

1.0 SUMMARY

The proposed project, described in Section 1.4, is to upgrade Interstate 494 (I-494) between the I-494/I-394 interchange and the Minnesota River (see Figure 1.1). This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) has been prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), and in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for FEIS preparation. The document also meets the environmental documentation requirements of the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act and Rules adopted by the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board for preparation of a state FEIS. The 1992 I-494 reconstruction Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is incorporated by reference herein and made a part of the FEIS.

1.1 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

Increasing congestion, outdated facility design, declining physical condition of the existing roadway facilities, and environmental issues have resulted in the identification of a need to initiate roadway improvements along the segment of I-494 from I-394 to the Minnesota River. These issues are of special concern, due to the corridor's importance as a regional and interstate transportation corridor, as described below.

1.1.1 ROLE IN THE REGIONAL AND FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Interstate 494 is a principal arterial roadway that serves as a key component of the Twin Cities metropolitan highway system, as defined by the Metropolitan Council in its *Transportation Policy Plan 2000*. Interstate-494 is the southern half of a circumferential route around the Twin Cities, and serves as a collector/distribution facility for other metropolitan area highways, as well as an urban bypass for interstate or interregional trips. In addition, I-494 provides access to/from the rest of the metropolitan area for the rapidly-growing population and employment bases in the southwestern suburbs as well as access to the metro area from Greater Minnesota. Within the study area, I-494 intersects with nine other principal arterial highways that provide access between suburban areas and from the suburbs to downtown Minneapolis.

Interstate 494 is part of the National Highway System, created by the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. The purpose of establishing the National Highway System was to focus federal resources on roads that are most important to interstate travel and national defense, roads that connect with other modes of transportation, and roads that are essential for international commerce.

As part of the National Highway System, as well as the Twin Cities metropolitan highway system, I-494 plays an important role in maintaining the efficiency and accessibility of the transportation system and in contributing to local and national economic vitality by facilitating the movement of goods and people.

Figure 1.1 8-1/2 x 11

1.1.2 NEED FOR PROPOSED PROJECT

The segment of I-494 under study in this FEIS is currently experiencing congestion problems during peak travel periods. Growing travel demand along the I-494 corridor is anticipated to further increase corridor congestion, thus further reducing vehicle travel speeds and increasing delays over longer periods of time for I-494 users.

The regional travel forecast model was used to reassess existing and future congestion along the corridor. The model indicated that under existing (1999) conditions, 74 percent of the I-494 corridor between I-394 and the Minnesota River currently operates under congested conditions (i.e., level of service [LOS] D or worse) for at least one hour of the day, with 43 percent operating at LOS E or F (slow-and-go/stop-and-go). The model also indicates that 24 percent of the roadway length is operating at LOS D or worse for four or more hours of the day. For future No-Build conditions (year 2022), 83 percent of the freeway would operate at LOS D or worse for at least one hour, but the duration and magnitude of congestion would increase substantially: 52 percent of the freeway would be congested for four or more hours per day and 65 percent would experience at least one hour of LOS E/F conditions. Fourteen percent of the roadway would operate at LOS D or worse for at least six hours of the day for 2022 No-Build conditions.

The forecast model was also used to estimate the existing and 2022 No-Build average peak hour travel speeds along the corridor. The estimated existing (1999) average peak hour speeds are 64 to 68 km/h (40 to 42 mph) in the morning and 58 to 61 km/h (36 to 38 mph) in the afternoon. By 2022, these speeds would drop to 50 to 56 km/h (31 to 35 mph) in the morning and 42 to 48 km/h (26 to 30 mph) in the afternoon. The posted speed limit along the I-494 corridor is currently 96 km/h (60 mph).

Improvements to this corridor are also needed to correct existing facility deficiencies, including physical deterioration due to the age of the facility and design deficiencies resulting from changes in roadway design standards since construction of I-494 in the 1950s/1960s. In addition, traffic demand along the corridor has grown well beyond the levels the facility was designed to handle. Following are some of the specific deficiencies in the I-494 corridor.

- The I-494 pavement has reached the end of its design life and is in need of replacement.
- Several bridges along the I-494 corridor are in need of either deck or total structure replacement.
- Segments of I-494 between TH 100 and TH 77 currently have inadequate shoulder widths, which can create safety concerns.
- There is an inadequate lateral clearance between the edge of the outside traffic lane and the retaining wall for the section of I-494 between Lyndale and Nicollet Avenues.
- Several bridges along I-494 have inadequate vertical clearances between the road surface and the bottom of the bridge.

- There are a number of locations within the I-494 corridor (i.e., between Penn Avenue and 34th Avenue) that do not meet the minimum interchange and ramp spacing guidelines.
- Inadequate storm water drainage capacity and roadway profiles exist in some areas, which can result in flooding under some of the cross-street underpasses during periods of heavy rain.

Reconstruction of I-494 would also provide an opportunity to address existing environmental concerns in the corridor area. The existing roadway was designed prior to implementation of storm water treatment regulations. As a result, most of the roadway runoff is currently discharged untreated from the corridor area. Also, continued congestion on I-494 will also result in increased air quality problems along the corridor, as idling vehicles are a source of carbon monoxide pollution. The existing and projected future congestion on I-494 will also result in increased traffic and congestion on local arterials and on other local residential streets as motorists look for alternatives to the congested routes. The increase in local roadway traffic would, in turn, cause increased traffic noise, safety problems, and air pollution in local neighborhoods.

1.2 PROJECT HISTORY

1.2.1 PROJECT PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION

In 1986, the Metropolitan Council initiated the *I-494 Corridor Study* (“Corridor Study”) in cooperation with Mn/DOT, the Regional Transit Board, the Metropolitan Airports Commission, Hennepin County, and the cities of Richfield, Bloomington, Edina, Eden Prairie, and Minnetonka.

The intent of the Corridor Study was to provide a planning framework for further work in the I-494 corridor. The study objectives included: producing a design concept for the major transportation facilities in the corridor; identifying transit and travel demand management strategies; identifying development levels and land use types compatible with the proposed transportation infrastructure; and recommending a strategy for implementation of the proposed transportation improvements. The Corridor Study concluded with recommendations to add one additional lane in each direction, reserve space in the median for future needs, study the high occupancy vehicle (HOV) option, improve interchanges, and enhance the parallel roadway system, specifically 77th Street between TH 77 and I-35W, and 79th/80th Street between 34th Avenue and East Bush Lake Road.

As a result of the recommendations from the Corridor Study, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) preparation process was initiated in 1989 through a jointly funded effort of Mn/DOT, the five corridor cities, and Improve I-494, a private sector travel management organization (TMO). In December 1989, a Scoping Document and Draft Scoping Decision Document for the I-494 reconstruction project were published for public review. These documents defined and analyzed an initial group of alternatives considered for the I-494 corridor,

including adding one or more lanes in each direction, potential light rail transit, relocating the freeway, as well as the minimum improvement and no-build options. A public meeting was held in January 1990 to receive comments on the documents.

In September 1990, a Final Scoping Decision Document was prepared. This document defined the alternatives retained from the Scoping Document that were to be considered for more detailed analysis in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). More information regarding the alternatives in the DEIS is provided in Section 1.3.2 of this document.

The DEIS was completed in April 1992 and was followed by a public review period. This review period concluded in June 1992 with a formal Public Hearing. The comments received from agencies, organizations, and the general public in response to the DEIS were considered by Mn/DOT in the identification of a preferred alternative in January 1993.

Following the identification of Alternative 2A (see Section 1.3.2 discussion) as the Preferred Alternative in 1993, Mn/DOT initiated design development and environmental impact analyses for the preparation of a FEIS. However, due to the inability to define a funding source for the 1993 Preferred Alternative improvements, the EIS process was suspended and remained inactive between 1995 and 1999.

The Preferred Alternative currently under consideration in this FEIS has been reduced in scale compared to the 1993 Preferred Alternative, to bring the estimated costs in line with anticipated project funding availability. Phase I of the proposed I-494 reconstruction project (TH 212/Flying Cloud Drive to TH 100) was included in the Metropolitan Council's 2000-2002 *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP). The current Preferred Alternative has been defined and discussed within the context of the overall EIS process in a DEIS Re-evaluation, which was prepared by Mn/DOT and FWH (February 2001). This DEIS Re-evaluation determined that the 1993 DEIS was still valid and that a supplemental DEIS would not have to be prepared prior to moving forward with the FEIS process.

1.2.2 CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS COMPLETED IN THE I-494 STUDY CORRIDOR SINCE THE DEIS

Since the publication of the I-494 DEIS in 1992, a number of maintenance (primarily bridge replacement) and transportation system management (transit and HOV access improvements) projects have been completed within the corridor. Projects for which environmental review documentation was prepared are listed chronologically below.

- Bridge Redeck-I-35W Interchange (completed 1995); a Project Memorandum (Categorical Exclusion determination) for this project (SP 2785-284, and SP 2785-6850) was completed in November 1994.
- MCTO Bus Access to HOV Ramp Meter Bypass at Southbound 24th Avenue to Westbound I-494 (completed 1996); a Project Memorandum (Categorical Exclusion determination) for this project (SP 2785-296) was completed in July 1996.

- Bridge Redeck–Bridge 9079 at Portland Avenue over I-494 (completed 1997); a Project Memorandum (Categorical Exclusion determination) for this project (SP 2785-9079) was completed in April 1997.
- Interchange Reconstruction–I-494/TH 169 Interchange (completed 1998); a Project Memorandum (Categorical Exclusion determination) for this project (SP 2785-290) was completed in March of 1997.
- Reconstruction of I-494 from CSAH 5 to Stone Road including Bridge Replacement (completed 1999); a Project Memorandum (Categorical Exclusion determination) for this project (SP 2785-307) was completed in February of 1998.
- Addition of HOV Bypass at Valley View Road Northbound Ramp to I-494 (completed 1999); a Project Memorandum (Categorical Exclusion determination) for this project (SP 2785-320) was completed in January 1999. An Addendum to this Project Memorandum was approved in April 1999.
- Reconstruction of the TH 5/I-494 Interchange (completed 2000); a Project Memorandum (Categorical Exclusion determination) for this project (SP 2785-309) was completed in June 1998.
- Reconstruction of Penn Avenue/I-494 Interchange (to be completed 2002); a Project Memorandum (Categorical Exclusion determination) for this project (SP2785-328) has been prepared by the City of Richfield.

Additional information on these projects is provided in Appendix A of the FEIS.

1.3 ALTERNATIVES NOT SELECTED

1.3.1 ALTERNATIVES DISMISSED PRIOR TO THE DEIS

New Location Alternative

The construction of a new replacement or supplemental I-494 facility within a new right-of-way was considered to be infeasible because the project area is intensely developed, and the social, economic, and environmental impacts of this alternative would be substantially greater than those that would occur with expansion of the existing facility. The construction of a new supplemental facility would not address the deteriorated condition of the present I-494 roadway or bridge structures.

Light Rail Transit

Light rail transit (LRT) was dismissed as an alternative in the *I-494 Corridor Study* based on the findings of the *Long-Range Transit Analysis*, completed by the Metropolitan Council in 1986 and a ridership forecast developed during the Corridor Study. The Metropolitan Council study established 23,000 daily riders as the minimum viability threshold for LRT in the freeway median. These low ridership projections (6,000 riders per day forecast for the I-494 corridor) and the high capital cost of LRT on a freeway right-of-way lead to a very low cost-benefit ratio and very high cost per rider index for LRT in the I-494 corridor. As a result of the ridership and benefit-cost analyses, the Metropolitan Council does not indicate I-494 as a potential LRT corridor in its most recent *Transportation Policy Plan* (2000) or *Transit 2020 Master Plan* for the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area.

1.3.2 ALTERNATIVES DISMISSED AFTER THE DEIS

The alternatives analyzed in the DEIS included No-Build and Transportation System Management (TSM) options, in addition to the following expansion options:

- Alternative 1 – add one general traffic lane in each direction
- Alternative 1A – add one high occupancy vehicle lane in each direction
- Alternative 2 – add two general traffic lanes, one initially, and reserve right-of-way for a second as needed in the future
- Alternative 2A – add two lanes, an HOV lane initially with right-of-way reserved for a general traffic lane as needed in the future

The No-Build Alternative has been dismissed because it would not adequately address existing or future congestion, transportation and infrastructure needs as summarized in Section 1.1 of this document. (However, consistent with state and federal EIS analysis requirements, the No-Build Alternative was retained for study in the FEIS as the basis for comparison with the Preferred Alternative impacts.) Transportation system management, as a separate alternative by itself, was dismissed for the same reason. (Many TSM measures have been implemented in the I-494 corridor since the DEIS, and TSM is now considered part of the No-Build Alternative.) In January 1993, Alternative 2A was selected as the Preferred Alternative on the basis of being considered best able to meet the needs identified for the project as summarized in Section 1.1.

However, in 1994 the I-494 reconstruction project was removed from the Metropolitan Council's *Transportation Development Guide/Policy Plan* due to federal requirements for financial constraint in regional transportation planning, and insufficient available funding to construct the 1993 Preferred Alternative. In 2000, Mn/DOT reinitiated the I-494 EIS process with corridor improvements that were reduced in scale and cost relative to the 1993 Preferred Alternative.

1.4 PROPOSED ACTION

The current Preferred Alternative combines elements of the various alternatives evaluated in the DEIS to provide many of the benefits of the 1993 Preferred Alternative, but at lower cost. It has the following primary characteristics:

- One additional through lane in each direction for the full length of the project corridor.
- Auxiliary lanes will be provided as follows: one auxiliary lane each direction between TH 5 (Eden Prairie) and TH 100; two auxiliary lanes each direction between TH 100 and I-35W; one auxiliary lane each direction between I-35W and TH 77.
- Between TH 169 and 24th Avenue, 7.3 meters (26 feet) will be reserved in the median for future undetermined transportation use.
- Outside shoulders will be constructed to accommodate buses during peak travel periods to provide transit preference.
- Interchanges and bridges will be reconstructed throughout the corridor to meet current design standards and to improve capacity and operational characteristics to the extent that available funding will allow.
- Transportation Management System (TMS) components will be provided, such as vehicle Detector Systems, Integrated Corridor Traffic Management, and Intelligent Transportation System technology.

Ramp meter HOV bypass ramps will be implemented in the I-494 reconstruction corridor consistent with overall Mn/DOT policy as stated in the *2001 Transportation System Plan* (Mn/DOT Metro Division). This policy indicates that HOV bypasses of ramp meters will be pursued where feasible over the 20-year planning horizon of the *2001 Transportation System Plan*. After results of the ramp meter study (conducted by Mn/DOT in 2000-2001) are finalized, the Metro Division will undertake a system-wide study, working with Metro Transit and other Travel Demand Management (TDM) partners, to determine the locations, scope, and level of priority for candidate HOV bypass projects, which will lead to the more efficient use of the transportation system.

1.5 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

1.5.1 TRANSPORTATION

1.5.1.1 I-494 Corridor and Regional System Operations

The Twin Cities' regional forecast model was used to compare regional freeway operations for existing, 2022 No-Build and 2022 Build conditions, based on a comparison of forecast volumes to estimated freeway capacities. Regional freeways in the study area are currently operating at congested (LOS D) or heavily congested (LOS E/F) levels. Performance levels will continue to

worsen by the year 2022 for No-Build conditions. Construction of the Preferred Alternative would result in fewer heavily congested regional roadways for 2022 conditions in the peak hour, compared to the No-Build Alternative.

In addition to the location of congestion, the expected duration of congestion can also be estimated using the regional forecast model data. An estimated 74 percent of I-494 currently operates at LOS D or worse for at least one hour of the day, with 43 percent operating at LOS E or F (slow-and-go/stop-and-go). Currently, 24 percent is operating at LOS D or worse for four or more hours of the day.

Under the No-Build Alternative, 83 percent of the freeway would operate at LOS D or worse for at least one hour, but the duration of congestion and magnitude of the congestion would increase substantially compared to current conditions, with 52 percent of the freeway congested four or more hours per day and 65 percent experiencing at least one hour of LOS E/F conditions. Fourteen percent of the roadway would operate at LOS D or worse for at least six hours per day.

Under the Preferred Alternative, most of I-494 would still experience some congestion, but the congestion would not last for as long a time period as it would under the No-Build condition. With the Preferred Alternative, 78 percent of the directional kilometers/miles traveled (i.e., eastbound plus westbound) could be expected to operate at LOS D for at least one hour. However, the duration of congestion falls substantially under the Preferred Alternative, with only four percent of the roadway experiencing LOS D or worse for four hours of the day. None of the facility would operate at LOS E/F outside of a single peak hour.

Based on regional travel forecast model analyses of trip times and travel speeds, projected 2022 Preferred Alternative peak hour trip times are comparable to existing conditions and 20 to 27 percent shorter than 2022 No-Build trip times. The analysis also indicates that the 2022 Preferred Alternative peak hour speeds would be similar to existing speeds and 24 to 38 percent faster than 2022 No-Build trip speeds.

1.5.1.2 Changes in Local and Regional Access

The Preferred Alternative would result in changes in access to/from the I-494 corridor at the following interchange locations:

- I-494/TH 62/CSAH 62
- I-494/East Bush Lake Road
- I-494/TH 100
- TH 100/77th Street
- I-494/I-35W area (including Penn and Lyndale Avenue interchanges)
- I-494/Nicollet Avenue
- I-494/Portland Avenue
- I-494/12th Avenue
- I-494/TH 77
- I-494/24th and 34th Avenues

In all cases, the Preferred Alternative concept includes alternative access provisions to/from the regional system wherever access is changed.

Some changes in local system access to adjacent land uses also result from the proposed I-494 reconstruction, as described below on the following page.

TH 212/Flying Cloud Drive to East Bush Lake Road

Frontage roads exist along the portion of this segment between TH 212/Flying Cloud Drive and West Bush Lake Road. The only impact to frontage roads will be a small portion of Marth Road which would need to be shifted slightly to the south of its current alignment. This shift will not result in change of access to any adjacent land use.

East Bush Lake Road to TH 77

Frontage roads exist along the majority of this corridor segment. Many segments of these frontage roads would be removed as part of the Preferred Alternative. Where possible, new access will be provided to adjacent properties by extending adjacent roadways or by reorienting access to parallel reliever arterials. Properties where existing access is removed and no alternative access can be provided would be acquired as part of the project. Green Valley Drive in the southeast quadrant of the East Bush Lake Road/ I-494 interchange would be realigned to the south, maintaining access to the properties that are not being acquired for the project.

1.5.1.3 Transit

The No-Build Alternative would perpetuate the inability of the existing I-494 mainline to efficiently serve transit use, due to limited areas suitable for bus use of shoulders and limited HOV bypass lanes at metered ramps. The Preferred Alternative includes “transit advantage” features such as bus-only use of shoulders throughout the corridor and HOV bypass lanes at meters and ramps where feasible, as discussed in Section 1.4.

There are three proposed transit/rail lines that cross the I-494 corridor study area: the Hiawatha LRT line, the Dan Patch commuter rail corridor, and the Minneapolis Southwest Corridor. The proposed I-494 improvements would have no negative impacts on the development of these transit corridors. The importance of I-494 as a transit route connecting these lines or as a route to access related transit hubs could increase as these lines are developed.

1.5.1.4 Pedestrian and Bicycle Travel

Existing or planned pedestrian/bicycle facilities that cross I-494 will have connections provided as part of the Preferred Alternative construction. Existing crossings will be replaced at or near their present location, and every crossing provided by Mn/DOT will be rebuilt to current Mn/DOT standards (see *Minnesota Bicycle Transportation Planning and Design Guidelines*, Mn/DOT, 1996). Minnesota Department of Transportation staff will work with communities and agencies with facilities in the corridor to assure that any existing or committed pedestrian/bicycle facility improvements are coordinated with I-494 reconstruction plans.

1.5.2 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC

Right-of-Way and Relocation

Right-of-way acquisitions for the proposed project would affect an estimated 291 parcels. The majority of these parcels are within the Richfield/Bloomington portion of the corridor. Overall parcels affected can be broken down into 96 total acquisitions and 195 partial acquisitions. Of the total acquisitions, 61 are residential parcels and 35 are non-residential. The Minnesota Department of Transportation Property Acquisition and Owner Relocation Program and the availability of suitable alternative property would serve to mitigate the impacts of these acquisitions.

Economic/Fiscal

The Preferred Alternative is anticipated to require the total acquisition of 96 parcels. The year 2000 taxes payable for these properties is approximately \$1.0 million. By comparison, 2000 taxes payable for all properties within the five cities in the study area combined is approximately \$295.6 million (includes City School District and Housing and Redevelopment Authority levies). Actual tax revenues lost will be a function of how many of the acquired businesses choose to relocate outside the corridor cities.

The cities with the greatest number of acquisitions are Bloomington and Richfield. The 2000 taxes payable associated with the total acquisition properties in Bloomington is \$853,000, as compared with overall City of Bloomington taxes payable of \$86.5 million. The 2000 taxes payable associated with the total acquisitions in Richfield is \$123,400, as compared with the overall City of Richfield taxes payable of \$24.3 million.

Environmental Justice

Issues that were considered when evaluating the potential for environmental justice impacts included social impacts, right-of-way, access, transit, pedestrian and bicycle travel, visual quality, air quality, noise, and parks. Of these potential issues, only right-of-way and noise would impact study area households where concentrations of low-income and/or minority persons are likely. However, these impacts would not be disproportionately borne by these populations and/or the impacts would be mitigated. This topic is discussed in detail in Section 5.4.4 of the FEIS.

Land Use and Development

The majority of land within the I-494 corridor is already developed. Implementation of the Preferred Alternative would not induce land use changes, but would support in-fill development which is planned within the project corridor. Mn/DOT has coordinated extensively with local governments regarding the proposed project relative to city planning efforts.

Public Facilities

The Preferred Alternative would require the acquisition of the following public facilities within the study area:

Bloomington

- Total acquisition of one park and recreation facility (Beaverbrook Park);
- Partial acquisition of a park/recreation facility (Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve);
- Partial acquisition of park open space (unnamed open space area along Nine Mile Creek east of East Bush Lake Road);
- Partial acquisition of one church (Christ King Lutheran Church – 8600 Freemont Avenue); and
- Total acquisition of one transitional housing facility.

Richfield

- Total acquisition of one nursing home (Richfield Health Center – 7727 Portland Avenue);
- Partial acquisition of two churches (Church of Christ – 7314 Humboldt Avenue; Church of the Assumption – 305 East 77th Street); and
- Partial acquisition of one transitional housing facility.

Mitigation of park losses will be performed consistent with applicable Section 4(f)/6(f) requirements. Other public facility acquisition impacts involve churches and residential-use properties.

The transitional housing facility in Bloomington is a single-family home. As discussed in Section 5.2.3.2 of the FEIS, relocation opportunities for single-family housing may be available due to turnover in the existing single-family stock resulting from anticipated construction of new multifamily housing, particularly senior housing. The Minnesota Department of Transportation has procedures in place to ensure that residents of the nursing home are relocated to facilities which can provide the appropriate level of care for each individual's need. The nursing home business itself could be relocated in the metropolitan area where a suitable site can be found. Minnesota Department of Transportation relocation advisors will assist the affected community facilities in addressing special needs they may have during the relocation process. All property acquisitions and relocations would be conducted in accordance with the Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, as amended, and 49 CFR Part 24. In addition, the policies summarized in the Mn/DOT handbook *Relocation: Your Rights and Benefits*, will be implemented when relocation becomes necessary.

1.5.3 PHYSICAL AND NATURAL IMPACTS

Air Quality

The traffic-related air quality parameter that is generally considered to have the most potential for concern is carbon monoxide (CO). The Environmental Protection Agency recently (1999) reclassified the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area as an attainment area for CO, contingent upon the implementation of measures to assure that CO concentrations remain below applicable standards. The contingency stipulates that future CO concentrations be modeled for proposed transportation projects. Results of modeling done in conformance with federal and state requirements indicates that CO levels will remain below state and federal standards in the project corridor under the Preferred and No-Build Alternatives. In most of the corridor, the Preferred Alternative results showed improved air quality conditions relative to the No-Build Alternative, because of increased capacity and the corresponding decrease in congestion levels associated with the Preferred Alternative.

Noise

State noise standards are lower (more restrictive) than federal noise abatement criteria, and are administered by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). In 1995, an amendment to Minnesota Statute 116.07 provided an exemption for roadway projects from state noise standards if all reasonably available noise mitigation measures, as approved by Mn/DOT and the MPCA, are utilized in the project to abate noise. Federal noise regulations require that every reasonable and feasible effort be made to provide noise mitigation when applicable federal abatement criteria are approached or exceeded.

For locations at which modeled noise levels exceed applicable state and federal thresholds, Mn/DOT has developed a methodology of determining the cost-effectiveness of implementing noise mitigation (most commonly in the form of noise walls). This methodology has been put into practice since issuance of the DEIS. The MPCA concurs that this methodology to determine cost effectiveness is appropriate for assessing the viability of the implementation of noise walls at given locations.

Using preliminary design information and analytical and assessment methods currently in place for transportation projects in Minnesota, analysis prepared for the FEIS showed noise walls to meet cost effectiveness criteria at the following locations:

- East of TH 100, north of 77th Street (Poppy Lane);
- North of I-494 between Xerxes Avenue and Penn Avenue;
- An apartment complex north of I-494 and west of Portland Avenue;
- North of I-494 between Portland Avenue and 12th Avenue; and
- An apartment building north of I-494 and east of 12th Avenue.

Prior to construction of each phase of the project, Mn/DOT will perform a more detailed analysis of cost effectiveness, utilizing final design plans, including additional receptors and multiple iterations of noise wall length and height to find the most cost effective barrier for each area. The results of this analysis will then be reviewed to determine if the most cost effective barrier

for each area meets the cost effectiveness criteria. If, following identification of all feasible and cost effective mitigation locations, there are still areas along the corridor that would exceed state noise standards for the existing land use type, a “Noise Reasonableness and Exemption Request” will be prepared subject to review and final approval by the commissioners of Mn/DOT and the MPCA.

In addition to cost effectiveness, other reasonableness issues such as current and future land use and the desires of adjacent residential and commercial property owners must be taken into account. Commercial property owners (such as with businesses and hotels) may prefer to remain visible to adjacent roads, and this possibility would be considered during the design of any potential noise barriers. In addition, noise barriers would not likely be built in residential areas where future land use is guided for commercial.

Surface Water Drainage/Quality

The proposed project will result in increased impervious surfaces relative to existing and No-Build conditions. This, in turn, would result in increased surface water hydraulic and pollutant loadings in the corridor. The project will include mitigation in the form of new or enhanced detention and treatment facilities to serve the following functions:

- Hydraulic storage (flow control); and
- Treatment and attenuation of pollutant loadings.

Through the EIS process, Mn/DOT has coordinated extensively with cities and watershed districts within the corridor to discuss and confirm appropriate surface water routing and detention/treatment approaches. The Minnesota Department of Transportation has developed a conceptual plan for addressing storm water discharge and water quality issues in the I-494 corridor. For each construction phase of the I-494 reconstruction project, Mn/DOT will develop more detailed surface water conveyance, detention and treatment facility design plans, coordinating with the appropriate local and state surface regulatory agencies, prior to permitting.

Floodplains

Floodplain encroachment from the Preferred Alternative is limited to two watercourses: County Ditch 34 and Nine Mile Creek (North and South Forks). County Ditch 34 would sustain transverse and longitudinal encroachments on both sides of the highway where the ditch passes under I-494, due to widening of lanes and shoulders. However, these encroachments would not result in substantive impacts to the County Ditch 34 floodplain.

The floodplain of Nine Mile Creek would be affected both positively (through pond and mitigation site volumes) and negatively (through roadway encroachments). A complete floodplain analysis for Nine Mile Creek is currently underway in conjunction with final design plan development for the Phase I implementation area, and proposed mitigation, if required to maintain existing floodplain limits, will be finalized after the design and impacts are confirmed. Development of final design floodplain mitigation will include working with the Nine Mile Creek Watershed District to identify appropriate mitigation strategies, involving floodplain

volume replacement and/or changes in discharge rates to achieve the goal of maintaining or reducing existing flood stage levels. Floodplain volume replacement could include construction of ponds or wetland areas within floodplain areas. Discharge rate control would involve increasing or decreasing discharge rates, as needed, by increasing or decreasing system flow capacity (e.g., changing culvert or channel design) and/or storage. The proposed project will conform to all state and local (city and watershed) floodplain protection standards and mitigation requirements.

Groundwater

The Preferred Alternative is not anticipated to have groundwater impacts. There will be increased impervious surfaces in the project area relative to existing and No-Build conditions; however, these increases, relative to overall existing impervious surfaces in the project area, should not be large enough to noticeably affect regional groundwater recharge rates. Proposed new ponding locations and water quality control swales are anticipated to provide a degree of groundwater recharge. No new permanent de-watering activities are anticipated with the Preferred Alternative. For any de-watering required during construction activities, the necessary permits and authorizations will be obtained.

Wetlands

As part of the EIS process, extensive efforts have been utilized to identify, map, and assess existing wetlands in the I-494 corridor. Because the project involves the expansion of an existing roadway with wetlands in close proximity, the degree to which impacts to wetland areas can be avoided or minimized is limited. However, using the existing center median area to add roadway width from I-394 south to the TH 169 interchange area (a distance of approximately 15.3 kilometers [9.5 miles]) will help avoid and minimize wetland impacts for this portion of the project. Design approaches at other individual locations have been used to further limit wetland impacts.

An estimated 35 wetland basins will be impacted by the Preferred Alternative. The fill impacts are estimated to total approximately 9.1 hectares (22.5 acres). State and federal wetland regulations require mitigation in the form of replacement of unavoidable losses of wetland functions and values. Unavoidable wetland losses will be mitigated for each phase of project construction in compliance with requirements of wetland regulations in effect at the time of construction (e.g., the Minnesota Wetland Conservation Act [WCA] and the federal Clean Water Act [Section 404]). Mitigation generally involves replacing lost wetland areas with areas of equal or greater value. Currently, WCA requires replacement at a 2:1 ratio. Every effort will be made to define and implement replacement sites in proximity to the project corridor. However, the fact that the corridor is generally heavily developed limits this approach. To the degree that mitigation must take place outside the project corridor, Mn/DOT will continue to coordinate with Hennepin Conservation District to locate and design off-site wetland replacement. A wetland compensation plan for replacement of affected wetland areas will be developed to conform to permitting requirements during final design for each phase of the Preferred Alternative.

Potential Soil and Water Contamination Sites

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was performed in November of 2000 for the I-494 reconstruction project corridor. This ESA identified 87 known or potentially contaminated sites that are located within the estimated construction limits for the proposed project. Eighteen of these sites have been categorized as “Sites of Concern” because of the type and magnitude of environmental impact based upon available information. Using information from the ESA, it does not appear that any of the sites identified are serious enough to require the project design concept to be substantially altered or abandoned. Prior to construction, further investigations will be performed consistent with applicable environmental regulations. Where necessary, modifications to the project will be evaluated to minimize or avoid impacts to any contaminated portions of the sites.

Stream or Water Body Modifications

Two streams would be impacted by the Preferred Alternative: County Ditch 34 south of the TH 62/I-494 interchange and Nine Mile Creek between West Bush Lake Road and TH 100 (both the South and North Forks). A total length of 880 meters (2,881 feet) of these two streams would be impacted, and a total area 0.5 hectare (1.2 acres) would be filled. Complete avoidance of stream and water body impacts would not be possible due to several factors, including the presence of streams and water bodies on both sides of the existing roadway alignment, and the need to widen the roadway to meet capacity requirements and current roadway design standards. Impacts will be minimized to the extent practicable by utilizing steep fill slopes or structures for the road improvements, where feasible.

Section 6.7 of the FEIS discusses impacts on water bodies through the discussion of impacts on MnDNR wetlands (public waters). Wetland Basins 8, 25, 37, 54, 63, 64, 69, 70 73, 74A and 75 are MnDNR Protected Waters that may be impacted by the Preferred Alternative. Total impacts on MnDNR Protected Waters are estimated as 5.7 hectares (13.9 acres). Any impacts to these basins will require replacement wetlands as compensation.

Prior to construction of each project phase, the exact areas of impact (and mitigation) will be determined based on final design plans, regulations will be reviewed to determine replacement requirements and ratios and permitting requirements, and detailed mitigation plans for impacts on streams and water bodies would be coordinated with the appropriate regulatory agencies.

1.5.4 CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

Some impacts associated with construction activities, most notably traffic disruption, are unavoidable. However, every effort will be made to limit or mitigate impacts when feasible. While the overall duration of the project is anticipated to be ten to 15 years, the corridor will be divided into logical and usable sections that can be reconstructed over two- or three-year time periods. This will reduce the length of time over which the impacts may occur in a particular area.

The reconstruction of I-494 will require extensive planning efforts to minimize the disruption associated with construction activities. A construction management plan will be developed

during preliminary and final design which will be used to minimize disruptions and detours, and to ensure access to affected properties. A Mn/DOT Corridor Coordinator will oversee construction phasing and activities to limit traffic and access impacts to the degree practicable. At least two traffic lanes in each direction will be maintained during peak periods to the extent feasible. Disruption of freeway-to-freeway movements at interchanges will be minimized. Local street interchanges may be closed for limited periods of time; however, simultaneous closure of adjacent interchanges will be avoided when possible. Travelers will be kept informed of construction activities and on-going traffic conditions through informational signage, distribution of newsletters and brochures, press releases, and promotional activities coordinated with neighborhoods, cities, retailers, employers, and other groups.

There will be air quality and noise impacts associated with construction activities. Air quality impacts will result from increased traffic congestion levels caused by construction-related traffic disruption and other factors. Traffic congestion problems will be mitigated through the measures identified above. Noise impacts will be caused primarily by the operation of construction equipment. Permanent noise walls will be constructed as early as possible within each construction phase. For both air quality and noise impacts, the staging of construction activities will limit the duration of impacts for individual locations.

1.5.5 SECTION 4(F) AND 6(F) EVALUATION

The Preferred Alternative will impact one Section 4(f)/6(f) property (Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve) and two Section 4(f) properties (Beaverbrook Field and Unnamed Open Space). All impacted areas are within the City of Bloomington.

- Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve—The Preferred Alternative would require the acquisition of up to 1.8 hectares (4.4 acres) of this 1,038 hectares (2,565 acres) park facility. The acquisition would be within the Highwood Corridor, which is a 44-hectare (108-acre) sub-area jointly owned by the City of Bloomington and Hennepin Parks. Land and Water Conservation (LAWCON) and Metropolitan Council park development funds were used, among other sources, to acquire property within the Highwood Corridor sub-area, therefore requiring impact analysis and mitigation in conformance with Section 6(f) requirements, in addition to Section 4(f) requirements. The impacted area is a linear segment at the northernmost portion of the Highwood Corridor, adjacent to existing I-494.
- Beaverbrook Field—The Preferred Alternative would require the total acquisition of this property, which is 3.0 hectares (7.4 acres) and comprises two ball fields and ancillary features. This property is owned by the City of Bloomington and is located east of East Bush Lake Road and immediately south of Green Valley Drive. There is no LAWCON funding associated with this property.
- Unnamed Open Space—The Preferred Alternative would require the acquisition of approximately 2.4 hectares (6.0 acres) of this property. The property is a corridor of open space comprising approximately 3.8 hectares (9.3 acres) which follows Nine Mile Creek between Normandale Lake and East Bush Lake Road. It is owned by the City of Bloomington and is maintained as open space; no park improvements are planned. There is no LAWCON funding associated with this property.

A Draft Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation was prepared for these properties as part of the I-494 reconstruction DEIS process. (A Supplemental Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation was prepared for the Unnamed Open Space in December 2000.) Because the scale of the overall project has been reduced since the DEIS was prepared, there are now fewer impacts to park areas. Chapter 8.0 of the FEIS provides the Final Section 4(f)/6(f) Evaluation for the I-494 reconstruction project, including discussion of:

- Alternatives to anticipated uses of the identified properties are not feasible.
- Impacts to the Highwood Corridor of the Hyland-Bush-Anderson Lakes Regional Park Reserve will be minimized to the extent practicable through various design measures and mitigated through purchase of replacement land as negotiated with the City of Bloomington and, to address Section 6(f) requirements, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Some of the impacted area may require only a temporary construction easement and not direct acquisition.
- Impacts to Unnamed Open Space—Bloomington will be limited to the extent practicable through roadway and landscaping design features. The extent of the impacts to the Beaverbrook Field property requires total acquisition of this property. The City of Bloomington has indicated that they prefer receiving monetary compensation for the appraised value of these properties (including value of improvements) in lieu of a replacement property. The money would then be used to improve other park facilities in the City.

1.5.6 SECTION 106 EVALUATION

The proposed project was reviewed for effects to cultural resources in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800). Phase I and Phase II studies examining archaeological potential and standing structures was conducted for the DEIS and the 1993 Preferred Alternative. Two National Register-eligible properties were identified: The Anna and Joseph Lorence residence, 7335 Marth Road, and the Elizabeth and Frederick H. Carpenter summer residence, 13405 McGinty Road. The 1993 Preferred Alternative was determined to have adverse visual and auditory effects to both properties and a Memorandum of Agreement between FHWA and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requiring SHPO review of the roadway design in proximity to these properties was signed in 1995.

The Areas of Potential Effect (APEs) for both archaeology and standing structures were re-examined for the current Preferred Alternative. As the project limits of the current Preferred Alternative did not differ substantially from the limits of the 1993 Preferred Alternative, and would not result in the acquisition or demolition of structures beyond those anticipated in the 1993 Preferred Alternative, the APE for standing structures (generally the first row of structures outside of the project limit) was determined appropriate for the current Preferred Alternative. Where construction limits for the current Preferred Alternative, including potential high flow storm water conveyance line (not yet designed—see Section 1.7 information) east of 34th Street, extended beyond those of the 1993 Preferred Alternative, these areas were included

within the archaeological APE and examined for archaeological potential by Mn/DOT Cultural Resources staff. One National Register eligible archeological site (21HE-316) was identified near the potential high flow storm water conveyance line, but is outside the APE for the project. No additional archaeological resources were identified.

The current Preferred Alternative lessens the effects to the two National Register-eligible properties listed above as compared to the 1993 Preferred Alternative. Noise analysis indicates the noise levels in proximity to both properties will rise by only 1 decibel (dB) by the year 2020 under the Preferred Alternative as compared to the No-Build Alternative. Visual impacts to the Carpenter property are reduced (compared to the 1993 Preferred Alternative impacts) as none of the parcel will be acquired for the project under the current Preferred Alternative. As no additional National Register-eligible properties were identified under the current Preferred Alternative and no additional adverse effects were identified, the 1995 Memorandum of Agreement for the project will remain in force.

1.6 AREAS OF CONTROVERSY

Traffic noise impacts and proposed mitigation are an area of controversy for the I-494 reconstruction project. The noise-related controversy primarily involves residences in Eden Prairie and Minnetonka that are in close proximity to the I-494 mainline, and a Bloomington neighborhood south of I-494 between TH 169 and West Bush Lake Road. Preliminary concept layouts showing currently proposed noise wall locations were reviewed with residents, staff, and elected officials from cities along the project corridor in a series of meetings held in January through April of 2001. A number of attendees commented that they thought that the proposed noise wall mitigation was inadequate, particularly given that there currently are fewer noise walls proposed to be included in the I-494 reconstruction project than were indicated in the DEIS document.

The differences between the currently proposed noise wall locations and those identified in the DEIS are due to new mitigation assessment procedures that Mn/DOT (with MPCA concurrence) has put into place since the completion of the DEIS in 1992. This assessment is based upon “reasonableness” (including a cost-effectiveness analysis) criteria regarding noise wall implementation at given locations. The noise mitigation cost effectiveness assessment used in the FEIS was developed with MPCA coordination and input, and is consistent with procedures currently used for roadway projects throughout the metropolitan area and the state. This analysis used preliminary roadway design information. It will be refined further as part of project final design, to determine actual noise wall locations and construction as discussed in Section 1.5.3, and in sections 6.2.4 and 6.2.5 of the FEIS.

1.7 UNRESOLVED ISSUES

East Drainage Design

There is one unresolved design issue related to the proposed I-494 reconstruction project. This issue, as discussed in greater detail in Section 6.3.4 of the FEIS, relates to the storm sewer design at the easternmost portion of the corridor study area. The existing trunk storm sewer line

servicing I-494 from approximately the I-35W interchange east to the Minnesota River is currently under capacity. With additional flows associated with the Preferred Alternative, this problem will become more pronounced, and additional capacity will have to be provided. There are also capacity and lift station issues that need to be addressed in the vicinity of the Penn Avenue/I-494 interchange. The Minnesota Department of Transportation is currently conducting a study to evaluate various alignment, construction, and outfall location options for providing additional capacity in these areas.

It is anticipated that, from the line's western terminus in the vicinity of the I-494/I-35W interchange (or possibly the I-494/Penn Avenue interchange) east to 34th Avenue, this added capacity will be provided within Mn/DOT right-of-way. East of 34th Avenue, it is anticipated that added capacity in the form of a new overflow line (for flows greater than 16.8 cms [600 cfs]) will need to be constructed on a new alignment. The specific alignment and outfall location for this line cannot be identified until the evaluation study referenced above is completed. However, alternatives being considered for this line would be located within Mn/DOT or other publicly-owned (MAC or U.S. Air Force) land. It would not affect Fort Snelling State Park or Minnesota River National Wildlife Refuge lands. Since this issue is related to the proposed reconstruction of I-494, an assessment of the potential impacts (based on information that is currently available) is included in the following sections of the FEIS:

- Right-of-way (Section 5.2)
- Surface Water Drainage (Section 6.3)
- Water Quality (Section 6.4)
- Wetlands (Section 6.7)
- Potential Soil and Groundwater Contamination (Section 6.8)
- Vegetation and Wildlife (Section 6.9)
- Rare and Endangered Species (Section 6.10)
- Wild and Scenic Rivers (Section 6.11)
- Construction Impacts (Chapter 7.0)
- Section 106 Evaluation (Chapter 9.0)

Since the study area for new drainage capacity and discharge does not include any wildlife refuge or other Section 4(f) resource, this issue is not discussed in the Final Section 4(f) Evaluation.

An important factor in the assessment of options to enhance capacity of this overall trunk line is the desire to minimize environmental impacts. Design elements and mitigation measures will comply with all applicable federal, state, and local regulatory requirements. A Study Report with recommendations will be issued upon completion of the evaluation study. If environmental issues other than those identified in this FEIS are determined through this report, further investigation and environmental documentation will be performed, consistent with applicable regulatory requirements.

I-494/East Bush Lake Road Interchange Design

There is a Canadian Pacific Railroad line that runs directly adjacent to and west of East Bush Lake Road in the vicinity of I-494. Due to right-of-way and operational constraints in the vicinity of the I-494/East Bush Lake Road interchange and the railroad line, Mn/DOT's preferred design for the westbound ramp of the interchange includes an at-grade crossing of the railroad line.

Concerns have been raised regarding the proposed at-grade crossing due to potential safety issues. On the basis of operational histories at other similar crossings in the United States, Mn/DOT believes that the proposed at-grade crossing at a freeway entrance ramp is not unique to this project, and that safety features can be incorporated into the design to make it a safe crossing. The Minnesota Department of Transportation is preparing analysis and documentation to support its position and is working with FHWA to address concerns with the proposed design.

Three alternate designs Mn/DOT has considered for this interchange that do not involve an at-grade railroad crossing for the westbound freeway entrance ramp are identified and discussed in Section 3.4.3 of the FEIS. Right-of-way and economic/fiscal impacts associated with these alternate designs are discussed in Section 5.2 and 5.3, respectively. For other impact categories, there are not substantial differences between the Preferred Alternative design and the alternate designs identified for this interchange. The alternate designs could be accommodated within the general surface water drainage approach for this portion of the project corridor discussed in Section 6.3.3.2 and 6.3.4.2.

1.8 PROJECT SCHEDULE, COSTS, FUNDING

Project Schedule/Funding

The first phase of the Preferred Alternative is the segment from TH 5 (Eden Prairie) to TH 100. This phase is programmed for a letting date of 2002 and is included in the *State Transportation Improvement Plan* (STIP). This phase is to be funded using state funds. The second phase of the Preferred Alternative is the section from TH 5 (Eden Prairie) to I-394. This phase is programmed for a letting date of 2006, and is currently to be funded using Interstate Maintenance and State Matching funds. The funding sources for subsequent phases of the project have not yet been identified.

Project Costs

The anticipated construction costs (total construction costs, including grading/pavement, bridge work, utilities, surface water conveyance and treatment, engineering, etc.) for the overall corridor project are presented below, by corridor segment:

- TH 5 (Eden Prairie) to TH 100: \$50 million
- TH 5 to I-394: \$60 million
- TH 100 to Penn Avenue: \$110 million

- Penn Avenue to Lyndale Avenue (includes I-35W/I-494 interchange): \$125 million
- Lyndale Avenue to 34th Avenue: \$105 million

Total: \$ 450 million

Estimated right-of-way acquisition and relocation costs include:

- Total Acquisitions/Relocation – Residential: \$11.7 million
- Total Acquisitions/Relocation – Non-Residential: \$39.7 million
- Partial Acquisitions – Residential: \$5.1 million
- Partial Acquisitions – Non-Residential: \$106.3 million

Total: \$162.8 million

1.9 COORDINATION

1.9.1 GENERAL COORDINATION

The Minnesota Department of Transportation is the State of Minnesota Responsible Government Unit (RGU) for this project and is taking the lead in preparing environmental documentation for the state and federal environmental review process. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is responsible for environmental decision-making for the project at the federal level. The Metropolitan Council assisted Mn/DOT in early studies, in light of the regional influence of the I-494 corridor, and it participated in the early EIS studies as Joint Lead Agency. However, once the regional decisions were made, the Metropolitan Council chose to participate in an advisory role as part of the I-494 Project Management Team (see below).

Cooperating agencies for this FEIS process are as follows:

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal Transit Administration

Cooperating agencies were sent copies of the draft FEIS for review and comment. The final FEIS document reflects input received from these agencies. The Corps of Engineers stated in their comments that, because they will be evaluating future permit applications for parts of the project, they cannot be either an opponent or proponent of the proposed project and cannot have a preferred alternative.

A Project Management Team (PMT) was established in the early scoping phase of the I-494 reconstruction DEIS to discuss and resolve issues associated with project design and environmental documentation. The PMT was re-established in 2000 when

the I-494 reconstruction project and the FEIS process were reinitiated after a period without formal activity due to funding issues (refer to Section 1.2). Current members of the PMT are as follows:

- Federal Highway Administration
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Metropolitan Council
- Metropolitan Airports Commission
- Hennepin County
- City of Minnetonka
- City of Eden Prairie
- City of Bloomington
- City of Edina
- City of Richfield
- Southwest Metro Transit

Section 1.2 provides a summary of the history of the I-494 reconstruction project. The scoping process and the subsequent DEIS process have provided interested parties the opportunity formally have input into the planning and design of improvements for the corridor.

Throughout the DEIS/FEIS process, Mn/DOT has maintained ongoing coordination with a broad range of organizations regarding their particular issues of concern. This has included state environmental regulatory agencies, cities within the project corridor, and affected watershed districts and management organizations. The Minnesota Department of Transportation has also met and coordinated with the I-494 Corridor Commission, a joint powers entity, including all cities within the project corridor plus the Metropolitan Council (ex-officio member), as well as Southwest Metro Transit and Metro Commuter Services (transit subcommittee).

In an effort by Mn/DOT to provide information to cities in the project corridor regarding the reinitiated FEIS process and the current Preferred Alternative, the following meetings were held in early 2001:

- Eden Prairie Open House: February 12, 2001
- Edina Open House: February 6, 2001
- Edina City Council: February 6, 2001
- Bloomington Open House: March 1 and 22, 2001
- Bloomington City Council: January 29, 2001
- Richfield Open House: February 20, 2001

1.9.2 OTHER MAJOR PROJECTS

Planning and design activities for the reconstruction of I-494 have been and continue to be coordinated with other major actions in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area including those identified and addressed below.

Light Rail Transit (LRT)

The Hiawatha Corridor LRT line will link downtown Minneapolis to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (MSP) and the Mall of America. The full length of the Hiawatha line is

scheduled to be operational by 2004. The Hiawatha LRT corridor crosses I-494 at 34th Avenue South. The closest LRT stations to I-494 will be MSP Main Terminal, MSP Hubert H. Humphrey Terminal, “Bloomington South” Station (Ceridian Drive and 28th Avenue South), 34th Avenue/80th Street Station, and the Mall of America. This project is being developed jointly by Mn/DOT and the Metropolitan Council.

Reconstruction of I-35W/TH 62 (Crosstown) Interchange

Mn/DOT is initiating a major reconstruction of this interchange (the “commons area”) to improve its safety and operation. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2001. According to current plans, portions of the interchange and associated ramps will have to be closed for up to four years to allow the necessary construction activities to be performed. Interstate 494 will be used as a detour route to accommodate closure and/or restricted use of the I-35/TH 62 interchange. The interchange reconstruction would not coincide with the scheduled reconstruction of I-494 in the I-35W Bloomington/Richfield area.

Parallel Arterial System

The parallel arterial concept focuses on enhancing the existing parallel street system immediately north and south of the I-494 alignment within the cities of Bloomington, Richfield, and Edina. This system is being developed to provide access to the commercial/office uses along the corridor and to keep local trips off the I-494 mainline. The implementation status of this system is described below.

Seventy-seventh Street in Richfield, between I-35W and TH 77, has been partially completed. The portion near TH 77 is currently under construction. This project, which is being led by the City of Richfield, connects with 76th Street east of I-35W. Seventy-sixth Street continues into Edina to west of Xerxes Avenue, where it becomes 77th Street and Edina Industrial Boulevard. Future City of Richfield plans call for extending 77th Street on the east end under TH 77 and connecting it with 24th Avenue adjacent to the airport.

On the south side of I-494, the 79th/80th Street corridor being developed by the City of Bloomington. The first phase of this project upgrades existing 79th and 80th Streets between 34th Avenue and TH 100, including a bridge across I-35W. Portions of this phase have already been completed. The second phase calls for an extension west from TH 100 to East Bush Lake Road via Bridge Road and Norman Center Drive. Segments of this section have also been completed, including the bridge over TH 100/Normandale Boulevard.

Penn Avenue Bridge Replacement at I-494

This project is being undertaken by the City of Richfield to support a major commercial development project (Best Buy Campus) north of I-494 at Penn Avenue. Construction for this project is scheduled to begin in 2001, with substantial completion by 2002.

1.10 PERMITS AND APPROVALS

Construction of the Preferred Alternative will require the permits and approvals identified in Table 1.1

**TABLE 1.1
PERMITS AND APPROVALS**

GOVERNMENT AGENCY	ACTION
<p>FEDERAL: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Federal Highway Administration Federal Aviation Administration Advisory Council on Historic Preservation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 404 Permit • Access change approvals • Location approvals • Approval of design exceptions • EIS approval • Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement • Record of Decision • Section 4(f) Approval • Part 77 of FAA Regulations Clearance • Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement
<p>STATE: Minnesota Department of Transportation Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Minnesota Pollution Control Agency State Historic Preservation Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIS Approval and Adequacy Determination • Wetland Conservation Act Permit (as LGU) • Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement • Layout Approval • Public Waters Permit • Groundwater Appropriation Permit • Air Quality Indirect Source Permit • 401 Water Quality Certification • National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit • Noise Exemption Process • Section 106 Memorandum of Agreement

**TABLE 1.1 continued
PERMITS AND APPROVALS**

GOVERNMENT AGENCY	ACTION
<p>REGIONAL: Metropolitan Council</p> <p>LOCAL: Cities of Bloomington, Richfield, Edina, Eden Prairie, and Minnetonka; Hennepin County</p> <p>WATERSHED DISTRICTS: Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, Nine Mile Creek Watershed District, Riley Purgatory Bluff Creek Watershed District, Lower Minnesota River Watershed District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Controlled access highway approval • Release park restrictive covenants • Layout approvals and continued review of construction plans • Surface Water Management Permits