimize impacts to adjacent properties.
- Construction activities are anticipated to start in 2027.

3.2.2 Permits and Approvals Required

In Question 9 of the published EAW, Table 10 – Permits and Approvals Required (Federal) lists “Endangered Species Act Section 7 Determination” and “Section 106 (Historic/Archaeological) Determination” as required approvals. Because the project no longer has federal funding, these approvals no longer apply and have been removed from the updated list of potential permits and approvals in **Section 3.3.4**. See correspondence from MnDOT in **Appendix B**.

The Public Waters Work Permit has also been added to the updated list of potential permits and approvals in **Section 3.3.4**, as discussed in **Section 3.2.3**.

3.2.3 Fish, Wildlife, Plant Communities, and Sensitive Ecological Resources (Rare Features)

In a formal comment letter, the DNR noted that the project will impact a railroad right of way that was designated an MBS Site of Moderate Biodiversity Significance. This MBS Site contains a known prairie native plant community and occurrences of state-listed threatened plants however the extent of these plant populations is unknown. The EAW did not discuss the need for a habitat assessment to determine the potential for project impacts. A habitat assessment or botanical survey is needed where the proposed project will impact the MBS Site along the Canadian Pacific/Kansas City Railroad. Areas within previously disturbed road right of way are exempt from the requirement to avoid take. Steele County will hire a qualified surveyor to complete the required assessment and coordinate with DNR regarding project commitments based on the results.

The DNR also recommended that seed mixes not include Smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) and Sweet clover (*Melilotus spp.*). DNR staff also provided a list of standard erosion control and invasive species prevention best practices. Steele County will follow these best practices to the extent practicable. The DNR’s formal comment letter is included in **Appendix B**.

In Question 9 of the published EAW, Table 10 – Permits and Approvals Required (Federal) lists “Endangered Species Act Section 7 Determination” as a required approval. As documented in the EAW, MnDOT Office of Environmental Stewardship (OES) reviewed the proposed Project and provided a list of federally threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, and designated and proposed critical habitats that overlap with the Project area. At the time of the review the Project had federal funding, which is no longer the case (see correspondence from MnDOT in **Appendix B**). The Section 7 approval no longer applies and has been removed from the updated list of potential permits and approvals in **Section 3.3.4**.

Question 14 in the EAW noted that a Public Waters Work Permit would not be needed because no Project work is anticipated to occur within a public water, however work within Maple Creek due to bridge design changes would require a Public Waters Work permit. While no bridge design changes have been proposed since the EAW was published, Steele County will need to coordinate with DNR staff as design progresses to confirm whether the permit is needed. The Public Waters Work Permit has been added to the updated list of potential permits and approvals in **Section 3.3.4**.

3.2.4 Historic Properties

In Question 9 of the published EAW, Table 10 – Permits and Approvals Required (Federal) lists “Section 106 (Historic/Archaeological) Determination” as a required approval. MnDOT’s Cultural Resources Unit (CRU) reviewed the project under Section 106, because the Project had federal funding at the time of the review, which is no longer the case (see correspondence from MnDOT CRU in **Appendix B**). The Section 106 determination has been removed from the updated list of potential permits and approvals in **Section 3.3.4**.

3.2.5 Visual

Question 16 in the EAW noted that potential mitigation measures for visual impacts would be determined following public input on the EAW. After considering public input, costs, impacts on utilities and drainage, Steele County is working to incorporate the following mitigation measures into the Project:

- Berming with trees – similar to what is currently in place along the south side of 26th St NE just east of Deer Trail Ln NE. Berms and trees would be in the public right of way.
- Landscaping with boulevard trees – provide a section of landscaping, including trees and shrubs to be located in the boulevard behind any trails. Landscaping would be in the public right of way.

Specific areas for these potential treatments will be determined as design progresses.

3.2.6 Noise

As noted in Question 19 of the EAW, the Project is exempt from state noise standards. Steele County and the city of Owatonna, however, identified potential measures that would be considered to mitigate effects of noise as part of the Project. These options were outlined in the EAW. After considering public input, costs, impacts on utilities and drainage, Steele County is working to incorporate the following mitigation measures into the Project, some of which will also serve as visual impact mitigation measures:

- Berming with trees – similar to what is currently in place along the south side of 26th St NE just east of Deer Trail Ln NE. Berms and trees would be in the public right of way.
- The design speed of the new roadway would be 40 miles per hour, which is considered low speed.
- The proposed roundabouts (see **Section 3.1.2**) will reduce vehicle speeds and resulting traffic noise.
- An urban design was used to minimize the roadway footprint in developed areas and to slow travel speeds.
- A portion of the urban section roadway between School St and Dane Rd where the roadway passes near an existing neighborhood (and the ROW narrows to approximately 100 feet) has been shifted east (away from the neighborhood) compared to previous design iterations, while remaining within the ROW.

Specific areas for berms, trees, and other landscaping treatments will be determined as design progresses.

3.3 Findings Regarding Criteria for Determining the Potential for Significant Environmental Effects

Minnesota Rules 4410.1700 provides that an EIS shall be ordered for Projects that have the potential for significant environmental effects. In deciding whether a Project has the potential for significant environmental effects, the following four factors described in Minnesota Rules 4410.1700, Subp.7 shall be considered:

- A. type, extent, and reversibility of environmental effects;
- B. cumulative potential effects. The RGU shall consider the following factors: whether the cumulative potential effect is significant; whether the contribution from the Project is significant when viewed in connection with other contributions to the cumulative potential effect; the degree to which the

Project complies with approved mitigation measures specifically designed to address the cumulative potential effect; and the efforts of the proposer to minimize the contributions from the Project;

- C. the extent to which the environmental effects are subject to mitigation by ongoing public regulatory authority. The RGU may rely only on mitigation measures that are specific and that can be reasonably expected to effectively mitigate the identified environmental impacts of the Project; and
- D. the extent to which environmental effects can be anticipated and controlled as a result of other available environmental studies undertaken by public agencies or the Project proposer, including other EISs.

Steele County's key findings with respect to each of these criteria are set forth below:

3.3.1 Type, Extent, and Reversibility of Impacts

Steele County finds that the analysis completed during the EAW process is adequate to determine whether the Project has the potential for significant environmental effects. The EAW describes the type and extent of impacts anticipated to result from the proposed Project. In addition to the information in the EAW, the additional information described in Section 3.2 of this FOFC document as well as the public/agency comments received during the public comment period (**Appendix B**) were taken into account in considering the type, extent and reversibility of Project impacts. Following are the key findings regarding potential environmental impacts of the proposed Project and the design features included to avoid, minimize, and mitigate these impacts:

3.3.1.1 Land use:

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. Land uses are primarily agricultural/undeveloped and low-density residential. Low density residential uses are concentrated in the northwest portion of the proposed Project along CSAH 34/26th St NE, CSAH 8/Kenyon Rd, and near the center of the project along the west side of the proposed 29th Ave/East Side Corridor. Most of the remaining Project area is agricultural or undeveloped. The Owatonna High School is located on SE 18th St, just southwest of the south end of the Project limits at the intersection of SE 18th St and CSAH 48/Bixby Rd. The high school opened in 2023 and replaced the previous high school located in downtown Owatonna.

The city's future land use map shows that much of the land near the proposed Project would develop over time, with much of the land use being low- or

medium-density residential with some spots of mixed use and public/institutional. The zoning for the city of Owatonna is consistent with existing land uses. Zoning for Steele County is consistent with existing land uses in the area (agricultural and interim agricultural). The Project aligns with current zoning regulations and future land use plans for the city of Owatonna and Steele County, which both anticipate continued development around the Project.

The Project would impact approximately 64.2 acres of prime or unique farmland. The city and Owatonna Township have an orderly annexation agreement that covers the Project area and supports the transition of land within the township to the city. Both parties understand the land is currently in agricultural production but is anticipated to be developed to support the economy of the region over the next 25 years. Owatonna Township has passed a resolution indicating support of the Project because it protects the long-term agricultural interests of the township and focuses development in areas agreed to through the orderly annexation agreement.

There are no existing parks immediately adjacent to the proposed Project that would be impacted. There are multiple existing trail connections within a half mile of the proposed Project. The proposed multiuse trails for the Project would establish a future trail loop, connecting and filling gaps within Owatonna's existing trail network. The Project would not impact any existing parks and trails, and it would provide connections to them in some locations as noted in **Section 3.1.2.**

The Project would require acquisition of property as well as temporary construction easements. Most of the right of way (property to be acquired) needed would be in areas for the new roadway and ponding. Right of way acquisition would follow state and federal requirements. Temporary easements are only needed for use during construction but are not required after construction.

3.3.1.2 Geology, Soils, and Topography/Land Forms:

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. There are no known geologic hazards, sinkholes, or other conditions that would require mitigation. No karst features are in the vicinity of the Project. Topographic mapping indicates that elevation within the Project area ranges between 1,190 feet above mean sea level in the northern portion of the area to 1,260 feet above mean sea level in the southern portion of the area. The lower elevations area is associated with the wetlands and Maple Creek within the Project area.

Constructing the Project – both the new roadway, realigning existing roadways, and making intersection improvements would require major grading to

accommodate the new roadway, bridge, turn lanes, multiuse trails, traffic control changes, and stormwater facilities. Construction of improvements would involve more than one acre of soil disturbance. Construction activities would disturb existing ground cover, and some of this work would take place in wetlands, floodplain, and floodway. All necessary permits would be acquired, including coverage under the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency's (MPCA) NPDES General Permit for Construction Stormwater (MNR100001).

As required by the NPDES permit, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be developed. The SWPPP requires temporary and permanent erosion and sediment control Best Management Practices (BMPs) to be implemented by the contractor during all phase of construction. Erosion and sediment control measures recommended by the DNR, NPDES, and other applicable jurisdictions would be used. Ditches, dikes, siltation fences, bale checks, sedimentation basins, and temporary seed could be utilized as temporary erosion control measures. BMPs contained in MnDOT's Standard Specifications, details, and special provisions would be used. Erosion control measures are also discussed in **Section 3.3.1.3**. The SWPPP would also identify sensitive resources within the Project area, as applicable, to minimize disturbance.

Erosion control measures, including requiring erosion control plans and designating a site inspector and enforcer, would be in place and maintained throughout the entire construction process. Removal of erosion control measures would occur only after all disturbed areas have been stabilized.

Because the Project would disturb over 50 acres and Maple Creek is impaired, the NPDES permit would need to be submitted to the MPCA for review and approval 30 days in advance of construction.

3.3.1.3 Water resources:

Surface Waters

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. There is one public water - Maple Creek (PWI No. M-048-026-006) within the Project area. Maple Creek is listed as an impaired water for aquatic recreational activities within the Project area. Maple Creek is impacted by fecal coliform. A Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan for fecal coliform was approved in 2006. If bridge design changes and work would be needed within Maple Creek, a Public Waters Work permit would have to be obtained for the Project.

Unnamed Stream/Izaak Walton Creek (PWI No. M-048-026-006-001) is approximately 0.1 mile west of the far southern portion of the Project along SE

18th St. County Ditch 1 West (CD1w) is in the Project area, flowing east to west north of Havana Road. The 29th Ave/East Side Corridor would cross one of the two short upstream branches of CD1w.

Groundwater

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. No springs or seeps were identified in the Project area during the field wetland delineation conducted in 2024. According to the Minnesota DNR's Karst Feature Inventory web map, no springs are present in the Project area. There is a Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Wellhead Protection Area (WHPA) and Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA) within portions of the Project area. The DWSMA is categorized as having a low vulnerability for outside contamination by the MDH.

According to the Minnesota Department of Health's Well Index, there are nine wells within or near the Project. All wells within the proposed county right of way would be capped. If a well is impacted but the balance of the site (and its associated uses) remains intact, the well would be mitigated by replacement in a new location. Known active wells near construction limits would be labeled on plan sheets as sensitive resources to prevent impacts due to potential changes during construction. Well abandonment would follow state and local guidelines. If unidentified wells are encountered, the MPCA and MDH would be contacted to determine an appropriate course of action, which may include sealing, relocating, or preserving by a licensed well contractor according to Minnesota Rules Chapter 4725.

Stormwater Management

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. The Project would result in approximately 20 acres of net new impervious surface and 9.1 acres of reconstructed impervious. The Project would involve more than one acre of soil disturbance. Construction activities would disturb the existing ground cover, and some of this work would take place in the vicinity of wetlands. All necessary permits would be acquired, including an NPDES permit. As part of the NPDES permit, a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be developed for the Project. The SWPPP would require temporary and permanent erosion control Best Management Practices (BMPs) to be implemented by the contractor during all phases of construction. Erosion control measures used by the DNR, NPDES, and other applicable jurisdictions would be used on this Project.

Erosion and sedimentation of all exposed soils within the Project area would be minimized by implementing BMPs during construction. Implementation of BMPs greatly reduces the amount of construction-related sedimentation and helps to

control erosion and runoff. Ditches, dikes, siltation fences, bale checks, sedimentation basins, and temporary seed could be utilized as temporary erosion control measures. BMPs contained in MnDOT's Standard Specifications, details, and special provisions would be used. As described under Reference 3 in the Standard Specifications, DNR recommends using 'bio-netting' or 'natural netting' types of erosion control products (category 3N or 4N) and excluding the use of plastic mesh netting.

Temporary and permanent erosion control plans would be identified in the final site grading and construction plans as required by NPDES permitting for construction sites, in accordance with the MPCA.

Because Maple Creek is an impaired water for aquatic recreation due to fecal coliform and because the Project would disturb over 50 acres, the NPDES permit would need to be submitted for review and approval at least 30 days in advance of construction.

The city of Owatonna is part of the MS4 program (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System). The Project would be required to meet the MS4 permit requirements for water quality volume. The required water quality volume for areas of the Project within the city boundary is the greater of one (1) inch of runoff from the new impervious surface or one-half (0.5) inch of runoff from the sum of the new fully reconstructed impervious surfaces created by the Project.

As a new roadway facility, the net new impervious water quality volume controls. The MS4 permit stipulates that volume reduction practices (e.g. infiltration or other) to retain the water quality volume on-site must be considered first when designing the permanent stormwater treatment system. The Project would make all reasonable attempts to reduce the runoff volume in accordance with the MS4 permit. Given the nature of the soils in the Project area (which have a low infiltration rate), alternative methods such as filtration and detention ponds were incorporated.

Permanent stormwater BMPs would include using a combination of the proposed ditches with ditch checks where the roadways would be rural sections, filtration basins and wet ponds. It would not be feasible to construct infiltration basins due to the high groundwater and poorly draining soils in the Project area.

A storm sewer system would be designed along the urban (proposed curb and gutter areas) portions of the Project that would convey the 10-year peak flow rates.

The Project would possibly extend an existing culvert at SE 18th St near the western Project limits. In addition, the roadway realignment and reconstruction

of CR 180/Claremont, SE 18th St, and 26th St NE along with the construction of 29th Ave/East Side Corridor would cross over relatively small local drainage ditches and swales. A preliminary analysis indicated nine culverts ranging in size from 15 to 42 inches would be needed.

Water Appropriation

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. Water appropriation (includes dewatering) may be required to complete culvert and bridge work near wetlands, waterways, and areas with shallow water tables, including the floodplain and floodway. Dewatering BMPs would be identified in the SWPPP, and a Project dewatering plan would be included with the construction documents. Any locations that are determined to require dewatering by the contractor would follow the dewatering plan.

If temporary dewatering during construction exceeds 10,000 gallons per day or one-million gallons per year, a DNR water appropriation permit would be obtained by the contractor for these temporary activities. Dewatering discharge would be treated to be free of suspended sediment before entering surface waters using methods consistent with the permit. Discharge rates would be controlled to prevent scour/erosion at the point of discharge. No water appropriation is expected during operation of the roadway.

Wetlands and Wet Ditches

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. The Project would impact approximately 2.99 acres of wetland and 0.4 acres of wet ditch through placement of fill to support roadway improvements. Wetland impacts that are unavoidable have been minimized to the extent practicable without compromising safety.

As wetland impacts are expected, Steele County proposes to provide wetland replacement under the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) at a ratio of 2:1. Impacted wetlands would be replaced near the watershed if possible, to help retain wetland services in the area consistent with WCA guidance; however, a bank has not been identified at this time.

Because the Project is currently expected to impact 2.99 acres of wetlands, a COE Section 404 Permit may be required. Steele County will coordinate an Approved Jurisdictional Determination with the COE to determine the wetlands which the COE will regulate. If a Section 404 permit is required, it is anticipated the project would require either a Section 404 Transportation Regional General Permit or Individual Permit. If a Section 404 Permit is needed, an MPCA Section 401 Certification is also required. If a USACE Section 404 Individual Permit is

needed, the MPCA would need to review the Project for Section 401 Certification independently from the COE permit review process.

Floodplain

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. There is FEMA Zone A and AE floodplain designated within the Project area. The proposed 29th Ave/East Side Corridor would cross Maple Creek. At the crossing, Maple Creek has a wide regulatory floodplain (over 700 feet) and a wide (325 feet) floodway. The proposed roadway crossing coincides with the cross-section “AY” on the FEMA data, whose 1 percent annual chance flood water surface elevation (WSE) is given as 1187.2, NAVD88.

The Project parallels the floodplain associated with Unnamed Stream/Izaak Walton Creek. The FIRM panel 27147C0154C (effective December 2, 2011) shows that the regulatory floodplain of Izaak Walton Creek at this location is classified as Special Flooding Hazard Area Zone A. Zone A has no determined Base Flood Elevation (BFE) and no defined floodway. A WSE rise of no more than 0.5 feet is permissible within Zone A.

FEMA and Minnesota Rule 6115.0231, Subp.2.B.(1) state that for new crossings, no approach fill can encroach upon the regulatory floodway. Therefore, the proposed bridge over Maple Creek would span over the entire width of the defined floodway. The low chord of the bridge must be designed above the 100-year WSE of 1187.2 to meet MnDOT requirements. The proposed bridge design would also seek to achieve no (zero) rise in the WSE of 1187.2 under proposed conditions and also no drop in the WSE. Excavation within the floodplain would be needed. No grading would take place within the channel (i.e., below the bankfull elevation) of Maple Creek. Based on preliminary discussions with DNR it was determined that if no rise can be demonstrated, under final design and during construction phase alike, no Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) would be required. Furthermore, if the proposed design can also demonstrate no drop in the WSE, a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) would also not be required.

In addition to the proposed 29th Ave/East Side Corridor, the Project would include reconstruction of other local roads. The planned reconstruction of SE 18th St could involve minimal encroachment into the floodplain of Izaak Walton Creek. There are no significant anticipated floodplain impacts as discussed in the Floodplain Assessment included with the EAW.

3.3.1.4 Contamination/Hazardous Materials/Wastes:

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. Steele County reviewed MPCA and MDA databases to check for known or suspected contaminated sites

in the Project area. The databases searched included: feedlots, stormwater areas, and a closed old agricultural chemical incident (pesticide spill/fire in a dairy barn). Although no areas of concern were noted in either database near the railway, there are some risks regarding contamination from freight and materials traveling through the Project area via this mode. The sites identified in the databases have low risk for contamination. If contaminated soils are encountered during construction, the response would be handled consistent with MPCA requirements.

Excess materials generated because of construction (e.g., concrete, granular, bituminous, and topsoil) may be exported from the Project. It is anticipated that the existing pavement would be disposed of offsite. Storm sewer removals would be disposed. All earthwork would stay onsite within the county right of way. Excess materials and debris from this Project would be disposed of in accordance with MnDOT Standard Specifications for Construction, 2104.3C, Minnesota Rule 7035.2825.

Project activities would generate wastes and debris typical of construction operations. All solid waste generated by construction of the proposed Project would be disposed of properly in a permitted, licensed solid waste facility. Project demolition of concrete, asphalt, gravel, and other potentially recyclable construction materials would be directed to the appropriate storage, crushing, or renovation facility for recycling.

Following construction, the Project would not generate solid waste.

Products, materials, or wastes typical of construction sites would be present during the construction of this Project (e.g., gasoline, diesel fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, portable toilets, etc.). In compliance with the NPDES Construction Stormwater permit, products that have the potential to leach pollutants would be stored under cover, hazardous materials would be stored in sealed containers and would have secondary containment to prevent spills. Solid wastes would be collected and disposed of properly, and vehicle and equipment washing would not be allowed on site.

Temporary storage tanks for petroleum products may be in the Project limits for refueling construction equipment during roadway construction. The potential for substantial fuel or other chemical spills during and after road construction activities is considered low. A spill kit would be kept near any storage tanks. Appropriate measures would be taken during construction to avoid spills that could contaminate groundwater or surface water in the Project area. If a leak or spill occurs during construction, appropriate action to remedy the situation

would be taken immediately in accordance with MPCA guidelines and regulations.

Any contaminated spills or leaks that occur during construction would be the responsibility of the contractor, who would notify the Duty Officer and work with the MPCA to contain and remediate contaminated soil/materials.

3.3.1.5 Fish, wildlife, plant communities, and sensitive ecological resources (rare features):

This topic has been updated to reflect comments from the DNR and to note that the project no longer has federal funding. Within the Project area, there are multiple surface water features, such as Maple Creek, wet ditches, and wetlands. Unnamed Stream/Izaak Walton Creek, while not within the Project area, is located approximately 0.1-mile west of the southernmost portion of the Project limits. Both creeks are DNR public waters. Please refer to the EAW for a list of measures to limit impacts to public waters.

The project will impact a railroad right of way that was designated an MBS Site of Moderate Biodiversity Significance. This MBS Site contains a known prairie native plant community and occurrences of state-listed threatened plants however the extent of these plant populations is unknown. Steele County will hire a qualified surveyor to complete the required assessment and coordinate with DNR regarding project commitments based on the results. Please refer to the EAW for a list of additional measures to reduce impacts to the Site of Moderate Biodiversity Significance.

Multiple rare native plants have been documented near the Project area. Three state threatened species and two state species of concern were identified. All these species are found in mesic or wet native prairie. Threatened species include:

- Tuberous Indian plantain (*Arnoglossum plantagineum*)
- Sullivant's milkweed (*Asclepias sullivantii*)
- Edible valerian (*Valerian edulis var. ciliata*)

The species of concern include:

- Small white lady's-slipper (*Cypripedium candidum*)
- Rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*)

Steele County will coordinate with the DNR on measures to reduce potential impacts to these species based on the findings of the survey discussed above. Steele County will follow the DNR's standard erosion control and invasive species

prevention best practices to the extent practicable (see DNR correspondence in **Appendix B**).

MnDOT Office of Environmental Stewardship (OES) reviewed the proposed Project and provided a list of federally threatened, endangered, proposed and candidate species, and designated and proposed critical habitats that overlap with the Project area. At the time of the review the Project had federal funding, which is no longer the case (see correspondence from MnDOT in **Appendix B**). However, the findings of the review are still presented below.

The Project is within the range of four species listed as federally threatened, proposed, or candidate species. These include:

- Whooping crane (*Grus americana*) – non-essential experimental population
- Monarch butterfly (*Danaus Plexippus*) – proposed threatened
- Western regal fritillary (*Argynnis idalia accidentalis*) – proposed threatened
- Minnesota dwarf trout lily (*Erythronium propullans*) – threatened

MnDOT OES provided a “no effect” determination for the Minnesota dwarf trout lily (*Erythronium propullans*). No in-water work is proposed for this Project and no direct or indirect impacts to suitable habitat are anticipated. “No jeopardy” determinations were provided for the remaining species.

No northern long-eared bat hibernacula and/or roost trees are documented within the Project Action Area; however, the Project would require removing approximately 3.3 acres of trees for construction of the new 29th Ave/East Side Corridor and other corridor realignments. The EAW included a list of avoidance and minimization measures provided by MnDOT OES. Because the Project no longer has federal funding, Steele County will follow the DNR’s tree removal recommendations to minimize impacts to northern long-eared bats. Tree removal will be avoided from June 1 through August 15.

If an eagle nest is found ahead of, or during construction, all work within 0.06 miles (300 feet) of the nest would be stopped and the MnDOT protected species team will be contacted.

It is possible that soil disturbance and vegetation clearance associated with the Project could create conditions that enable the spread of invasive species. No noxious weeds have been previously mapped within the limits of the Project. The Project would follow all state requirements for the control and spread of state listed noxious weeds and/or invasive weeds if encountered during construction. Disturbed areas would be reestablished using appropriate native and

stabilization seed mixes, contributing to improved climate change resilience and ecosystem health.

3.3.1.6 Historic properties:

This topic has been updated to note that the project no longer has federal funding. The Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the project was reviewed by MnDOT's Cultural Resources Unit (CRU) for the presence of historically significant archaeological and/or architectural resources. This review was initiated under Section 106, because the Project had federal funding at the time of the review, which is no longer the case (see correspondence from MnDOT CRU in **Appendix B**).

MnDOT's CRU commissioned cultural resources surveys (archaeology and architecture-history). The archaeological field survey was completed on parcels where survey access was granted. No archaeological resources were identified. Based on the lack of findings and the fact that the pending parcels are of similar landforms and further away from waterbodies (lessens probability of findings), it was the archaeologist's professional opinion that the remaining areas have low potential for archaeology and the review is complete.

There were two railroads identified as culturally significant. There was also a culvert, which contributes to the railroad, but on its own, is not significant. Based on the archaeological and cultural reviews conducted by CRU and consultation with the tribes and SHPO, CRU issued a findings letter dated April 1, 2025, concluding that there would be **no adverse effect** by the Project.

SHPO responded to MnDOT's additional letter, requesting some additional investigations. MnDOT worked with a consultant team to review the additional sites and provide documentation on their review. The additional information from the investigations was provided to SHPO along with an updated findings letter dated July 3, 2025. The conclusion was the same – **no adverse effect** from the Project. SHPO reviewed MnDOT's updated findings letter and provided a response letter (July 29, 2025) indicating it agrees with MnDOT's conclusion.

Information from MnDOT's CRU has been shared with the Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA) and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council (MIAC) for review and comment regarding state rules. However, comments have not been received from either of these agencies. Follow-up requests regarding the status of both agency reviews have been made, most recently on January 13, 2026. Steele County will continue to coordinate with OSA and MIAC to meet its obligations under state statute.

If cultural materials are encountered during construction, unanticipated discoveries protocols would be followed. If archaeological artifacts, features, or human remains are uncovered during construction, demolition, or earthmoving activities, ground disturbance at the location would cease and the state archaeologist would be contacted.

3.3.1.7 Visual:

This topic has been updated to identify mitigation measures. The Project area is not designated a scenic byway, area, or easement. The Project would not produce vapor plumes or glare from intense lights. There would be lighting associated with the Project at intersections but would be consistent with MnDOT illumination guidelines.

Much of the surrounding land is in agricultural use where the new roadway is proposed, with a nearby neighborhood and more scattered farmsteads or rural residential homes. There are no substantial vistas, as the area is mostly flat with some rolling topography and trees, especially closer to Maple Creek. Where the Project would reconstruct existing roadways, there is suburban development or agricultural uses, which do not provide scenic views or vistas that would be substantially altered. To minimize visual effects where there is a new roadway, the proposed Project would be built in alignment with existing topography, that is, the roadway would not be elevated.

Recognizing that at least part of the Project would be a new addition to the overall landscape, Steele County prepared a visual impact assessment (VIA) for the proposed Project based on guidance provided on MnDOT's Transportation Project Development Process (TPDP) and in consultation with MnDOT staff. Per the TPDP, the VIA used the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (2015). Based upon compatibility with local comprehensive plans, annexation agreements, and proposed future land uses, an abbreviated VIA was completed.

The analysis indicated areas where populations are currently located near the proposed Project as well as vegetation around those areas, highlighting key locations where vegetation does and does not provide screening for properties/groups of properties. The analysis identified there would be both short- and long-term visual impacts associated with the Project, with short-term impacts occurring during construction when equipment would be present and there could be temporary dust impacting air quality. Short-term effects would go away following construction. Long-term impacts are the permanent alteration of transportation through the Project area and the loss of agricultural land use.

Mitigation for visual impacts was identified as limited, as there are limited adverse effects to the viewshed for drivers and for most surrounding land uses. After considering public input, costs, impacts on utilities and drainage, Steele County is working to incorporate the following mitigation measures into the Project:

- Berming with trees – similar to what is currently in place along the south side of 26th St NE just east of Deer Trail Ln NE. Berms and trees would be in the public right of way.
- Landscaping with boulevard trees – provide a section of landscaping, including trees and shrubs to be located in the boulevard behind any trails. Landscaping would be in the public right of way.

Specific areas for these potential treatments will be determined as design progresses.

3.3.1.8 Air:

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. The Project would not include any stationary sources of air emissions. The purpose of this Project would be to improve Steele County's transportation network by addressing poor north-south connectivity, reducing congestion in downtown Owatonna, and supporting non-motorized travel. By redirecting traffic from residential streets and downtown, the Project would alleviate congestion and provide a more direct route for local and regional traffic. The Project is anticipated to generate minimal air quality impacts for Clean Air Act criteria pollutants and does not present specific MSAT concerns. Future traffic volumes would be redistributed, easing pressure on currently congested routes like Mineral Springs Road, while supporting growth and development in adopted local and regional plans. EPA vehicle regulations would ensure substantial reductions in MSAT emissions over time, further minimizing environmental impact.

Because future volumes on the proposed roadway are anticipated to be approximately 3,500 in 20 years, the proposed two-lane roadway will not be congested (assuming a roadway capacity of 10,000) or have air quality concerns related to congestion.

During construction, there would be noise, dust, and air emissions from construction equipment and activities. No unique concerns have been identified. Standard noise, dust, and air quality control measures would be followed, in addition to adherence to applicable local ordinances. This could include the use of alternative fuels for construction equipment when feasible, minimizing equipment idling time and maintaining properly tuned equipment. As noted

previously, erosion and sedimentation would be controlled in accordance with a Project SWPPP and compliance with MPCA's NPDES General Permit for Construction Stormwater.

Construction contractors would be required to control dust and other airborne particles in accordance with MnDOT specifications. This could include measures such as applying water to exposed soils and limiting the extent and duration of exposed soil conditions. Contractors would be required to conform to all applicable federal, state, and local requirements.

3.3.1.9 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions/Carbon Footprint:

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. An analysis of operational and construction emissions (measured in carbon dioxide equivalents or "CO₂e") was conducted for the No Build and preferred alternative using the Minnesota Infrastructure Carbon Estimator (MICE) tool.

The proposed Project would build a new roadway – a two-lane highway with multiuse trails and intersection traffic control improvements (including ADA elements). The Project would improve travel time for motorists currently using other routes through downtown Owatonna, and would reduce vehicle idling in those areas. It would also have the potential to reduce trip lengths, decreasing vehicle miles of travel (VMT). However, because the Project would construct a new roadway GHG emissions compared to the No Build are higher. The Build Alternative is expected to generate 2,405 metric tons CO₂e per year compared to 821 for the No Build. It should be noted the No Build condition does not consider longer trips that would be required as growth continues to occur without additional transportation infrastructure.

Construction GHG emissions would result from production and transportation of construction materials and from fuel used in construction equipment. For the Build Alternative (2026), total construction GHG emissions over the entire construction period are estimated at 4,228 CO₂e (total metric tons). The No Build Alternative (2046), which considers the maintenance of the existing roadway system, is estimated at 491 CO₂e (total metric tons).

Constructing the trail has the potential to reduce emissions by facilitating non-motorized travel. Reuse of roadway materials or other measures may be considered to reduce emissions associated with construction. No additional Project-specific mitigation measures have been identified at this time.

While not calculated, the proposed Project would use roundabout traffic control at key intersections along the corridor rather than traffic signal or side-street stop conditions. The roundabouts not only provide safety benefits for both

motorized and non-motorized (those walking, biking, and rolling) but provide mobility and emissions benefits by reducing idling time and providing more even traffic flow.

3.3.1.10 Noise:

Construction Noise

This topic has not changed since the published EAW. Activities associated with construction of the proposed Project would result in increased noise levels relative to existing conditions for the duration of the construction period. These impacts would primarily be associated with construction equipment. Anticipated construction activities include earthwork, concrete and bituminous paving, pile driving, storm sewer, concrete curb and gutter, signing, striping, lighting, and turf establishment.

Construction activities would be temporary in duration. Steele County would require that construction equipment be properly muffled and in proper working order. Advanced notice would be provided to affected communities of any planned, abnormally loud construction activities. Steele County would communicate with local governments and property owners when night work close to residential areas is unavoidable. Steele County anticipates all major work on the Project to happen during the day, and construction would be limited to daytime hours as much as possible. The use of pile drivers, jackhammers, and pavement sawing equipment would be prohibited during nighttime hours. Steele County would coordinate with the city of Owatonna and Clinton Falls and Owatonna Townships as the construction staging/maintenance of traffic plans for the Project are developed.

Traffic Noise

This topic has been updated to include information on traffic noise mitigation measures. The proposed Project would construct a roadway on a new alignment along with reconstructing existing roadways. As such, there are locations in the Project that currently do not experience roadway noise and other locations that do. Existing sound levels vary within the Project, with some areas having limited traffic noise, to other areas having regularly occurring traffic noise. Existing sound levels within the Project vary between 26.3 and 64.2 dBA.

Sensitive receptors in the area include residential developments, farmsteads, and rural homes. Much of the land along the new roadway portion of the Project is largely undeveloped or in agricultural production or has a limited number of nearby farmsteads or small residential clusters. There is a portion of the new roadway alignment that goes near a larger existing residential development

between Rose St and Briarwood Pl NE. There is also a smaller neighborhood adjacent to the existing eastern limits of 26th St NE that is near an existing roadway, but it is currently not a county highway.

As noted in the EAW, the Project is exempt from state noise standards. Steele County and the city of Owatonna, however, identified potential measures that would be considered to mitigate effects of noise as part of the Project. These options were outlined in the EAW. After considering public input, costs, impacts on utilities and drainage, Steele County is working to incorporate the following mitigation measures into the Project:

- Berming with trees – similar to what is currently in place along the south side of 26th St NE just east of Deer Trail Ln NE. Berms and trees would be in the public right of way.
- The design speed of the new roadway would be 40 miles per hour, which is considered low speed.
- The proposed roundabouts (see **Section 3.1.2**) will reduce vehicle speeds and resulting traffic noise.
- An urban design was used to minimize the roadway footprint in developed areas and to slow travel speeds.
- A portion of the urban section roadway between School St and Dane Rd where the roadway passes near an existing neighborhood (and the ROW narrows to approximately 100 feet) has been shifted east (away from the neighborhood) compared to previous design iterations, while remaining within the ROW.

Specific areas for berms, trees, and other landscaping treatments will be determined as design progresses.

3.3.1.11 Transportation:

Parking

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. The Project would not remove or create additional parking spaces.

Traffic

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. The proposed Project would not generate new trips in the same way as a new development because the roadway improvements proposed are not a destination or end point like a business or residential neighborhood. However, the Project introduces a new roadway to the area and provides connections to existing east-west routes, which will bring new travel and traffic to the Project area.

It is anticipated that approximately 10 percent of the trips would occur during the morning and afternoon peak periods. Based on intersection counts at CSAH 48/Bixby Rd and SE 18th St, just west of the proposed Project, the morning peak period is from 7:15 to 8:15 am and the afternoon peak period is from 4:15 to 5:15 pm.

All existing volumes on streets that would intersect with the proposed 29th Ave/East Side Corridor are currently between 100 and 2,400 vehicles a day. These volumes are substantially below the capacity of the existing routes. SE 18th St, which is currently a township gravel roadway, and has less capacity than a paved roadway but would be reconstructed as a paved roadway with shoulders as part of the Project.

Future traffic volumes on the new 29th Ave/East Side Corridor would range from 2,500 to 3,500 vehicles a day. Traffic volumes on connecting roadways would range from 1,600 to 3,700 vehicles a day. Information used to develop future traffic volumes came from the area identified in the orderly annexation agreement with the city using development intensities currently present for existing land use and proposed land uses. Additional information from the ITE trip manual was used to generate specific trips for the future elementary school along the corridor.

All the roadways would be below the planning-level thresholds for congestion (volume to capacity [V/C] ratio of 1.0 or greater) or approaching congestion (V/C ratio of 0.85 to 1.00) in the future. No future congestion would be anticipated on the roadway segments.

The Project would include new intersection control along 29th Ave/East Side Corridor with dedicated left- and right-turn lanes where warranted to promote safety and traffic mobility. Roundabouts at key intersections would promote traffic movement through the intersection and provide pedestrians and bicyclists with a safe crossing.

Proposed access on 29th Ave/East Side Corridor is generally consistent with Steele County access guidelines for collector roadways. A few of the public streets do not quite provide a quarter of a mile spacing from one another. The spacing between Havana Rd, CR 180/Claremont, and School St is less than a quarter of a mile. The spacing between Rose St and Fox Hollow Ln is also less than a quarter of a mile. To mitigate for some of the spacing, Fox Hollow Ln and Havana Rd would be limited to right-in/out intersections.

The proposed Project would provide sufficient capacity to accommodate the planned growth in the area without overbuilding transportation facilities. Access

management, the proposed traffic control at key intersections, and multimodal facilities would enhance safety and mobility for travelers in the area.

Steele County would coordinate with the city of Owatonna and Owatonna and Clinton Falls Townships and area businesses and property owners to maintain direct access to parcels during construction. Detours would be minimized to the extent practicable. Additional information would be provided to the public as staging plans become available. Steele County would coordinate with emergency responders to ensure access is provided to properties during construction should responders be called to one of the sites. As design plans progress and construction staging plans are developed, Steele County would meet with property owners/residents/businesses within and near to Project area to identify their needs and concerns with construction activities.

Alternative Transportation Modes

This topic has not changed from the published EAW. Currently no fixed transit routes are provided in the Project area. Steele County is part of Southern Minnesota Area Rural Transit (SMART) which operates three dial-a-ride buses within the county. Buses are 18-passenger mini-buses and are fully accessible.

There are currently no multiuse trail facilities in much of the Project area. Just outside the Project area are some trail connections as noted in the EAW. The Project would provide non-motorized users with more options and improve walkability and bikeability through construction of the proposed trails on 29th Ave/East Side Corridor and on connecting roadways.

3.3.2 Summary Finding with Respect to These Criteria

Steele County finds that the Project, as proposed, does not have the potential for significant environmental effects based on the type, extent, and reversibility of impacts to the resources evaluated in the EAW and in the Findings summary above. Project impacts would be mitigated as described in the EAW, the Findings above, and the construction plans and specifications.

3.3.3 Cumulative Potential Effects of Related or Reasonably Foreseeable Future Projects

As discussed in Item 21 of the EAW, the cumulative potential effects were considered, and the proposed Project has minimal potential for cumulative impacts to the resources directly or indirectly affected by the Project. Given the laws, rules, and regulations in place as well as local regulatory requirements and comprehensive planning and zoning laws, substantive adverse cumulative impacts to resources are not anticipated.

3.3.4 Extent to Which the Environmental Effects are Subject to Mitigation by Ongoing Public Regulatory Authority

- 3.3.4.1 The mitigation of environmental impacts would be designed and implemented in coordination with regulatory agencies (including the coordination and approvals described in **Section 3.3.1**) and would be subject to the plan approval and permitting processes. Permits and approvals that have been obtained or may be required prior to Project construction include those listed in **Tables 2 - 5**. Project commitments would be included in the construction plans and specifications.
- 3.3.4.2 The approvals and permits listed in **Tables 2 – 5** include general and specific requirements for mitigation of environmental effects of the Project. Therefore, Steele County finds that the environmental effects of the Project are subject to mitigation by ongoing regulatory authority.

Table 2 – Agency Approvals and Permits – Federal

Unit of Government	Type of Application	Status
US Army Corps of Engineers	Section 404 Permit	To be requested

Table 3 – Agency Approvals and Permits – State

Unit of Government	Type of Application	Status
Minnesota DNR	Dewatering Permit	To be requested
Minnesota DNR	Public Waters Work Permit	To be requested (if needed)
Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) – State Aid	Final Construction Plan Review	To be requested
MnDOT Bridge Office – State Aid	Preliminary and Final Bridge Review	In progress
Minnesota Indian Affairs Council	Archaeological Review	In progress
Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA)	Archaeological Review	In progress
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination Permit Construction Stormwater Permit	To be requested
MPCA	Section 401 Certification	To be requested

Table 4 – Agency Approvals and Permits – Local

Unit of Government	Type of Application	Status
Steele County	Environmental Assessment Worksheet	Complete
Steele County	Issue Record of Decision on Need for Environmental Impact Statement	Complete
Steele County Soil and Water Conservation District	Wetland Conservation Act Public Road Project Notification and Replacement Plan	To be requested
City of Owatonna	Municipal Consent	To be requested
City of Owatonna	MS4 Permit	To be requested

Table 5 – Approvals and Permits – Private

Private	Type of Application	Status
Canadian Pacific/Kansas City Railroad (CPKC)	Railroad Temporary Occupancy - Work in Right of Way	In progress
CPKC	New Railroad Crossing Agreement – Including Preliminary Engineering and Memorandum of Understanding	In progress

3.3.5 Extent to Which Environmental Effects can be Anticipated and Controlled as a Result of Other Environmental Studies

- 3.3.5.1 Steele County has extensive experience in roadway construction. Many highway projects have been designed and constructed throughout the county. The Steele County Highway Department and construction staff are familiar with the Project area.
- 3.3.5.2 No problems are anticipated which Steele County staff have not encountered and successfully solved many times on similar projects in or near the Project area. Steele County finds that the environmental effects of the Project can be anticipated and controlled as a result of the assessment of potential issues during the environmental review process and Steele County's experience in addressing similar issues on previous projects.

4.0 CONCLUSION

1. The Steele County Highway Department has jurisdiction in determining the need for an environmental impact statement on this Project.
2. All requirements for environmental review of the proposed Project have been met.
3. The Environmental Assessment Worksheet and the permit development processes to date related to the Project have generated information which is adequate to determine whether the Project has the potential for significant environmental effects.
4. Areas where potential environmental effects have been identified will be addressed during the final design of the Project. Mitigation will be provided where impacts are expected to result from Project construction, operation, or maintenance. Mitigative measures will be incorporated into Project design and have been or will be coordinated with state and federal agencies during the permit processes.
5. Based on the criteria in Minnesota Rules part 4410.1700, subp. 7, the Project does not have the potential for significant environmental effects.
6. An Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the Owatonna East Side/29th Ave Corridor Project.
7. Any findings that might properly be termed conclusions and any conclusions that might properly be called findings are hereby adopted as such.

Based on the Findings of Fact and Conclusions contained herein and on the entire record:

The Steele County Highway Department hereby determines that the Owatonna East Side/29th Ave Corridor Project will not result in significant environmental impacts, and that the Project does not require the preparation of an environmental impact statement.

For Steele County Highway Department

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to be "Ronald Gaines" written in a cursive, stylized script.

Ronald Gaines
Steele County Public Works Director