



Blatnik Bridge

PURPOSE AND NEED
FACT SHEET // JANUARY 2021



OVERVIEW: MnDOT and WisDOT have initiated a planning and design study of the John A. Blatnik Bridge, one of two major bridges that connects Duluth, Minnesota to Superior, Wisconsin. Carrying I-535 over the St. Louis Bay, the Blatnik Bridge is an important freight and commercial connection between the Twin Ports. In collaboration with WisDOT, MnDOT is performing an analysis and environmental study of the bridge to plan for either the rehabilitation or replacement of the Blatnik Bridge.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the Blatnik Bridge project is to provide an Interstate highway connection over the St. Louis Bay that does not restrict the movements of freight and provides local, regional, and international movement in a reliable and efficient manner.

PROJECT MAP



WHY IS THE BLATNIK BRIDGE PROJECT NEEDED?



Poor condition of the bridge



Bridge conditions hinder vehicle and freight mobility



Design deficiencies impair traffic operations



High crash rates on the bridge, approaches, and access interchanges



No bicycle or pedestrian facilities on the existing bridge

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WEBSITES

🌐 www.dot.state.mn.us/d1/projects/blatnik-bridge

🌐 wisconsindot.gov/Pages/projects/by-region/nw/blatnikbridge

Blatnik Bridge



POOR CONDITION OF THE BRIDGE

The **Blatnik Bridge** is identified by both MnDOT and WisDOT as a high priority improvement project. The bridge is ranked #1 for risk of service interruption.

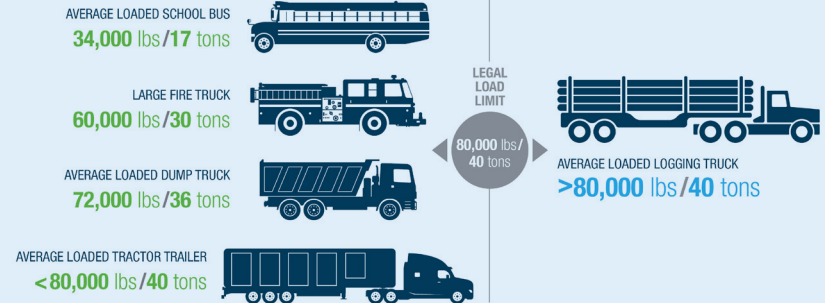
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PRIORITY

Substantial corrosion has occurred in bridge elements which requires frequent and ongoing maintenance efforts to ensure reliability for traffic across and under the bridge.



BRIDGE CONDITIONS HINDER VEHICLE AND FREIGHT MOBILITY

Oversize overweight (OSOW) trucks need to be able to travel across the Blatnik Bridge. The Blatnik Bridge is a critical link for freight movement to and from the Twin Ports and the region. Current bridge conditions hinder that mobility.

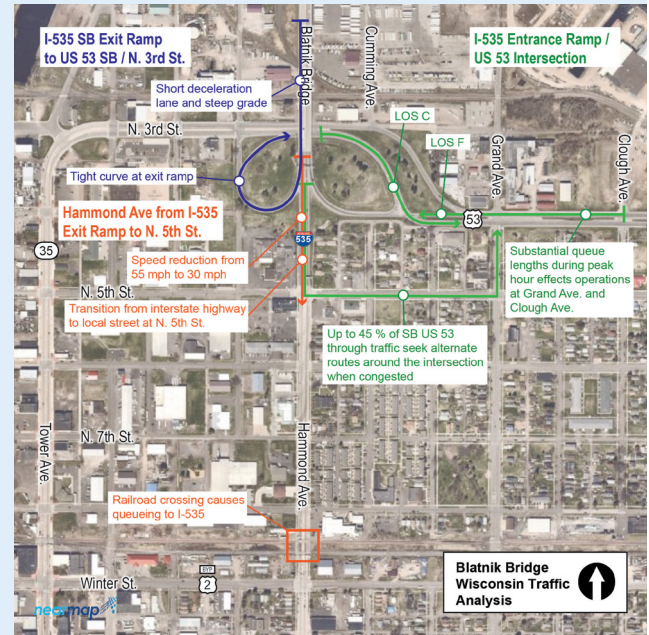


- Maintaining the dual crossing of the Blatnik and Bong bridges over the St. Louis Bay between the Twin Ports is essential to reliable vehicle and freight mobility.



DESIGN DEFICIENCIES IMPAIR TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

- Interchange and bridge design deficiencies include:
 - Short deceleration lane and steep grade.
 - Tight curve at exit ramp.
 - Short speed transition zone from 55 mph to 30 mph.
 - Abrupt transition from freeway to urban street.
 - Narrow inside and outside shoulders on the bridge contribute to high crash rates.



HIGH CRASH RATES ON THE BRIDGE, APPROACHES, AND ACCESS INTERCHANGES

- Crash rates in the project area are **much higher than the statewide average** for similar road and intersection types.
- Geometric deficiencies** influence poor traffic operations contributing to crashes.
- Weather events** exacerbate traffic operational issues.



NO BICYCLE OR PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES ON THE EXISTING BRIDGE

- People walking or biking who desire to cross the St. Louis Bay **must use the closest crossing, the Bong Bridge.**
- The Blatnik Bridge is identified as a **network gap for bicycles and pedestrians** in multiple regional plans.

