

Owatonna East Side Corridor

Environmental Assessment Worksheet

Prepared for

**City of Owatonna, Minnesota
and
Steele County, Minnesota**

March 8, 1999

Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW)

NOTE TO REVIEWERS

Comments must be submitted to the RGU (see item 3) during the 30-day comment period following notice of the EAW in the EQB Monitor. (Contact the RGU or the EQB to learn when the comment period ends). Comments should address the accuracy and completeness of the information, potential impacts that may warrant further investigation, and the need for an EIS. If the EAW has been prepared for the scoping of an EIS (see item 4), comments should address the accuracy and completeness of the information and suggest issues for investigation in the EIS.

1. Project Title	<u>Owatonna East Side Corridor</u>	3. RGU	<u>Steele County</u>
2. Proposer	<u>City of Owatonna/Steele County</u>	Contact Person	<u>Michael Caron</u>
Contact Person	<u>David Strand</u>	and Title	<u>Steele County Planning Director</u>
Address	<u>540 West Hills Circle</u>	Address	<u>630 Florence Ave, P.O. Box 890</u>
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4. Reason for EAW Preparation

- EIS Scoping Mandatory Citizen Petition RGU Discretion Proposer Volunteered

If EAW or EIS is mandatory, give EQB rule category number(s) 4410.4300, subp. 22 A

5. Project Location

1/4 1/4 1, 2, 12, 13, 24 Section 107N Township 20W Range

County Steele City/Twp Owatonna

Attach copies of each of the following to the EAW:

- a county map showing the general location of the project; Exhibit 1
- copy(ies) of USGS 7.5 minute, 1:24,000 scale map (photocopy is OK) indicating the project boundaries;
- a site plan showing all significant project and natural features.

6. Description - Give a complete description of the proposed project and ancillary facilities (attach additional sheets as necessary). Emphasize construction and operation methods and features that will cause physical manipulation of the environment or produce wastes. Indicate the timing and duration of construction activities.

The proposed project is an east segment of a roadway "belt-line" around the City of Owatonna between 26th Street N.E. (CSAH 34) to the north and U.S. Trunk Highway 14 to the south. The north segment beltline is CSAH 34 and the south segment beltline is T.H. 14. This east side corridor is linear in a north-south direction for approximately 3.75 miles. The proposed east side corridor will combine urban and rural design sections within a right-of-way up to 150 feet. Access will be restricted to existing east-west routes including County Roads 8, 35, 19, 80 and 71. Bridging will be required for crossing Maple Creek. Railroads will be intersected at-grade. There were four alternatives considered for this east side corridor. At the northern termini of each alternative, the roadway would need to extend to the west to connect with CSAH 8 and CSAH 34 and all alternatives cross Maple Creek and the DM&E Railroad.

The City of Owatonna and Steele County have resolved that the alternative addressed in this worksheet best balances anticipated impacts with the existing and projected needs of the community. The following described corridor shall be the basis for continued study and environmental review:

The exact timing of the project is not yet known. The project would not begin prior to 2000 and could possibly be constructed in phases or segments of one to two miles.

Provide a 50 or fewer word abstract for use in EQB Monitor notice:

The project is a 3.75 mile arterial roadway being the east segment of a "beltline" around the City of Owatonna. This east side corridor is linear in a north-south direction and intersects existing east-west arterials. The purpose of the corridor is to accommodate traffic from existing and anticipated future development on the northeast side of Owatonna.

7. Project Magnitude Data

Total Project Area (acres) _____ or Length (miles) 3.75

Number of Residential Units

Unattached N/A Attached N/A

Commercial/Industrial/Institutional/ Building Area (gross floor space)

Total N/A square feet;

Indicate area of specific uses:

Office N/A Manufacturing N/A

Retail N/A Other Industrial N/A

Warehouse N/A Institutional N/A

Light Industrial N/A Agricultural N/A

Other Commercial (specify) N/A

Building Height(s) N/A

8. Permits and Approvals Required - List all known local, state, and federal permits, approvals, and funding required:

Unit of Government	Type of Application	Status
Federal Highway Administration	Federal Assessment	To be Submitted
Federal Highway Administration	Design Approval	To be Submitted
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Section 404 Permit	To be Submitted
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Protected Waters Permit	To be Submitted
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	Section 404 Water Quality Certification	To be Submitted
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	NPDES Permit	To be Submitted
State Historic Preservation Office	Historical/Archaeological Clearance	To be Submitted
Steele County Soil & Water Conservation Dist.	Wetlands Conservation Act Permit	To be Submitted

9. Land Use - Describe current and recent past land use and development on the site and on adjacent lands. Discuss the compatibility of the project with adjacent and nearby land uses; indicate whether any potential conflicts involve environmental matters. Identify any potential environmental hazard due to past land uses, such as soil contamination or abandoned storage tanks.

The existing land use is residential and farmland. The proposed route triangulates three farm fields and there are four farm splits. The triangulation is proposed to avoid wetlands, allow a perpendicular intersection with an existing roadway and railroad and to create a separation to an existing residential development.

The presence of an east side bypass will allow future residential growth to be oriented to both the east/west roadways and the new north/south roadway through the use of residential collector streets. In this way, the presence of the bypass will decrease the dependence on future residential collector streets as north/south connections to the existing arterials in the study area.

10. Cover Types - Estimate the acreage of the site with each of the following cover types before and after development (before and after totals should be equal):

	Before	After		Before	After
Types 2 to 8 Wetlands	<u>2.4</u>	<u>1.4</u>	Urban/Suburban Lawn Landscaping	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Wooded/Forest	<u>4.2</u>	<u>2.2</u>	Impervious Surface	<u>0</u>	<u>20.2</u>
Brush/Grassland	<u>6.1</u>	<u>0</u>	Other (describe) Road ditches	<u>0</u>	<u>27.7</u>
Cropland	<u>38.8</u>	<u>0</u>			

11. Fish Wildlife, and Ecologically Sensitive Resources

- a. Describe fish and wildlife resources on or near the site and discuss how they would be affected by the project. Describe any measures to be taken to minimize or avoid adverse impacts.

Fisheries

Existing Conditions

Fisheries data has been provided by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) Lake City Office.

Maple Creek is a MDNR-protected stream. It is the only habitat for fisheries in the project study area. Maple Creek is a 16-mile long stream flowing east to the Straight River. It is classified as a Class III warmwater stream. The headwaters start about 5-7 miles east of the project area, on the north side of Steele County 19 and Rice Lake.

The project intercepts Maple Creek in the lower reach (0-10.8 miles from the Straight River) at about 4.4 miles. The channel has been only slightly modified in the lower reach, primarily from the dam in Dartt's Park. Much of the stream corridor is wooded in the project vicinity. Bank erosion is moderate to severe. The fisheries habitat potential is good in this stretch, with numerous pools, 3+ feet of water, and good cover. The bottom is 87% sand or gravel. A quick visual estimate indicates presence of several orders of aquatic insects and also crustaceans.

A new management plan is being implemented by the MDNR to enhance fisheries of Maple Creek. The goal is to provide northern pike spawning access to the wetlands of the Maple Creek watershed (wetlands). Two approaches are planned to accomplish this goal. First is to stock the Maple Creek wetland area. Second is to remove the Dartt's Park dam, allowing northern pike from the Straight River to move into Maple Creek spawning habitat. The dam removal was undertaken in 1995 by the City of Owatonna in conjunction with a bridge replacement. Third will be to work with the City of Owatonna towards removal of the dam at Mineral Springs Park (used to create an aesthetic waterfall) and the final barrier to fish movement.

Impacts

The preferred crossing will bridge the creek and banks. Bridge runoff will be channeled to upland areas away from stream. Therefore, no impacts are expected to occur to the water or bottom substrate of Maple Creek.

Construction will require removal of woodland vegetation in the immediate vicinity of the stream crossing. This will reduce the amount of woodland cover for this stretch of Maple Creek. Thermal changes to the water would also be expected. However, the existing stream is warmwater, therefore no thermal impacts are expected.

Mitigation

Reduced woodland cover can be mitigated by increasing tree cover in nearby nonwooded sections of the stream.

Wildlife

Existing Conditions

Wildlife data come from the MDNR Owatonna Office at Rice Lake Park (personal communication), MDNR wildlife surveys, the Minnesota Ornithologists Union Christmas bird count, aerial photo interpretation, and field reconnaissance.

Land use is agricultural throughout the project study area. Scattered woodlots and wetlands, particularly associated with Maple Creek, conservation reserve meadows, and hedgerows provide habitat. Bird species most frequently found wintering in the Owatonna area are common and widespread, including mallards, rock dove, crow, black-capped chickadee, and European starling. No deer wintering yards are in the project area. Introductions of game and nongame species are not planned for any sites in the project area.

Impacts

Conversion of nonimpervious surface will remove between 60-80 acres of land depending on the amount of right-of-way. Much of this land base is agricultural fields, providing negligent wildlife habitat.

Farmland landscapes in general contain scattered natural areas (see Vegetation) which are important for a wide variety of wildlife. Roadways have the most impact on landscapes by fragmenting habitats and increasing mortality of local populations. This is significant in the case of fenced freeway systems. The proposed 2-lane Beltway will have less impact than the latter. Roadways will also have an impact on wildlife habitat by providing a catalyst for future development and ultimately accumulate impacts which can be very significant.

Mitigation

Choice of the preferred alternative weighed impacts to wildlife habitat. During roadway design, impacts to natural areas will be avoided to the extent feasible with respect to required roadway design standards.

The potential cumulative impacts on wildlife habitat adjacent to, but not in the right-of-way would best be addressed by comprehensive land use planning which restricts development in ecologically sensitive zones.

- b. Are there any state-listed endangered, threatened, or special-concern species; rare plant communities; colonial

waterbird nesting colonies; native prairie or other rare habitat; or other sensitive ecological resources on or near the site. Yes No

If yes, describe the resource and how it would be affected by the project. Indicate if a site survey of the sources was conducted. Describe measures to be taken to minimize or avoid adverse impacts.

Threatened and Endangered Species

Existing Conditions

Threatened and endangered species are being investigated under the Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 and the State of Minnesota Endangered Species Act of 1983. Both acts require the protection of these species and their critical habitat. The MDNR Natural Heritage Program was requested to provide a search of species in the project area.

Rare species are typically associated with undisturbed, native communities of prairie, forest, and wetland. The proposed alternative crosses Steele County Road 80 and the nearby DM&E railroad. Discontinuous stretches of native wet and mesic prairie are present in the right-of-ways (ROW) of these two transportation routes. Nondegraded prairie remnants are present near the proposed crossing location. In addition, a high quality remnant needs to be considered during siting of construction and roadway drainage areas. These prairie areas may support at least five plant species which are either state-listed or of special concern, and found in nearby remnants outside the project area.

Maple Creek in the project study area has supported four species of freshwater mussels (M. Davis, 1987. Mussel Survey of the Cannon River Drainage, MDNR). None of the species are state-listed, however, all mussels species are of concern due to significant decline in numbers nationwide.

Impacts and Mitigation

The sites identified above as supporting mussels or native prairie were considered in choosing the preferred alternative. Design and construction of the roadway will avoid impacts to these areas as much as practical, given their limited spatial extent.

- 12 **Physical Impacts on Water Resources: Will the project involve the physical or hydrologic alteration (dredging, filling, stream diversion, outfall structure, diking, impoundment) of any surface water (lake, pond, wetland, stream, drainage ditch)?** Yes No

If yes, identify the water resource to be affected and describe: the alteration, including the construction process; volumes of dredged or fill material; area affected; length of stream diversion; water surface area affected; timing and extent of fluctuations in water surface elevations; spoils disposal sites; and proposed mitigation measures to minimize impacts.

Wetlands

Existing Conditions

Wetlands were identified using the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) maps, Steele County Soil Survey, and Soil Conservation Service (SCS) hydric soils and farmland wetland rating system. Wetlands are classified according to Cowardin et al.

Several wetlands are found throughout the project vicinity. Most of them are remnants of more extensive basins which have been tile drained. Except for the Maple Creek wetlands, all are classified as palustrine emergent.

Wetlands along the DM & E railroad and C.R. 80 right-of-ways are classified as palustrine emergent with seasonal flooding. The vegetation type is wet prairie.

Impacts

Wetlands are being investigated in compliance with Executive Order 11990, which provides national policy to avoid adverse impacts to wetlands; the US DOT Order on "Mitigation of Impacts to Privately Owned Wetlands"; the MDNR Protected Waters and Wetlands Program; and the State of Minnesota Wetlands Conservation Act of 1991.

Several wetlands are located in the project study area.

Mitigation

Mitigation sequencing will be conducted for wetland impacts. Avoidance, minimization, and compensation in that order will be used. Because impacts are along edges, rather than through the middle of wetland basins, minor shift in alignment should be able to avoid most impacts. Bridge design for crossing Maple Creek can also be used as a tool to avoid or minimize impacts. Where unavoidable losses of wetland acreage occur, compensatory mitigation will be carried out according to applicable federal and state laws.

Table 1
Estimated Wetland Impacts by Area (Acres)

Wetlands in Study Area			Location (section number) and Area (acres) of Impacted Wetlands Near Preferred Route				
Wetland #	Type *	Size	1	12	13	24	
0	PEMA	0.83					
1	PF01C	Maple Creek					
2	PF01C	Maple Creek	1.27				
3	PF01C	Maple Creek					
4	PF01C	Maple Creek					
5	PEMC	1.99					
6	PEMC	6.32	0.50				
7	PUBFh x	1.42		0.20			
8	PEMB	2.39					
9	PEMB	3.19					
10	PEMB	2.96			0.38		
11	PEMC	8.20					
12	PEMC	9.22					
13	PEMB	5.58					
14	PEMB	2.90					
Impacts		Total	1.77	0.20	0.38		2.35

See Appendix A for wetlands map. All alternatives required a bridge crossing at Maple Creek. The bridge will be analyzed and further studied.

13 Water Use

- a. Will the project involve the installation or abandonment of any wells? Yes No
For abandoned well give the location and Unique well Number. For new wells, or other previously unpermitted wells, give the location and purpose of the well and the Unique well number (if known).
- b. Will the project require an appropriation of ground or surface water (including dewatering)? Yes No
If yes, indicate the source, quantity, duration, purpose of the appropriation, and DNR water appropriation permit number of any existing appropriation. Discuss the impact of the appropriation on ground water levels.
- c. Will the project require connection to a public water supply? Yes No
If yes, identify the supply, the DNR water appropriation permit number of the supply, and the quantity to be used.

14 Water-related Land Use Management Districts - Does any part of the project site involve a shoreland zoning district, a delineation 100-year flood plain, or a state or federally designated wild or scenic river land use district?

Yes No

If yes, identify the district and discuss the compatibility of the project with the land use restrictions of the district.

Floodplains

Existing Conditions

Data from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) are available for Maple Creek in the project vicinity. The FEMA flood insurance rate map developed in 1981 indicates several floodplain zones for Maple Creek.

The 100-year floodplain ranges from 200 to 1,000 feet wide in the project vicinity. The base flood elevation has been determined to be approximately 1168 feet (NGVD) for this area.

Impacts

Floodplain modifications are not expected to occur from any alternatives.

Shorelands

Existing Conditions

Following Minnesota Rules 6120.3000 Maple Creek is protected water and is classified as a tributary.

Impacts

The preferred crossing will bridge the creek and banks. Bridge runoff will be channeled to upland areas away from stream. Therefore, no impacts are expected to occur to the water or bottom substrate of Maple Creek.

Construction will require removal of woodland vegetation in the immediate vicinity of the stream crossing. This will reduce the amount of woodland cover for this stretch of Maple Creek. Thermal changes to the water would also be expected. However, the existing stream is warmwater, therefore no thermal impacts are expected.

Mitigation

Reduced woodland cover can be mitigated by increasing tree cover in nearby nonwooded sections of the stream. Shoreland best management practices will be implemented during and after construction to minimize impacts to the stream and shoreland area.

- 15 **Water Surface Use - Will the project change the number or type of water craft on any water body?** Yes No
If yes, indicate the current and projected watercraft usage and discuss any potential overcrowding or conflicts with other users or fish and wildlife resources.

- 16 **Soils - Approximate depth (in feet) to:**

Ground water: Minimum 0 Average 7 Bedrock: Minimum 40 Average 100

Describe the soils on the site, giving SCS classifications, if known (SCS interpretations and soil boring logs need not be attached).

Data for this subject come from the Steele County Geologic Atlas (Natural Resources Center, Mankato State, July, 1991) and Steele County Soil Survey (USDA SCS in cooperation with Minnesota Agricultural Exp. Station, August, 1973).

The soils are derived from a heavy cover of nearly level glacial drift. Drainage was historically slow. Today the majority of the soils in the entire project area have been drained to enable or increase crop production. Drain tile and ditching have created rapid drainage. Highly erodible soil occurs in a few localized areas of the project.

Like much of the county, the glacial deposits in the project area are underlain by Galena limestone bedrock. This layer serves as the shallow bedrock aquifer, providing the water for private wells in the area. Groundwater sensitivity to contamination is primarily low in the project area. No bedrock disturbances are expected to occur.

- 17 **Erosion and Sedimentation - Give the acreage to be graded or excavated and the cubic yards of soil to be moved:**

acres 50.8 cubic yards 200,000

Describe any steep slopes or highly erodible soils and identify them on the site map.

Describe the erosion and sedimentation measures to be used during and after construction of the project.

All alternatives avoid highly erodible soil. Impacts to all other soil disturbed by road construction will be mitigated according to standard erosion control practices, including silt fences, check bales, and mulch/cover cropping.

- 18 **Water Quality - Surface Water Runoff**

- Compare the quantity and quality of site runoff before and after the project. Describe methods to be used to manage and/or treat runoff.**
- Identify the route(s) and receiving water bodies for runoff from the site. Estimate the impact of the runoff on the quality of the receiving waters. (If the runoff may affect a lake consult "EAW Guidelines" about whether a nutrient budget analysis is needed).**

Existing Conditions

Data for this section come from the Steele County Surface Water Hydrology Atlas (Water Resources Center, Mankato State University, 1993); MPCA nonpoint source survey, 1990; and MDNR Maple Creek Fisheries Habitat Survey.

Maple Creek and ditches are the only surface waters in the project vicinity. The project area has been extensively drain tiled for modern agricultural productivity. This has created fluctuating water levels and affected water quality in Maple Creek. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) nonpoint source survey for 1990 identified the following effects on Maple Creek.

Pollutant	+(present)/ -(absent)
oxygen depletion	-
eutrophication	-
bacteria contamination	+
bottom sedimentation	+
toxicity (pesticides, metals)	+
turbid waters	+
physical habitat alteration	+

The MDNR water quality data indicates degraded water quality in Maple Creek. Half of Section 12 north and all of Section 1 are in the Maple Creek drainage. Traditional agricultural land use practices appear to be the cause of these conditions.

County ditch 1 (west) drains large portions of the southern part of the project area. This ditch drains into the South Fork of Maple Creek at the center of Section 14, west of the project study area.

Impacts

Development of a new two-lane road surface will increase impervious surface area in the watershed. This will increase surface water runoff, including sediment, oils, heavy metals, and salts.

Mitigation

Pollutant discharge into surface waters from road surfaces can be reduced significantly by runoff retention. Grass swales and detention ponds will be used to reduce runoff pollutants to accepted levels. The location at which treated runoff enters nearby surface waters, including wetlands, will be chosen to avoid and minimize impact on sensitive ecological areas. Specific locations will be determined during roadway design.

19. Water Quality - Wastewaters

- a. Describe sources, quantities, and composition (except for normal domestic sewage) all sanitary and industrial wastewaters produced or treated at the site.

N/A

- b. Describe any waster treatment methods to be used and give estimate of composition after treatment, or if the project involves on-site sewage systems, discuss the suitability of the site conditions for such systems. Identify receiving waters (including ground water) and estimate the impact of the discharge on the quality of the receiving waters. (*If the discharge may affect a lake consult "EAW Guidelines" about whether a nutrient budget analysis is needed*).

N/A

- c. If wastes will be discharged into a sewer system or pretreatment system, identify the system and discuss the ability of the system to accept the volume and composition of the wastes. Identify any improvements which will be necessary.

N/A

20. Ground Water - Potential for Contamination

- a. Approximate depth (in feet) to ground water: 0 minimum; 7 average.

- b. Describe any of the following site hazards to ground water and also identify them on the site map: sinkholes; shallow limestone formations/karst conditions; soils with high infiltration rates; abandoned or unused wells. Describe measures to avoid or minimize environmental problems due to any of these hazards.

All of the project area experiences a perched water table. Glacial deposits, with depths of 40 to over 100 feet, are underlain by Galena limestone bedrock. This layer serves as the shallow bedrock aquifer, providing the water for private wells in the area. Groundwater sensitivity to contamination is primarily low in the project area. No bedrock disturbances are expected to occur.

- c. Identify any toxic or hazardous materials to be used or present on the project site and identify measures to be used to

prevent them from contaminating ground water.

Surface waters serve as groundwater recharge areas. The construction of a new two-lane road surface will increase surface water runoff. This surface water runoff includes sediment, oils, heavy metals and salts. Grass swales and detention ponds will be used to reduce runoff pollutants to accepted levels.

21. Solid Wastes; Hazardous Wastes; Storage Tanks

- a. Describe the types, amounts, and compositions of solid or hazardous wastes to be generated, including animal manures, sludges ashes., Identify the method and location of disposal. For projects generating municipal solid waste indicate if there will be a source separation plan; list type (s) and how the project will be modified to allow recycling.

N/A

- b. Indicate the number, location, size, and use of any above or below ground tanks to be used for storage of petroleum products or other materials (except water).

N/A

- 22. Traffic** - Parking spaces added _____ Existing spaces (if project involves expansion) _____ Estimated Total Average Daily Traffic (ADT) generated _____ Estimate maximum peak hour traffic generated (if known) and its timing _____, _____. For each affected road indicate the ADT and the directional distribution of traffic with and without the project. Provide an estimate of the impact on traffic congestion on the affected roads and describe any traffic improvements which will be necessary.

The projected ADT volumes range from 2,600 just north of T.H. 14 to over 12,000 between Dane Road and Rose Street.

Based on the 20-year growth projections for the City of Owatonna and the area in which that growth is expected, significant increases in traffic volumes will occur on City streets such as Mineral Springs Road, Dane Road, Rose Street (CSAH 19) and School Street. Much of the traffic bound for the southerly and westerly portions of the City will need to traverse the downtown area to get to continuous north/south roadways, and to get to the industrial park or to Interstate 35 (I-35). An east side corridor connecting CSAH 34 to T.H. 14 will relieve the existing City streets from a significant amount of this growth, provided that it is placed close enough to existing City boundaries to be convenient to both new development and existing recent development on the east side of the City. A corridor placed too far to the east will not provide as much relief to the existing street system because most drivers will avoid going east in order to ultimately travel west.

One of the main functions of a new east side corridor would be to provide drivers with a means of traveling either north to CSAH 34 or south to T.H. 14, to bypass the City enroute to I-35 or the industrial park. Another purpose of the roadway will be to provide an alternate route to and from areas south of downtown. Future residents of the newly developed portions of the City on the northeast side of Owatonna will be able to travel a new corridor to get to Havana Road or 18th Street S.E. without traveling through downtown via Rose Street or Mineral Springs Road. Travel patterns of residents already living on the east side are also expected to change some of their travel patterns as a result of a new corridor.

Since much of the future development is projected on the northeast side of the study area, Dane Road (CSAH 8), Mineral Springs Road, and Rose Street (CSAH 19) are expected to be impacted the most by future development traffic, especially if no north/south corridor is built (no build scenario).

The farther east the corridor is placed there is less relief for traffic volumes on these two roadways. It is expected that a corridor placed close to existing City limits is more likely to be used by residents of future development to reach CSAH 34, which will then take them to either I-35 or existing and future industrial development west of I-35. The corridor will also take them to existing commercial and employment centers on the south side of the City, which they will access via Havana Road (Co. Rd. 71) or 18th Street S.E.

One result of placing the corridor farther to the east is the greater potential for development close to existing City limits to use existing north/south residential streets to avoid crossing through downtown. For example, Crestview Lane and Greenhaven Lane are expected to be used to travel between Dane Road and Rose Street. Approximately 500-1,000 trips per day can be expected to use these streets if no north/south corridor is built on the east side, or if the corridor is placed away from existing City limits. This would be undesirable from both an aesthetic and a maintenance standpoint since these streets are residential collectors and already have fairly large neighborhoods using them for ingress and egress. Future residential collector streets that run in the north/south direction can also be expected to be used in the place of an east side bypass if the "No Build" alternative is implemented.

Since future development is expected to occur in an orderly fashion gradually radiating out from existing City limits, the impact to County Road 43/59 is relatively insignificant, with an ADT increase of 1,600 or less. This road is expected to be used very little as a connection between northern and southern municipal development. It will, however, experience growth in traffic volumes as drivers use it to access T.H. 14 or Old Highway 14. That growth will definitely be higher without an east side corridor than with a corridor, but will not carry enough of the projected traffic growth to provide significant relief

to existing City streets.

23. **Vehicle-related Air Emissions** - Provide an estimate of the effect on the project's traffic generation on air quality, including carbon monoxide levels. Discuss the effect of traffic improvements or other mitigation measures on air quality impact. (If the project involves 500 or more parking spaces, consult "EAW Guidelines" about whether a detailed air quality analysis is needed).

Since the "No Build" alternative is expected to result in congestion and delay in the central portion of the City, it will result in a negative impact on the air quality in the same areas where congestion and delay occur. These areas are primarily expected to occur along Mineral Springs Road west of St. Paul Road and Rose Street west of Grove Avenue.

The future CO concentrations are not expected to approach the state air quality standards of 3.0 parts per million (1-hour) or 9.0 parts per million (8-hour) for the proposed corridor. Based on the development patterns expected in the area, which will not be dense, the projected traffic volumes on the new corridor are not expected to experience significant delay or congestion. In fact, the south portion of the study area is expected to remain very rural. Traffic volumes in the range projected on the roadway are not as high as those which sometimes result in air quality standards being exceeded. The elevation and topography also contribute to whether or not CO builds up over time versus dissipating. The corridor does not have any significant low areas or topography which would result in "hot spots".

24. **Stationary Source Air Emissions** - Will the project involve any stationary sources of air emissions (such as boilers or exhaust stacks)? Yes No

If yes, describe the sources, quantities, and composition of the emissions; the proposed air pollution control devices; the quantities and composition of the emissions after treatment; and the effects on air quality.

25. **Will the project generate dust, odors, or noise during construction and/or operation?** Yes No

If yes, describe the sources, characteristics, duration, and quantities or intensity, and any proposed measures to mitigate adverse impacts. Also identify the locations of sensitive receptors in the vicinity and estimate the impacts on these receptors.

Some relatively minor, temporary air quality impacts are anticipated resulting from construction. The impacts would be due to emissions from the construction machinery. The construction equipment emissions will be minimal from the standpoint of carbon monoxide since the majority of the equipment is diesel powered.

The construction is anticipated to temporarily generate noise not typical in the area, with the exception of the periodic operation of some farm equipment. Most construction activities such as grading and truck hauling will be of a fairly short duration. The noisiest construction activities can be mitigated by restricting the hours of equipment operation and by ensuring that all equipment is properly muffled.

There will also be on-going noise from traffic on the new corridor. A "No Build" scenario will result in more traffic and more noise in the existing neighborhoods and in downtown Owatonna.

The design speed of the roadway and the amount of truck traffic will be the most important factors in whether or not the adjacent sensitive receptors will experience noise levels exceeding state and federal standards. The proposed roadway is planned to be separated from existing residences by approximately 800 feet. Landscaped boulevards and berms provide a soft, absorptive surface which helps reduce the amount of noise which reaches the sensitive receptors. The 150 foot right-of-way anticipated for this corridor will provide adequate space to design these absorptive surfaces if necessary.

26. **Are any of the following resources on or in proximity to the site:**

- a. archeological, historical, or architectural resources? Yes No

Correspondence and a study report with regards to archeological, historical, or architectural resources is found in Appendix B. Further investigation will be conducted as feasibility and design stages of the project are undertaken.

- b. prime or unique farmlands? Yes No
c. designated parks, recreation areas, or trails? Yes No
d. scenic views and vistas? Yes No
e. other unique resources? Yes No

If any items are answered Yes, describe the resource and identify any impacts on the resource due to the project. Describe any measures to be taken to minimize or avoid adverse impacts.

Farmland

Existing Conditions

Data come from the U.S. SCS prime, unique, and statewide important farmland ratings and the Steele County Atlas and Plat Book. Data were analyzed using aerial photo map overlays and Steele County Soil Survey mapping.

Farmland constitutes the entire study area. There are ten separate properties in the project area. Much of the land is prime farmland.

Impacts

In most cases, properties are divided by alignment positioned to avoid farmsteads, residences, and ecologically sensitive areas and to create perpendicular intersections with existing roadways. This creates the greatest impact to farmland because the alignment cuts across individual fields rather than along fence lines.

There are 43.2 acres of prime and unique farmland or 63.3% of the total acres affected by this alternative. Five properties are affected along their property boundaries and three farm fields are triangulated.

27. Will the project create adverse visual impacts? (Examples include: glare from intense lights; lights visible in wilderness areas; and large visible plumes from cooling towers or exhaust stacks.) Yes No

A review and analysis of visual impacts are highly subjective. The aesthetic or visual impacts of a proposed project relates to the number of people who will regularly use the transportation corridor and the setting within which they will view it. Further, the people who will experience the corridor as nearby property owners and neighbors is also an important aesthetic consideration. Such perceptions of the proposed project is commonly referred to as the "viewshed". It is difficult, however, to actually quantify such impacts. What is pleasing to one person may be viewed as not so pleasing to another. Such perception may depend on a number of factors, such as whether the viewer lives, works, or recreates near the facility.

In order to assess the various impact elements relating to the subject project, a six-step Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) process developed by Mn/DOT was utilized. The analysis is deemed applicable to County and City projects as well. Key elements of the process have been followed to accurately describe any direct or indirect visual impacts affecting the user and/or viewer of the transportation project. Such information can then be utilized for further design phases and project development studies and plans. This assessment can be found in the Owatonna East Side Corridor Environmental Report, dated March, 1995.

28. Compatibility with plans - Is the project subject to an adopted local comprehensive plan or any other applicable land use, water, or resource management plan of an local, regional, state, or federal agency? Yes No
If yes, identify the applicable plan (s), discuss the compatibility of the project with the provisions of the plan (s), and explain how any conflicts between the project and the plan (s) will be resolved. If no, explain.

The traffic study prepared as part of the corridor study showed that an east side north/south roadway is needed to help relieve future congestion in the downtown area. Therefore, it is expected that the City and County will update their respective Comprehensive Plans by adding the east side corridor to their plans and any accompanying maps.

The future land use assumptions used to determine projected traffic volumes were based on City development trends, zoning and comprehensive plan land use designations within the City boundaries. Outside City boundaries, land use assumptions were based on development trends and expected land use designations after annexation.

Land use assumptions in the township areas that are expected to remain rural were consistent with County zoning for rural agricultural areas.

29. Impact on Infrastructure and Public Services - Will new or expanded utilities, roads, other infrastructure, or public services be required to serve the project? Yes No
If yes, describe the new or additional infrastructure/services needed. (Any infrastructure that is a "connected action" with respect to the project must be assessed in the EAW; see "EAW Guidelines" for details).

The proposed project is the construction of a new roadway corridor with associated improvements, including intersections and stormwater drainage.

30. Related Developments; Cumulative Impacts

- a. Are future stages of this development planned or likely? Yes No
If yes, briefly describe future stages, their timing, and plans for environmental review.
- b. Is this project a subsequent stage of an earlier project? Yes No
If yes, briefly describe the past development, its timing, and any past environmental review.
- c. Is other development anticipated on adjacent lands or outlots? Yes No
If yes, briefly describe the development and its relationship to the present project.

Future Development Assumptions

Future development assumptions for the east side of Owatonna were developed jointly with the City Planner of Owatonna. Based on past growth trends, information from the State Demographer's Office, and past growth projections by the City's Planning Department, population and household projections were made for the entire City. Of the overall household and population growth in Owatonna in the next 20 years, approximately 80 percent is expected to occur on the east side of the existing City limits, with development on the northeast side expected to outpace development to the central and south east. This results in development of nearly 2,600 households on the east side. Retail development of approximately 130,000 square feet was also assumed along Rose Street (CSAH 19). Due to the large amount of residential growth projected, it was logical to assume that some commercial/retail development would follow to meet the demand for goods and services created by the new neighborhoods. With input from City staff, Rose Street was selected as a potential location for such a development, because of the locations accessibility to both existing and new development.

- d. If a, b, or c were marked Yes, discuss any cumulative environmental impacts resulting from this project and the other development.

31. Other Potential Environmental Impacts - If the project may cause any adverse environmental impacts which were not addressed by Items 1 to 28, identify and discuss them here, along with any proposed mitigation.

Vegetation

Existing Conditions

Data for this section come from aerial photography interpretation.

The majority of the project is cropland. Areas of noncrop vegetation are Maple Creek, wetlands, prairie roadside along C.R. 80, conservation reserve program (CRP) land, and scattered vegetated fencerows. No CRP land is impacted directly by any alternative.

Mitigation

Mitigation of natural vegetation losses can be carried out by revegetating right-of-way disturbed by construction. The Minnesota Department of Transportation Integrated Roadside Resource Management strategies will be implemented in this project. Essentially this involves revegetating with native prairie species from this ecoregion and managing accordingly.

32. SUMMARY OF ISSUES (*This section need not be completed if the EAW is being done for EIS scoping, instead, address relevant issues in the draft Scoping Decision document which must accompany the EAW.*) List any impacts and issues identified above that may require further investigation before the project is commenced. Discuss any alternatives or mitigative measures that have been or may be considered for these impacts and issues, including those that have been or may be ordered as permit conditions.

Issues

1. Reduced woodland vegetation along Maple Creek and natural vegetation along right-of-ways.
2. Removal of nonimpervious land that serves as wildlife habitat.
3. Impact on freshwater mussels and native prairie.
4. Impact on wetlands.
5. Impact on highly erodible soils.
6. Increased surface water runoff.
7. Increased traffic generation.
8. Noise impact on sensitive receptors within the corridor.
9. Impact on prime farmlands.

Mitigation Measures

1. Increase tree cover in nearby nonwooded sections of Maple Creek and revegetate right-of-ways.
2. Choosing the preferred alternative weighed impacts of wildlife habitat. Design of roadway will avoid these impacts to extent that is feasible.

3. Design of roadway will avoid impacts to areas containing mussels or native prairie, to the amount feasible, given their limited spatial extent.
4. Mitigation sequencing will be conducted for wetland impacts. Avoidance, minimization, and compensation in that order will be used.
5. All alternatives avoid highly erodible soils. Impacts to all other soil will be mitigated according to standard erosion control practices, including silt fences, check bales, and mulch/cover cropping.
6. Grass swales and detention ponds will be used to reduce runoff pollutants to acceptable levels. The location at which treated runoff enters nearby surface waters, including wetlands, will be chosen to avoid and minimize impact on sensitive ecological areas.
7. The preferred alternative is designed to provide relief to existing street system.
8. The 150 foot right-of-way anticipated for this corridor will provide adequate space to design absorptive surfaces to reduce amount of noise.
9. The preferred alternative is a best balance trying to minimize impacts in several areas including prime farmland.

CERTIFICATIONS BY THE RGU (all 3 certifications must be signed for EQB acceptance of the EAW for publication of notice in the EQB Monitor).

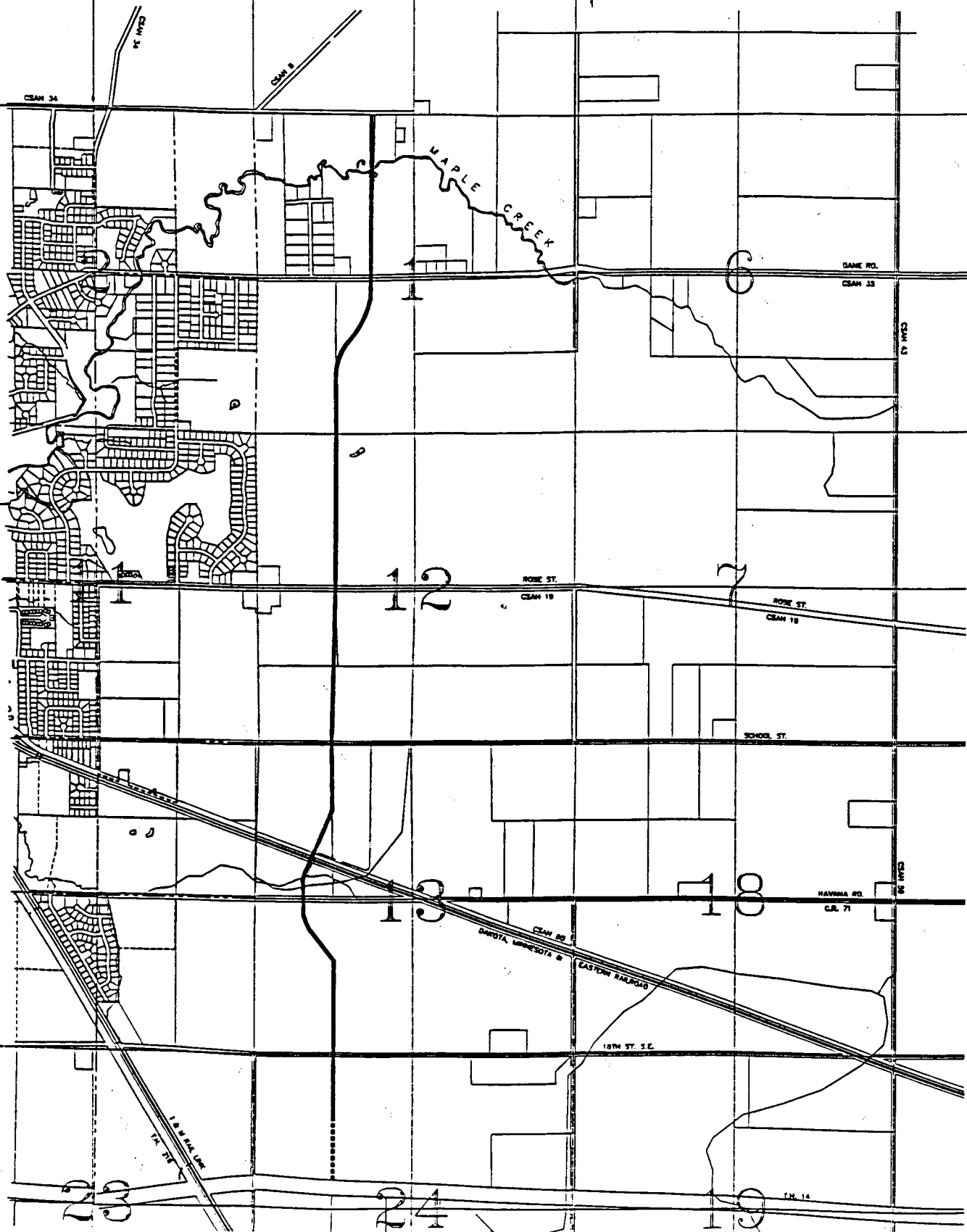
- A. I hereby certify that the information contained in this document is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.
Signature *Michael Loran*
- B. I hereby certify that the project described in this EAW is the complete project and there are no other projects, project stages, or project components, other than those described in this document, which are related to the project as "connected actions" or "phased actions", as defined, respectively, at MN Rules. pts. 4410.0200, subp. 9b and subp. 60.
Signature *Michael Loran*
- C. I hereby certify that copies of the completed EAW are being sent to all points on the official EQB EAW distribution list.
Signature *Michael Loran*
- Title of Signer *Steck County Planning Director* Date *3-9-99*

35

36

SHORT TERM TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Proposed Arterial
Existing Local Street
NOT TO SCALE



(MEDFORD EAST)

R. 20 W. 10' R. 19 W. 2,220,000 FEET

MERTON 1.5 MI.

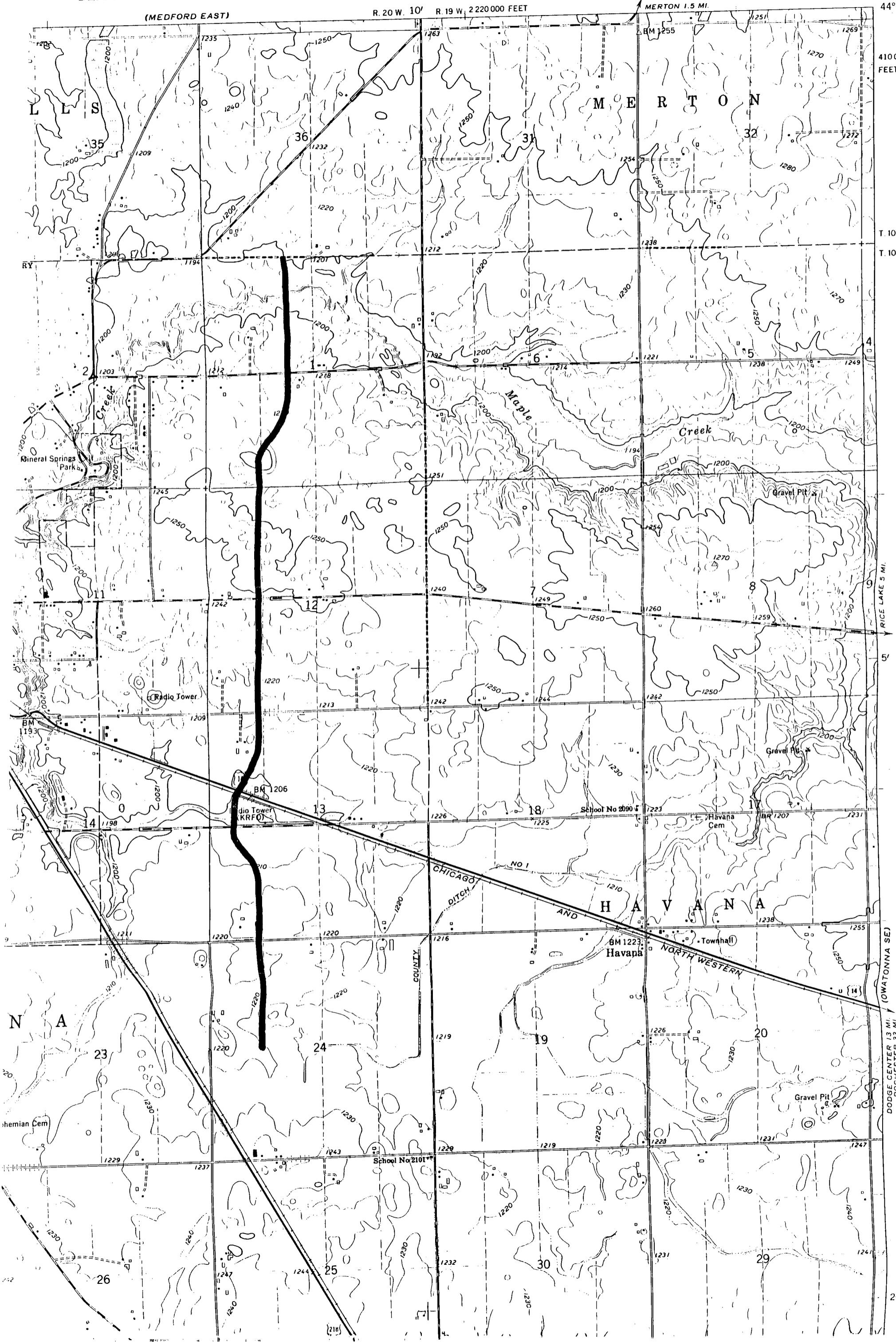
410 000
FEET

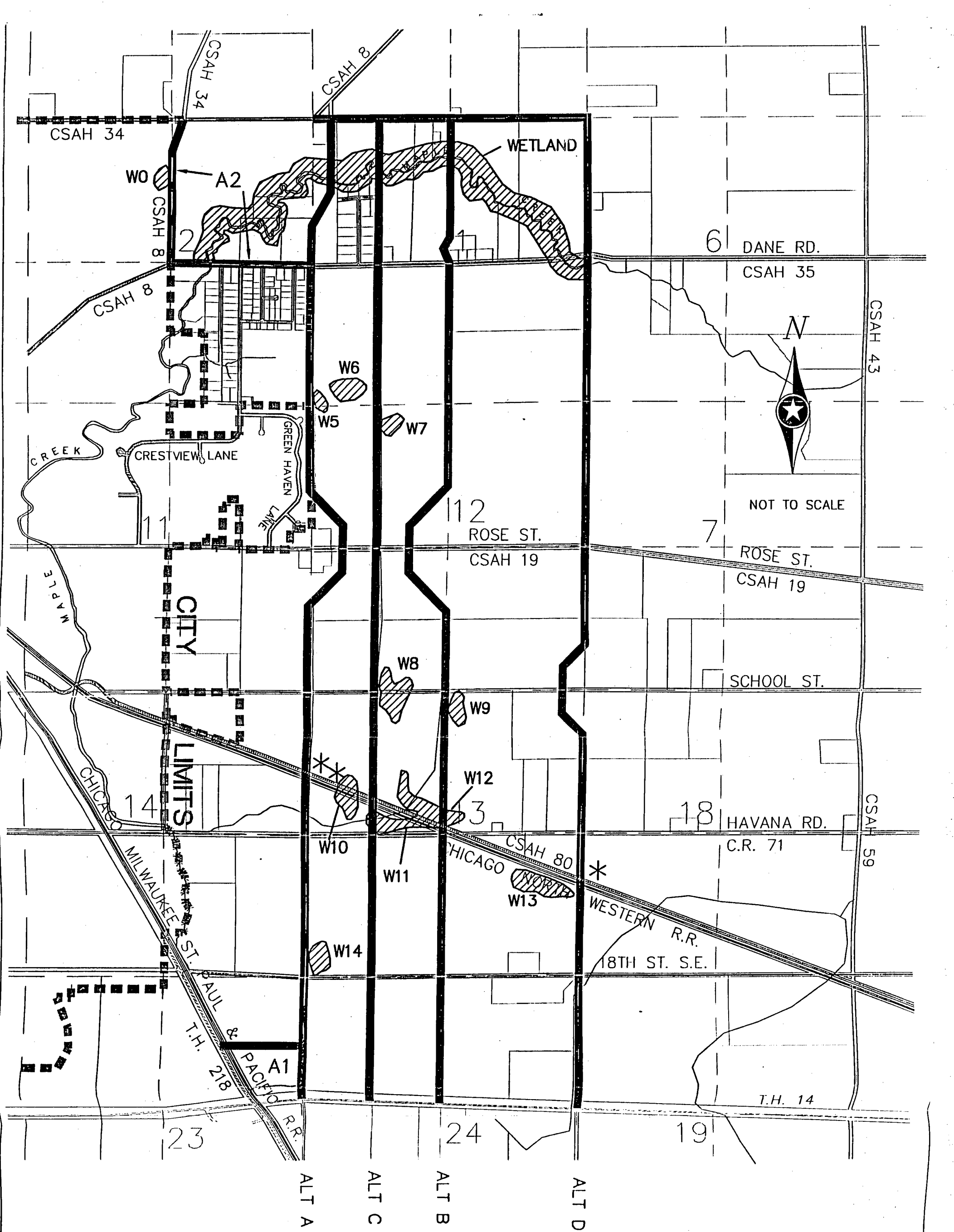
T. 108 N.
T. 107 N.

RICE LAKE 5 MI.

DODGE CENTER 13 MI.
ROCHESTER 33 MI.

2'30"





KEY (NOT TO SCALE)

INTRODUCTION

The City of Owatonna, in conjunction with Steele County has proposed construction of a new road along the east side of Owatonna. As a result of communication between the City of Owatonna and the Minnesota Historical Society, the 30 September 1994 letter from Mr. Dennis Gimmestad, Government Programs and Compliance Officer for the Minnesota Historical Society to the City of Owatonna regarding this project indicated that there "are numerous reported historical properties in the project vicinity..." and "a good probability that unreported properties may be present..." At that time, Mr. Gimmestad recommended that a Phase I field investigation of the project area be completed which would meet the requirements of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and Evaluation in addition to an evaluation of National Register Eligibility for any properties identified.

The 8 December 1994 letter from Mr. David Strand, Planning Director for the City of Owatonna to Impact Services indicated that prior to a Phase I field investigation of the alternative routes, the City of Owatonna wanted to "narrow the options down and ultimately select the preferred route." In so doing, the City of Owatonna contracted with Impact Services Inc. to undertake a literature search of known archaeological and historical properties within the four alternate routes. This included a records check of known archaeological and historical properties within the proposed corridors as well as a cursory field observation to determine if obvious impact due to construction activities has damaged (partially or totally) any known sites. The goal was to utilize the information gathered in the literature search to potentially eliminate some portions of the proposed corridors (based upon the existence of known archaeological and historical sites) and thus, reduce the over-all scope of the Phase I field investigation.

METHODS

Impact Services conducted the literature search of known archaeological and historical properties within the proposed corridors of the alternative routes around the east side of the City of Owatonna. This investigation also included a field observation, the purpose of which was to make some preliminary determinations as to the conditions of the properties. It should be noted here that cursory field observations are not at all adequate for making final determinations as to the presence or absence of previously unrecorded archaeological properties, the significance of new prehistoric sites that are found from a Phase I reconnaissance survey, or the significance of historic buildings that may be impacted by construction. On-the-ground field verification is the only way to make these determinations.

The literature search included the state site records of known historic and prehistoric properties at the State Historic Preservation Office, the listing of properties on the National Register of Historic Places, survey reports conducted in or near the project area, the Minnesota Room of the Mankato State University Library and county histories.

RESULTS

The following are the results of the literature search, divided into three categories. The first are historic properties, then prehistoric archaeological sites and the final section contains the results of the cursory field observation.

Historic Properties: Steele County was created in February of 1855. It was named in honor of Franklin Steele, a prominent government contractor. The City of Owatonna was first settled in 1854 by A.B. Cornell and W.F. Pettitt. There are several properties which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places within the City of Owatonna. None of the three properties will be impacted by any one of the proposed construction routes. The Steele County Courthouse was constructed in 1874 and is located at 139 East Main Street in Owatonna. It is a one-story building which was used until 1891 at which time it was too small for the current needs of the county. It was abandoned in 1891 when a larger courthouse was built. At present, the original Steele County Courthouse houses the Steele County Historical Society and the Owatonna Chamber of Commerce. The new Steele County Courthouse was built in 1891 and dedicated in 1892. It is a three-story building located at 111 East Main Street.

The Ezra Abbott House is located at 345 East Broadway in Owatonna. Ezra Abbott was one of the earliest and most prominent settlers in Steele County. His house is a two-story brick building, the first of its kind in Owatonna. The date of construction is unknown, however, it does appear on the tax rolls in 1860.

The Owatonna Free Public Library was designed by 1899 by Frank Gutterson of Des Moines, Iowa. It was constructed in 1899 and dedicated in 1900. It is a neo-classic style building, constructed of buff brick and Kasota stone. The structure is located at 105 North Elm in Owatonna.

Prehistoric Sites: A check of the State Site Files at the State Historic Preservation Office revealed that there are no known archaeological sites within the corridor of any of the four proposed alternative routes.

Cursory Field Observation: Once the records check had been complete, a cursory field observation of the four proposed alternative routes was done. It was apparent that the four routes were very similar to each other in terms of topography and proximity to water resources. The southern portion of each route, within Sections 12, 13 and 24 is characterized by gently rolling agricultural lands with Maple Creek between one-half to one mile to the west. The probability for locating previously unknown prehistoric archaeological sites in these areas is fair.

The northern one mile of the four alternative routes in Section 1 and Alternative A2 to the west present a greater potential for locating previously unknown prehistoric archaeological sites. Each proposed alternative bisects Maple Creek in this area and the

potential for site location here is high. No one can predict the number of sites that might be located here, nor the size and significance of any given site.

There were two specific areas that were observed that will require particular attention at the time of the reconnaissance survey. The first is on the south end of Alternative A where it intersects with T.H. 218. There is a relatively confined area characterized by a rise which is unique in comparison to the surrounding rolling topography. The rise is covered in evergreen trees and it is unknown at this time if it has been disturbed by road construction or not. There may be evidence of burials here or there may be remnants of a farmstead which was dismantled at the time of road construction. In any case, this area will have to be carefully checked.

The second area of interest is also on Alternative A at the intersection of 18th Street. There is a farmstead on the southwest corner of that intersection. North of the buildings (toward 18th Street) is a wooded area, the topography of which is somewhat different than the surrounding area. This topographic variation is visible in the northeast quarter of Section 23 on the U.S.G.S. Topographic Map (Owatonna Quadrangle, 7.5 Minute Series, 1962). It is unknown whether or not this area has been disturbed, but it should be carefully checked for archaeological sites. There is also the possibility that burials may be found at this location.

The southern two-thirds of the proposed corridors are characterized by reasonably flat agricultural fields with intermittent farmsteads consisting in most cases of a house, barn, silo and several out buildings. Because the project maps that were supplied to Impact Services at the time of the cursory field observation did not specify whether or not any given farmstead would be impacted by construction or whether construction activity would circumvent the buildings, it was impossible to make any specific recommendations concerning the historic importance of any given property. Our assumption here is that construction plans will make every attempt to avoid farmstead buildings, where ever possible. Those properties that will indeed be impacted should be evaluated in order to determine if any aspect is of historic value.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There are no known archaeological sites recorded that will be impacted by construction of any of the four alternative routes. The southern two-thirds of each of the routes is topographically homogeneous and the likelihood of finding previously unknown archaeological sites here is the same for each route. Thus, the elimination of any given alternative route cannot be made on that basis of known archaeological concerns.

2. Because the area of highest potential for locating currently unknown prehistoric archaeological sites is in the vicinity of Maple Creek which is bisected by all four alternative routes, every effort should be made in the Maple Creek area to impact only

those areas which have already been disturbed by previous road construction. This would reduce the area that would require the Phase I reconnaissance survey.

3. The historic properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places are all located within the city limits of Owatonna and are well outside the area of impact by the four alternative routes. Thus, significant historic properties cannot be used as a basis for elimination of one route over another.

4. All historic properties (house, barn, silo or out-buildings) that will be impacted by road construction will have to be examined in order to determine their significance. Thus, the proposed route should avoid as many buildings as possible, thus, minimizing the extent of historic evaluation that would be necessary.

5. It is obvious that if the proposed route could use existing roads (areas where impact has already taken place from road construction), the possibility of impacting unknown archaeological sites would be minimal, thus, reducing the extent of archaeological evaluation that would be necessary.

6. Outside of the vicinity of Maple Creek, there are two areas outlined above that may contain archaeological/historical resources. The first is at the intersection of T.H. 218 and Alternative A and the second is at the intersection of 18th Street and Alternative A. Cursory inspection noted the unique characteristics of these two areas in comparison to the surrounding topography in addition to the possibility that neither area has been disturbed. They both should be avoided by construction activities if at all possible.

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United States Geological Survey

- 1962 U.S.G.S. Topographic Map. Owatonna Quadrangle, 7.5 Minute Series.

RESOLUTION FOR NEGATIVE DECLARATION ON THE NEED FOR AN EIS

Whereas Steele County prepared an EAW pursuant to MN Rules Chapter 4410 for a proposed East Side Corridor

Whereas notice was published and served according to MN Rules Chapter 4410,

Whereas environmental effects were avoided or minimized,

Whereas environmental effects that could not be avoided will be mitigated,

Whereas there are no cumulative effects or anticipated future projects associated with this project,

Whereas the mitigation of the anticipated environmental effects will be subject to public regulatory authority and

Whereas similar projects have been studied and the environmental effects can be anticipated and controlled.

Now, therefore be it resolved that the Steele County Board of Commissioners negatively declares the need for an Environmental Impact Statement.

Adopted: May 25, 1999 (1) (2) = March 22, 1999

STEELE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

By: *Leslie Gellgren*
Chairman

ATTEST:

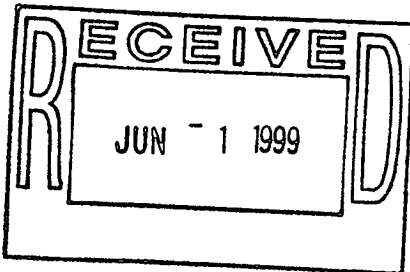
Saura Shrike
Steele County Auditor

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a Resolution duly passed, adopted, and approved by the County Board of said County on the 25th day of May, 1999.

Saura Shrike
County Auditor
County of Steele

(Seal)



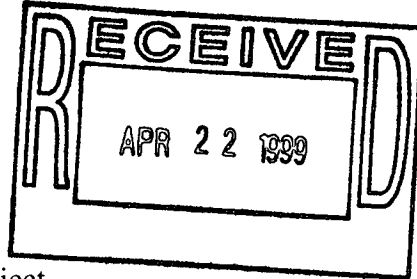


Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155-40__

April 19, 1999

Michael Caron, Planning Director
Steele County
630 Florence Avenue, P.O. Box 890
Owatonna, Minnesota 55060



Re: EAW for Owatonna East Side Corridor Project

Dear Mr. Caron:

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) has reviewed the above-referenced project and provides the following comments for your consideration.

Generally, we believe that the proposed Owatonna belt line, of which this project is the east segment, will facilitate development and urban sprawl, and will result in substantial impacts to natural resources, as discussed below. **The East Side roadway corridor as identified does not appear to be compatible with Steele County's Local Water Plan due to adverse impacts to wetlands and water quality. The corridor is also incompatible with the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Plan since the corridor will cause wetland losses, when alternatives that avoid wetlands are available.**

Maple Creek is paralleled by existing county roads north and south of the valley. These routes provide good access to Interstate 35 and downtown Owatonna. They cross Maple Creek on an existing bridge and also connect with each other within a mile of the new crossing. The project could avoid impacts to Maple Creek and much of the wetland impact associated with this project by ending the road at County Road 35, rather than running it north and then west to County Road 8.

The EAW adequately describes existing land uses, **but fails to address wildlife use, populations and habitats, except a brief mention of winter use. Maple Creek is a critical wildlife habitat area and corridor. The potential impacts to wildlife populations and habitats are inadequately described.**

Although the proposed corridor does not bisect the Maple Creek Deer Wintering Area, it is adjacent to the area and would cross an important route for deer traveling to and from the wintering area. **The Maple Creek valley is the largest deer wintering area in Steele County (in terms of both size and numbers of deer using it). The proposed corridor would also impact**



winter habitats for other species, including economically important protected species such as wild turkey, ring-necked pheasant, muskrat, mink, raccoon, and red fox.

The EAW incorrectly notes that there are no listed mussel species associated with the corridor. Our records indicate that there is one species of special concern, the spike mussel (*Elliptio dilatata*) from Maple Creek near the corridor. Since there has been no thorough biological survey of Maple Creek or Steele County, the presence of endangered or threatened species such as Blanding's turtle (known from Maple Creek upstream of this proposed corridor) cannot be ruled out.

The area associated with Maple Creek also provides habitat and a travel corridor for numerous migratory species including economically important waterfowl. The corridor is habitat for numerous species of protected song birds including species exhibiting long term declines like the common yellowthroat. Again, the importance of the Maple Creek travel corridor cannot be over-emphasized.

Proposed mitigation for loss of woody cover along Maple Creek calls for additional planting of trees along shoreland areas that are presently in grassy cover. Natural grassy shorelines are also important habitats. Replacing one valuable habitat with another does not mitigate for habitat losses. Any planting for mitigation should target restoring disturbed areas such as lawns to natural habitats.

The discussion of wildlife impacts also fails to mention that the proposed corridor will bisect wetlands identified as numbers 6 and 7, including partial filling of wetland 7. The Wetland Conservation Act requires that wetland impacts be avoided where feasible. The EAW provides no compelling reason for not routing the corridor around these two basins, to avoid wetland impacts and to avoid having a roadway between these nearby basins. The road would unnecessarily increase habitat fragmentation and become a major barrier to movement for many aquatic species, especially amphibians and turtles. In addition, significant sedimentation can be expected during construction, even with best management practices in place. Icing salts, sands, oils and other pollutants associated with a road will cause water quality deterioration in basins within or near the corridor. The corridor should be planned to avoid these types of wetland and habitat impacts, even along the edges. There should be an adequate buffer between the corridor and wetland basins to preserve or improve water quality even during construction. The best means of avoiding wetland impacts is to preserve a corridor for a roadway that does not cross or fragment these wetlands and associated habitat areas. Since these wetland losses can be predicted in advance of any right of way acquisition, all wetland losses should be mitigated on site. Right-of-way acquisition and the proposed corridor should include drained wetlands that would be restored for mitigation.

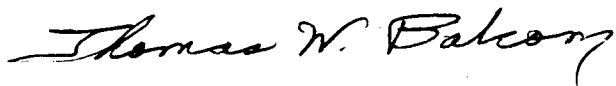
Crossing the Highway 80/DM&E railroad right-of-way is very likely to destroy good quality prairie communities. These habitats are extremely rare in Minnesota and Steele County.

The bridge crossing of Maple Creek will require a MDNR Protected Waters permit. Also, all the alternatives identified in the EAW cross Maple Creek in a "detailed study area" for flood insurance purposes; increases in flood stage from a crossing interpreted to be of 0.1 foot or greater will require an amendment to the effective flood insurance study.

Because of the potential for this project to facilitate additional development in the area, the City and County should consider initiating a more comprehensive review, such as an Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) as provided for in Minnesota Rules 4410.3610. AUARs afford responsible governmental units (RGUs) the opportunity to proactively address the environmental issues associated with developing an area such that any potentially significant environmental effects are avoided. For more information on the AUAR process, please contact Jon Larsen of the Environmental Quality Board at (651) 296-3865.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project. We look forward to receiving your record of decision and responses to comments. Minnesota Rules part 4410.1700, subparts 4 & 5, require you to send us your Record of Decision within five days of deciding this action. If you have any questions regarding these comments, please contact Ken Wald of my staff at (651) 296-4790.

Sincerely,



Thomas W. Balcom, Supervisor
Natural Resources Environmental Review Section
Office of Management and Budget Services

c:	Bret Anderson	Charles Kjos, US F&WS
	Con Christianson	Jon Larsen, EQB
	Larry Nelson	David Strand, City of Owatonna
	Don Nelson	

#990321-1
eawowato.wpd

STEELE COUNTY Planning Department

630 Florence Avenue
P.O. Box 890
Owatonna, MN 55060

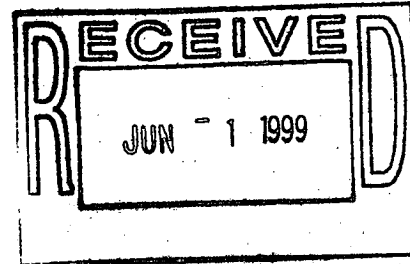


Michael Caron, *Director*

Telephone: 507-444-7475
FAX: 507-455-9688

May 21, 1999

Thomas W. Balcom, Supervisor
Natural Resources Environmental Review Section
Office of Management and Budget Services
MN Dept of Natural Resources
500 Lafayette Road
St. Paul, MN 55155



Re: EAW for Owatonna East Side Corridor Project

Dear Mr. Balcom:

Steele County has reviewed your comments concerning the East Side Corridor. Urban sprawl has long been a concern of County, City and Township officials and all have enacted policies to ensure orderly growth. Steele County currently enforces a land use plan and zoning ordinance designed to direct development in or immediately adjacent to existing urbanized areas. Owatonna's land use plan encourages in-fill strategies within their current boundaries. New annexations for development are governed by an annexation agreement with Owatonna Township. **This agreement allows expansion of the City only when the supply of available lots is below a specified level.** We do not feel the construction of this roadway will create or encourage urban sprawl.

Several routes were considered and studied for a possible East Side Corridor. After traffic studies demonstrated the need for this project, we undertook the process of locating the roadway. We had concerns about potential impacts to the Maple Creek Corridor, native prairie, wetlands, and wildlife. We also had to consider social, cultural and economic impacts during this process. Our sequencing was avoidance, minimization and finally mitigation. As we have stated, we feel the study area of the EAW best balances the anticipated impacts with the existing and projected needs of the community.

During and after construction we will employ best management practices to minimize impacts to several things including water quality. If mitigation of wetlands is necessary we will follow procedures required by MN Wetland Conversation Act. We realize a crossing of Maple Creek will require a DNR Protected Waters Permit and understand the requirements when flood stage is impacted. We will look forward to suggestions and consider additional comments by DNR staff when wetland mitigation is necessary and when we apply for a Protected Waters Permit.

Sincerely,

Michael Caron
Steele County Planning Director

STEELE COUNTY

Planning Department

630 Florence Avenue
P.O. Box 890
Owatonna, MN 55060



Michael Caron, *Director*

Telephone: 507-444-7475
FAX: 507-455-9688

May 20, 1999

Mr. David Wulff
Supervisor of Policy, Planning & Analysis Unit
Division of Environmental Health
121 East Seventh Place
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: Docket #: 98007

Dear Mr. Wulff:

Thank you for your recommendations regarding the Environmental Assessment Worksheet for the Owatonna East Side Corridor project in Steele County, Minnesota.

We have reviewed aerial maps from 1938, 1958, 1964 and 1980 and find no evidence of farmsteads located in the project area other than those that are still present today. This evidence leads us to believe that there are no unused, unsealed wells in the study area.

If, during the design or construction process, evidence indicates the presence of a well, actions will be taken in accordance with Minnesota Rules, Chapter 4725.

If you have any questions on our review of the data, please contact me at 507-444-7482.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael Caron". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael Caron
Planning Director

STEELE COUNTY Planning Department

630 Florence Avenue
P.O. Box 890
Owatonna, MN 55060



Michael Caron, *Director*

Telephone: 507-444-7475
FAX: 507-455-9688

May 20, 1999

Mr. Dennis A. Gimmestad
Government Programs & Compliance Officer
Minnesota Historic Preservation Office
345 Kellogg Boulevard West
St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

RE: EAW – Owatonna East Side Corridor
Owatonna, Steele County
SHPO Number: 99-1750

Dear Mr. Gimmestad:

Thank you for your recommendations and list of consultants regarding the Environmental Assessment Worksheet for the Owatonna East Side Corridor project in Steele County, Minnesota.

To our knowledge, the project area has not been previously disturbed or previously surveyed. It has always been our intent to complete an archaeological survey of the Maple Creek crossing area. Once a preliminary design of the crossing has been completed and we can define the limits of disturbance, a survey will be undertaken pursuant to contemporary standards.

We have also reviewed aerial maps from 1938, 1958, 1964 and 1980 and find no evidence of structures in the study area.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 507-444-7482.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Caron". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a vertical line that extends from the "Sincerely," above.

Michael Caron
Planning Director