

**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

FILE NAME: County State Aid Highway 23 (Main Street) Bridge

ADDRESS: 3rd Avenue Northeast to 1st Avenue N.E.

DATE OF APPLICATION: April 4, 2008

PUBLICATION DATE: April 20, 2008

DATE OF HEARING: May 6, 2008

EXPIRATION OF APPEAL PERIOD: May 16, 2008

HPC SITE/DISTRICT: St. Anthony Falls

CATEGORY: Non-contributing

CLASSIFICATION: Certificate of Appropriateness

APPLICANT: Michelle Julius, URS Corporation, on behalf of Hennepin County (612) 373-6373

STAFF INVESTIGATION AND REPORT: Carol Ahlgren (612) 673-2847

DATE: April 30, 2008

A. SITE DESCRIPTION:

County State Aid Highway 23 Bridge, more commonly known as the Main Street Bridge, is located on the east bank of the Mississippi River and crosses the Burlington-Northern-San-Francisco (BNSF) Railroad tracks between 1st Avenue Northeast and 3rd Avenue Northeast. To the west of the bridge is the small channel of the Mississippi River east of Nicollet Island. To the east are non-historic townhouses and condominium buildings. The bridge is located within the St. Anthony Falls Historic District which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is a City of Minneapolis Historic District. Portions of the District also fall within the boundary of the Mississippi National River Recreation Area (MNRRA), which is a unit of the National Park Service.

The two lane single span bridge is oriented northeast-southwest and measures 39.5 feet in length and represents several periods of construction. The central portion of the bridge above the tracks features concrete guardrails, approximately 5 feet in height that extend approximately 39 feet; this portion of the bridge was constructed in 1926. The concrete bridge deck, approximately 50 feet in width and supported by steel beam construction, was also constructed in 1926. According to the Hennepin County Transportation Department, the metal pipe railings located along the sidewalks on either side of the bridge date from the mid-1960's (Attachment A: 23; 33).

At track level the bridge features abutments constructed of massive rock-faced sandstone ashlar blocks; these abutments date to c.1900 (Attachment A:23; 26). The approach walls consist of concrete bars, or crib walls, date from c.1965 (Attachment A: 25; 32). In some areas, such as the portions of the walls adjacent to the stone abutments, rough limestone retaining walls are visible (Attachment A: 27; 28). The majority of the retaining walls, however, were covered or replaced with concrete; the walls were resurfaced with a spray-on concrete finish in 1991.

BACKGROUND:

The St. Anthony Falls Historic District includes the Mississippi River, the Falls, the east and west banks of the River, and Nicollet Island and encompasses over 800 acres. The District's significance is derived from its association with early milling industry of Minneapolis, including the water power. The District includes residential, industrial, natural, and archeological resources. Crucial to the historic development

of the District and its industries was the Great Northern Railroad which constructed several lines and spurs in the area; the most prominent of the resources associated with the Railroad is the Stone Arch Bridge.

According to research conducted by the applicant, plans for the Main Street Bridge were approved by the Minneapolis City Engineer in November, 1892. The proposed bridge featured a 56 foot wide cedar plank deck, and a 9 foot wide sidewalk with a lattice metal railing. Material for abutments was not indicated, although they featured a wide base that stair stepped to a narrower top. Although the plans were approved in 1892, this bridge and others over the Great Northern Railway tracks in northeast Minneapolis were not completed until after the turn of the century. The Bridge was rebuilt in 1926 with steel beams and a reinforced concrete deck; the stone abutments were retained. At this time, the five foot tall concrete guardrail was constructed, located at the center portion of the bridge and extending approximately 39 feet. The approaches to the bridge were brick paved (Attachment A, p. 6). According to the Hennepin County Transportation Department, the approach walls were covered with concrete sometime before the mid 1960's; the metal pipe railings were likely added at this time. In 1991, the concrete walls received an application of a sprayed on concrete surface.

B. PROPOSED CHANGES:

The Hennepin County Transportation Department proposes to demolish and reconstruct the Main Street Bridge approaches and retaining walls between 1st Avenue Northeast and 3rd Avenue Northeast. The existing single span vehicular bridge carries traffic over two BNSF railroad tracks. The proposed Northstar Commuter Rail will utilize the existing BNSF track beneath the Main Street Bridge. The purpose of the project is to reconstruct the existing bridge, bridge approaches, and retaining walls which have been recommended for replacement due to structural deficiencies noted by Hennepin County Transportation Department in 2000 and 2001 Bridge Inspection Reports. The inspections resulted in the bridge deck receiving a National Bridge Inventory rating of 4 on a scale from 0 to 10, indicating a poor condition. The c.1960s concrete cribs are also deteriorated and in need of replacement. Based on the inspections, the Hennepin County Transportation Department determined that it would be more cost effective to reconstruct the entire bridge than further modify the existing structure.

The new bridge will be built with a center pier and double span to accommodate future light rail transit (LRT) along the existing railroad corridor. The proposed length of the new bridge is approximately 81 feet, 6 inches. The roadway portion of the Project will consist of one 12 foot wide travel lane in both the northbound and southbound directions, bordered by an 8-foot wide shoulder on both sides of the roadway. There will be a 7 foot wide boulevard with trees and a 6 foot wide sidewalk on both sides of the roadway (Attachment A: 11). A five foot wide viewing platform for pedestrian will be constructed adjoining the sidewalk on the west (Mississippi River) side of the roadway at the center of the bridge. There will be no parking allowed on this segment of the roadway following construction of the replacement bridge. The project will require demolition of the existing bridge deck (1926); removal of the existing south stone bridge abutment (c.1900); and removal of the top portion of the north abutment (c.1900); and all concrete retaining, or crib walls (c. 1965).

The concrete surface for the proposed retaining walls, pier, and south abutment will be constructed using a form liner system, which produces a textured effect of a stone masonry survey with random ashlar, with a rough cut finish. The size of the form liner stones will measure between 14 and 48 inches with a maximum relief of 3 inches. The color of the concrete form liner stone will complement the natural stone indigenous to the project area. The historic north abutment, which will be retained, will be cleaned, including graffiti, in a non-abrasive manner.

Ornamental metal rails and pedestrian lighting will be located along the bridge and retaining walls; electrical and cable service will be buried, rather than existing overhead, in the project area. The new

bridge, including concrete form liner retaining walls, ornamental railing and lighting, and retention of the north c.1900 abutment, will be similar in span, width, and ornamentation to the Nicollet Avenue Bridge, located on the BNSF line approximately ¼ mile west of the proposed bridge. The Nicollet Avenue Bridge, constructed in 1993 also required replacement of an existing non-contributing bridge, and accommodation for future light rail. The project also included retention of a c.1900 stone abutment on the north side, and a portion of the historic stone retaining wall (Attachment A: 39; 40). The Nicollet Avenue Bridge received Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) approval in 1992 (Attachment C). In May, 1993 HPC staff approved a modification to the originally approved design through a Certificate of No Change concerning railing design and retention of the existing north stone abutment (Attachment D).

In November, 2002 an Environmental Assessment Worksheet was prepared for the proposed Main Street Bridge. HPC staff noted that the EAW stated that the bridge had lost historic integrity, but that its removal could have an adverse impact on the Great Northern Railway corridor. The November 27, 2002 letter from HPC staff called for review of the proposed bridge by the Commission. According to available records, however, the bridge was not constructed and HPC staff review was not initiated until the present (April, 2008,) submittal of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

C. APPLICABLE REGULATION, POLICIES, AND GUIDELINES:

ST. ANTHONY FALLS HISTORIC DISTRICT GUIDELINES Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (June 1980)

An addition to "District Guidelines for Utilization" (adopted April 18, 1978)

Preamble

The St. Anthony Falls Historic District is a varied area that includes structures of historical significance (e.g. mills), some that are architecturally distinguished (e.g. Our Lady of Lourdes), buildings that contribute to the historicity of the district (e.g. Salisbury Mattress Co., now Main Place), some non-contributive buildings (e.g. Post Office Parking Ramp), and also a great deal of open space. Traditional, uniform regulations are not adequate because of this variety. Instead, the HPC has divided the district into sub-areas that contain structures with common features and that share common concerns.

Purpose

The purpose of the Heritage Preservation Commission in following these regulations for permit review is to provide architectural control and maintenance of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District by promulgating regulations governing construction and rehabilitation for the preservation, protection and perpetuation of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District designated by the State of Minnesota.

These regulations apply to any and all new construction and rehabilitation of existing buildings and structures within the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.

The furthermore are intended to:

- 1) preserve the memory of past events
- 2) encourage sympathetic new development
- 3) encourage and enable access to the river
- 4) foster along the riverfront and adjacent areas a viable community geared to the pedestrian.

General Regulations

Infill construction shall be visually compatible with historic structures within the sub-area with regard to siting, height, proportions of facade, walls of continuity, rhythm of projections, directional emphasis, materials, nature of openings, texture, roof shapes, details, and color.

The Heritage Preservation Commission shall review all permit requests according to the standards established in the regulations. Variances to these regulations will be granted only in cases where an applicant clearly demonstrates that an alternative design is a superior and compatible solution.

J. East Hennepin - Central Avenue

This area is bounded by the Mississippi River, Central Avenue, University Avenue and Second Avenue Northeast.

1. Siting: The principal aims of new construction shall follow the existing grid.
2. Height: New buildings to be no higher than that of existing silo-mills in the area.
3. Rhythm of Projections: No restrictions.
4. Directional Emphasis: No restrictions.
5. Materials: New construction shall be of brick, brick veneer, or wood siding.
6. Nature of Openings: Openings should be rectangular and should have a repeated pattern across the facade. Windows should have vertical dimensions 1-1/2 to 3 times the horizontal dimension.
7. Roof Shapes: Roofs should be flat, nearly flat, or gabled.
8. Details: No restrictions.
9. Color: New buildings should be buff, dark red, or brown on the primary surfaces and should have subdued colors on the trim.

K. Northeast Residential

This area extends from University Avenue to the Mississippi River between Second Avenue Northeast and Eighth Avenue Northeast.

PLEASE NOTE: Sub-area K is excluded, as it is no longer included in Minnesota Statutes (see 138.73 Subd. 17). The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission will not attempt to regulate construction in this area and recommends that the city ordinance be changed to comply with the boundaries described by the State Statute.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

**U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service
1990**

District/Neighborhood

Recommended:

- Identifying, retaining, and preserving buildings, and streetscape, and landscape features which are important in defining the overall historic character of the district or neighborhood. Such features can include streets, alleys, paving, walkways, street lights, signs, benches, parks and gardens, and trees.
- Retaining the historic relationship between buildings, and streetscape and landscape features such as a town square comprised of row houses and stores surrounding a communal park or open space.
- Protecting and maintaining the historic masonry, wood, and architectural metals which comprise building and streetscape features, through appropriate surface treatments such as cleaning, rust removal, limited paint removal, and reapplication of protective coating systems; and protecting and maintaining landscape features, including plant material.
- Repairing features of the building, streetscape, or landscape by reinforcing the historic materials. Repair will also generally include the replacement in kind - or with a compatible substitute material - of those extensively deteriorated or missing parts of features when there are surviving prototypes such as porch balustrades, paving materials, or streetlight standards.
- Replacing in kind an entire feature of the building, streetscape, or landscape that is too deteriorated to repair - when the overall form and detailing are still evident - using the physical evidence to guide the new work. This could include a storefront, a walkway, or a garden. If using the same kind of material is not technically or economically feasible, then a compatible substitute material may be considered.

Not Recommended:

- Destroying streetscape and landscape features by widening existing streets, changing paving material, or introducing inappropriately located new streets or parking lots.

Design for Missing Historic Features

- Introducing a new building, streetscape or landscape feature that is out of scale or otherwise inappropriate to the setting's historic character, e.g., replacing picket fencing with chain link fencing.

Alterations/Additions for the New Use

- Introducing new construction into historic districts that is visually incompatible or that destroys historic relationships within the district or neighborhood.

D. STAFF ANALYSIS

The Main Street Bridge is located in Sub-areas K and J of the St. Anthony Falls Historic District but is nonetheless subject to HPC review (see guidelines above). The proposed new bridge will cross the historic Great Northern Railroad corridor, now the Burlington Northern San Francisco Railroad, in the same location as the original bridge. The Main Street Bridge represents several periods of construction and reconstruction, notably in 1926 and c.1965. The road surface has been replaced through time, the limestone retaining walls were covered with concrete in the mid -1960's and metal pipe railings were added to the bridge, likely at the same time. The massive stone abutments are the only remaining features associated with the bridge's construction in c.1903; the new design calls for the retention and rehabilitation of the north abutment.

The St. Anthony Falls District Guidelines applicable to the proposed bridge state that new construction should be visually compatible with existing historic structures in terms of siting, height, directional emphasis, materials, nature of openings, texture, details, and color. The proposed new bridge meets the district guidelines with its location in the same area as the existing bridge. The proposed concrete liner walls will be visually compatible to the setting and will be compatible to the previously approved Nicollet Avenue Bridge, located on Nicollet Island in the District. The new bridge will also meet the general District guideline of “fostering a viable community geared to the pedestrian,” through the elimination of parking on the bridge and the provision of a pedestrian viewing platform on the west side of the structure.

E. FINDINGS

1. The CSAH 23 Main Street Bridge over the Burlington Northern San Francisco Railroad (Great Northern) tracks is located in the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.
2. The bridge has had several periods of construction, including non-historic alterations, and lacks historic integrity.
3. The proposed bridge will retain the majority of the historic stone abutment to the north; will accommodate future Light Rail Transit in the corridor; and correct an unsafe condition.
4. The concrete form liner, width, height, lighting, and span of the proposed bridge, will be similar to the Nicollet Avenue Bridge which was approved by the HPC in 1993.

E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the Heritage Preservation Commission **adopt** the staff findings and **approve the** Certificate of Appropriateness.

1. The bridge lighting and railings shall be the same as, or compatible with, those of the previously approved Nicollet Avenue Bridge, also located within the St. Anthony Falls Historic District.
2. All final site plans and elevations shall be approved by CPED Preservation and Design staff.

Attachments:

- A. Certificate of Appropriateness application and supplemental materials.
- B. November 27, 2002 letter to Hennepin County Transportation Department from HPC staff Greg Mathis.
- C. HPC staff report, John Lauber, March 10, 1992.
- D. May 25, 1993 letter to Mr. Jim Stoutland from HPC Staff Martha Frey.
- E. Map of St. Anthony Falls Historic District showing location of proposed bridge.