



East Side Corridor

PROJECT UPDATE



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For more information, visit the project website at www.eastsidecorridor.com



More Information



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Next Steps

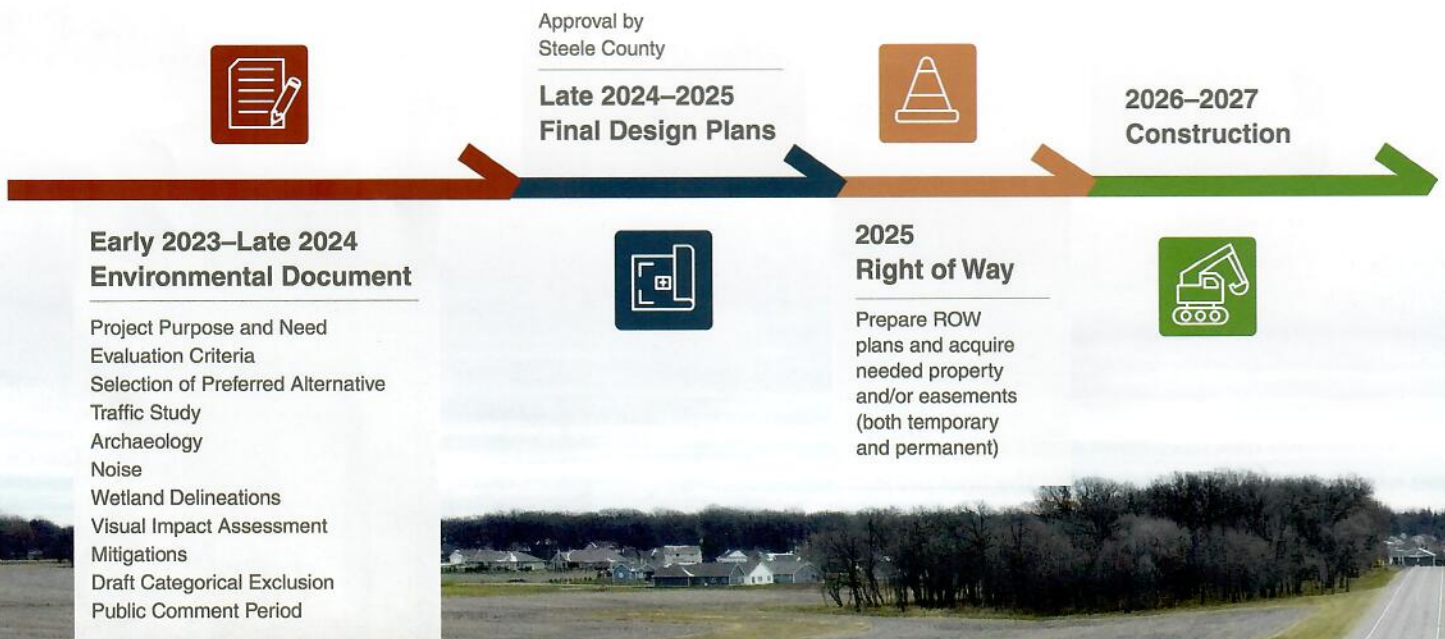
The team is currently completing environmental review documents for this project. This includes a series of reports describing the impact of the East Side Corridor project on people and the environment. The reports study impact on traffic, cultural resources, noise and wetlands. They also document the efforts required to avoid, minimize, and mitigate these impacts. As the project team works to complete the environmental documents, the next step will be evaluating the various corridor alternatives as described in the Evaluation Criteria Memo, obtaining FHWA's concurrence on the Evaluation of Alternatives, and selecting the preferred alternative. This step is anticipated to be completed by spring or early summer of 2024.

The preferred alternative will be brought into the State of Minnesota Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) and the Federal Environmental Assessment. The project team hopes to complete both the State and Federal environmental documentation processes by later this year. Both documents will be available for public comment before being finalized, and only then approved by the County Board.

Specific reports completed before the environmental review documents will be posted on the project website once appropriate agency approvals have been received. The County anticipates posting information related to traffic, noise, cultural resources, and other impact areas this summer.

Later this spring, County and City staff will hold meetings with stakeholder groups during the environmental documentation process to discuss potential project impacts related to the preferred alternative and potential strategies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate these impacts. The project will then proceed into final design, with construction scheduled for 2026-2027.

All timelines are subject to change, especially due to the anticipated extended periods that state and federal agencies need to review the documents submitted throughout the process.



Project Study History

The East Side Corridor project proposes to build a north-south roadway on the east side of Owatonna from near the intersection of Bixby Rd and 18th Street SE to Kenyon Road with an extension of 26th Street NE. Over the decades that the project has been considered, the project has evolved from the vision as a beltline arterial highway connecting regional routes around Owatonna to being an interior collector route connecting city neighborhoods.

The project team recognizes it has taken a long time to get to this point in the environmental process. One of the contributing factors to this timeline has been changes in direction the County has received from FHWA regarding required steps in the environmental process, including the level of required environmental documentation. This has

resulted in changes to the alternative evaluation process. FHWA provided directions regarding the environmental documentation process in late 2023 that the County is currently following. This process now involves more review by FHWA than previously required and therefore extends the project timeline. The change in direction also came in part from the public input received during community and stakeholder meetings in 2022 and 2023.

While the changes and subsequent delays that come with these decisions and processes present challenges, the time and effort they will require will help ensure Steele County, the City of Owatonna, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and the FHWA work together to meet the goals of the project and community in a comprehensive manner.

“The project, which has been decades in the planning, will address the critical need for a north – south collector route on the east side of Owatonna. This project will improve mobility options for residents and businesses within the city as well as all eastern Steele County. It will facilitate the City’s growth and significantly contribute to its economic development. Without this corridor traffic downtown will continue to increase and create congestion which will have a detrimental impact on the economic development of the city.”

Mike Herman, Board Chair of the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism and,
Brad Meier, President of the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism



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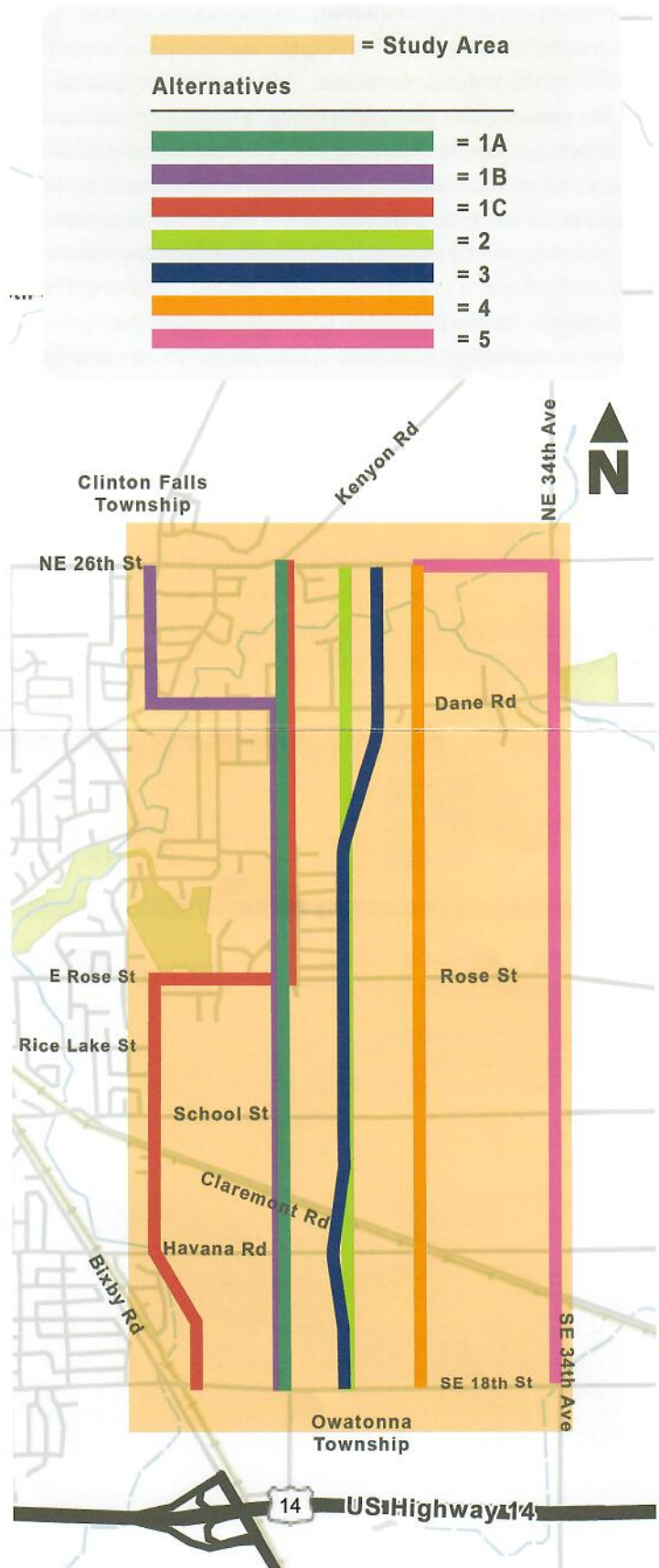
Officials from Steele County and the City of Owatonna are pleased to announce the proposed East Side Corridor project has achieved a milestone in the Federal environmental process, also referred to as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has accepted the project's Purpose and Need Memo and Evaluation Criteria Memo.

Why do these documents matter?

The Purpose and Need Memo explains why the County and City are undertaking the East Side Corridor Project and the objectives the project hopes to achieve. The "purpose" is a broad statement of the intended results and objectives to be achieved by the project (for example, connectivity of transportation network or roadway system, the roadway system's ability to meet near-term and future travel needs, or improved travel and safety conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians). The "need" identifies transportation problems or deficiencies the project will address (for example, traffic congestion, mobility, ease of getting from one place to another, or safety of road users among others).

The 'Evaluation Criteria' are a group of measures used to compare a set of alternatives identified for consideration as part of a new roadway project. The Evaluation Criteria Memo for the East Side Corridor presents the proposed evaluation criteria that will be used to assess various alternative corridors being considered. The purpose of evaluating these options is to figure out which ones best serve project needs and goals and provide desirable benefits, balanced with considerations of costs and impacts.

The two memos that have been approved by FHWA and which will be incorporated into the final project environmental documentation, are now available for the public to view on the project website under the Timeline & Process tab at www.eastsidecorridor.com



To view the Purpose and Need Memo and the Evaluation Criteria Memo scan this QR code or visit the Timeline & Process section of the website at www.eastsidecorridor.com.