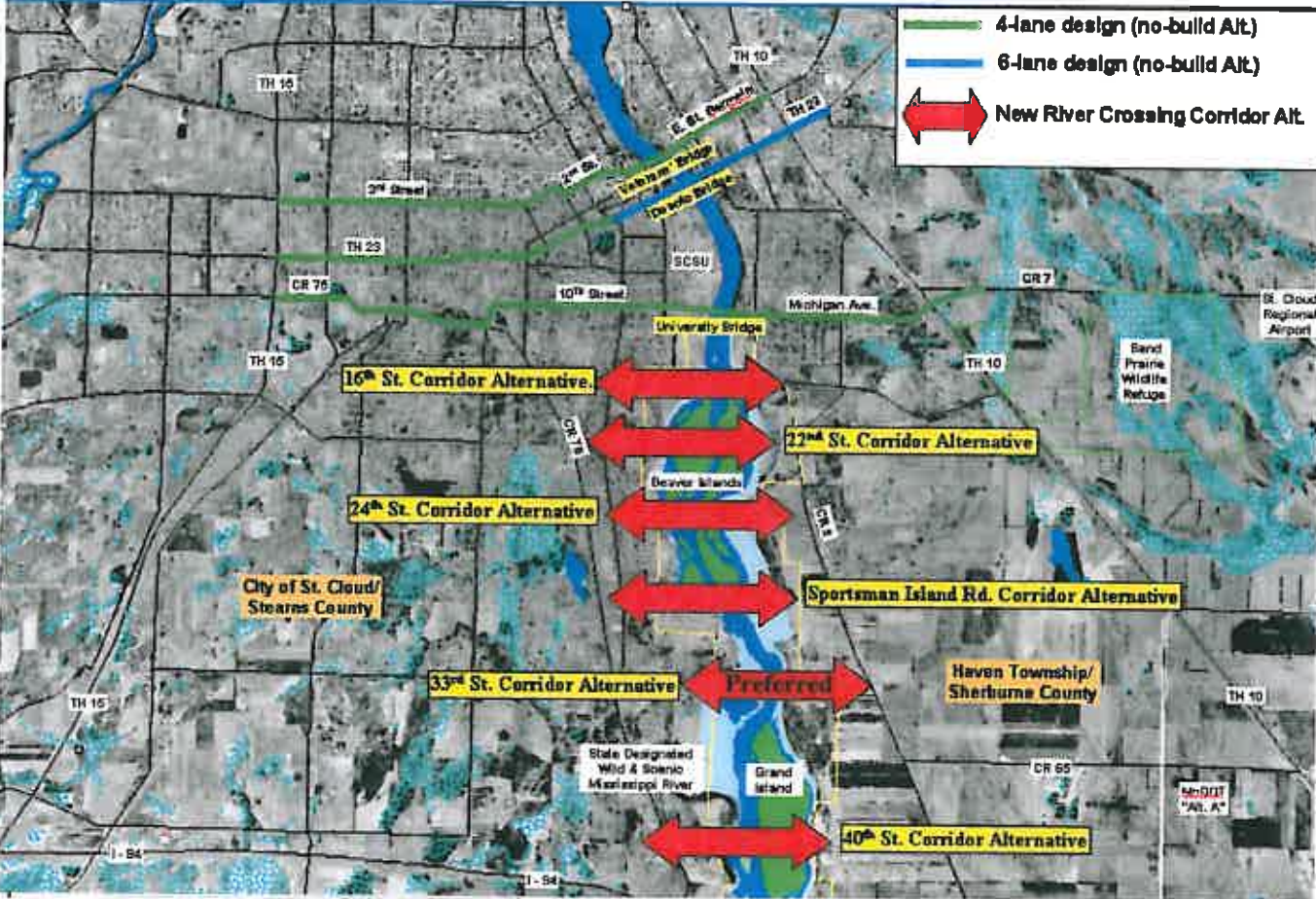


# St. Cloud Metropolitan Area Mississippi River Crossing Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Decision Document



Prepared by St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO)  
April, 2005



*Responsible Government Units:*  
Stearns County and Sherburne County

*Other Participating Agencies:*  
City of St. Cloud, Haven Township and  
Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT)

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
SCOPING DECISION DOCUMENT**

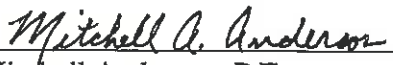
**ST. CLOUD METROPOLITAN AREA  
MISSISSIPPI RIVER CROSSING**

**COUNTIES OF STEARNS AND SHERBURNE**

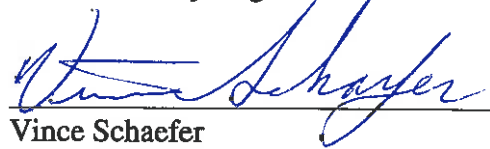
STATE PROJECT NUMBER: S.P. \_\_\_\_\_  
FEDERAL PROJECT NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

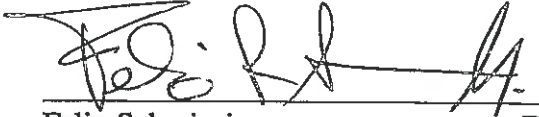
The proposed project will provide an east/west minor arterial connection and new Mississippi River Crossing between Trunk Highway 15 and Trunk Highway 10, along an alignment to be determined in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Corridor, within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, Minnesota.

**CERTIFICATION BY RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT UNITS**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mitchell Anderson, P.E.      6/14/05  
Stearns County Engineer      Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Rhonda Lewis, P.E.      4/21/05  
Acting Sherburne County Engineer      Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Vince Schaefer      Date  
Stearns County Board Chair

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Felix Schmiesing      Date  
Sherburne County Board Chair

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## **I. Introduction**

The Scoping Document described the purpose and need for the proposed project, and evaluated the transportation, social, economic and environmental aspects of six (6) ¼ to ½ mile Mississippi River Crossing corridor alternatives between Trunk Highway 15 and Trunk Highway 10. Figure 1 on the following page illustrates these six (6) build corridor alternatives, as well as improvements to existing Mississippi River Crossings assumed in the No-Build Alternative. Based on public input and evaluation of data during the scoping process, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Corridor has been selected as the Preferred Corridor Alternative to be further evaluated in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This Scoping Decision Document identifies four (4) alignment alternatives within the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Corridor and presents the decisions reached regarding the scope of future environmental studies for these alignment alternatives. It also outlines the level of EIS analysis that will take place for various social, economic, environmental and transportation considerations.

## **II. Project Description**

The purpose of the project is to identify and preserve from development an environmentally and culturally sensitive alignment for a future (20+) year 4-lane minor arterial roadway and Mississippi River bridge connecting Trunk Highway 15 to Trunk Highway 10. The need for this proposed river crossing is based upon the following considerations: 1. A lack of east/west minor arterial continuity south of the University Bridge between Trunk Highway 15 and Trunk Highway 10, 2. Forecasted 2025 congestion within the University Bridge Corridor and other existing bridge corridors north of the University Bridge, and 3. Forecasted 2025 land use and trip generation growth south of the University Bridge.

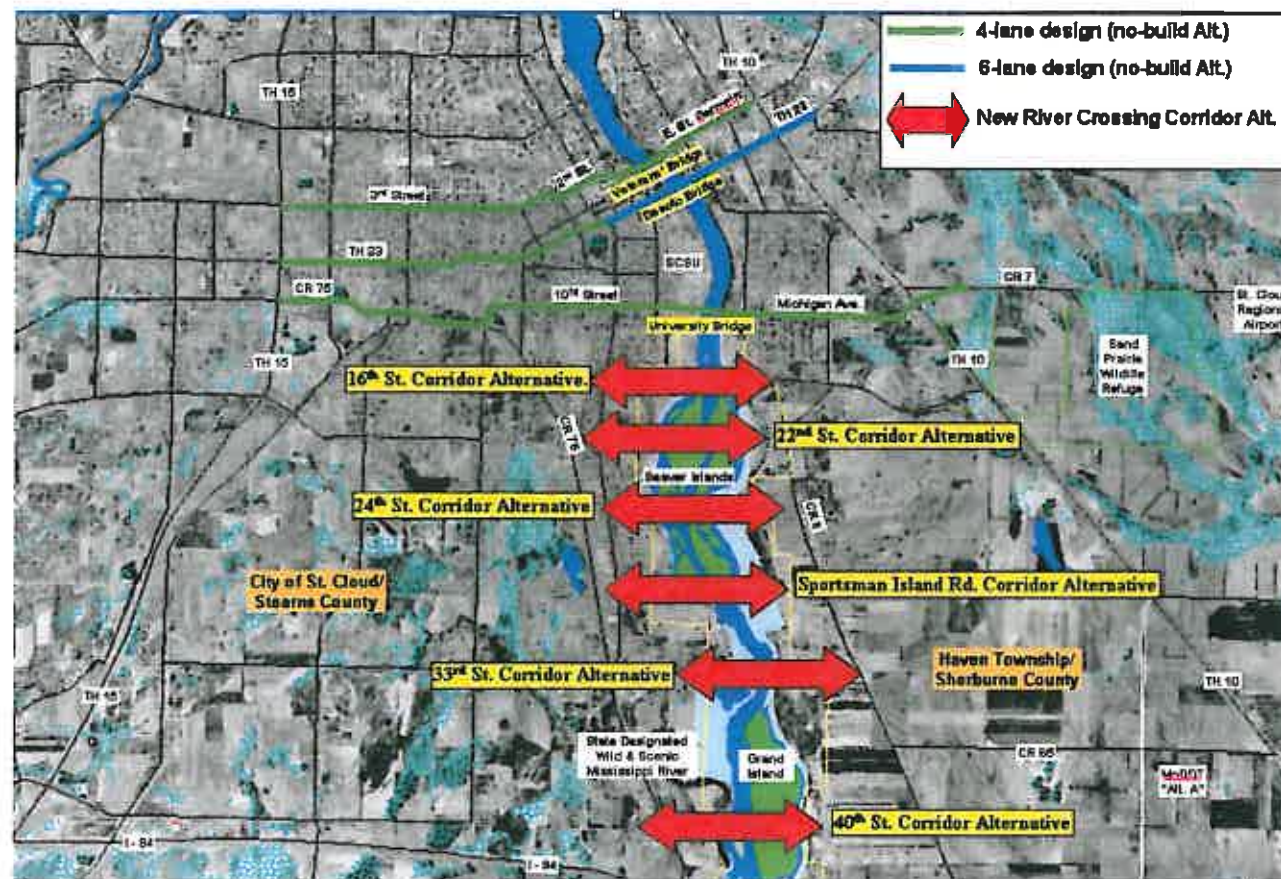
The Study Area includes portions of the City of St. Cloud, Stearns County, Sherburne County and Haven Township. The Study Area is bordered on the north by 10<sup>th</sup> Street South, on the west by Trunk Highway 15, on the south by Interstate 94 and on the east by Trunk Highway 10.

The No-Build Alternative assumes the existing roadway network plus complete build-out of three existing crossings north of the Study Area, including: a 4-lane Veterans Bridge Corridor from Trunk Highway 10 to 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, a six-lane Desoto Bridge Corridor from 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southeast to the Lake George Interchange, and a 4-lane University Bridge corridor from Trunk Highway 10 to Trunk Highway 15. The Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Alternative assumes low-cost, low-impact strategies to improve forecasted 2025 river crossing capacity such as increasing transit service, increasing car pooling, and staggering work hours. As a result of comments received during the Scoping Document 30 day comment period, the No-Build Alternative and TDM Alternative will be combined into one alternative in the EIS process.

All four (4) of the Build Alignment Alternatives within the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor assume the No-Build Alternative improvements to existing River crossings, plus a new four-lane

east/west minor arterial roadway and bridge. Figures 2 through 5 beginning on page 3 illustrate the proposed alignments for each 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Alignment Alternative.

**Figure 1**  
**“No-Build” Alternative Assumed Improvements**  
**and**  
**“Build” Corridor Alternatives**



# 33rd Street South Alignment Alternative #1

Figure 2

**LEGEND**

**RIVER CROSSING ALTERNATIVE**

- Existing 33rd Street South Alignment
- Proposed 33rd Street South Alignment

**SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS**

- Wild & Scenic River Boundary
- Sand Prairie Wildlife Refuge
- Blandings Turtle
- Sandhill Crane
- Western Hognose Snake
- Vascular Flora
- Rock Outcroppings
- Forest, Savannah, or Woodland
- Prairie
- Swamp, Marsh, or Wet Meadow
- Historic or Archeologic Site
- Identified Natural Areas - St. Cloud Ordinance
- DNR Owned Islands
- Other Islands

**HYDROLOGY**

- Lakes & Rivers
- Floodplain
- Wetlands

**TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

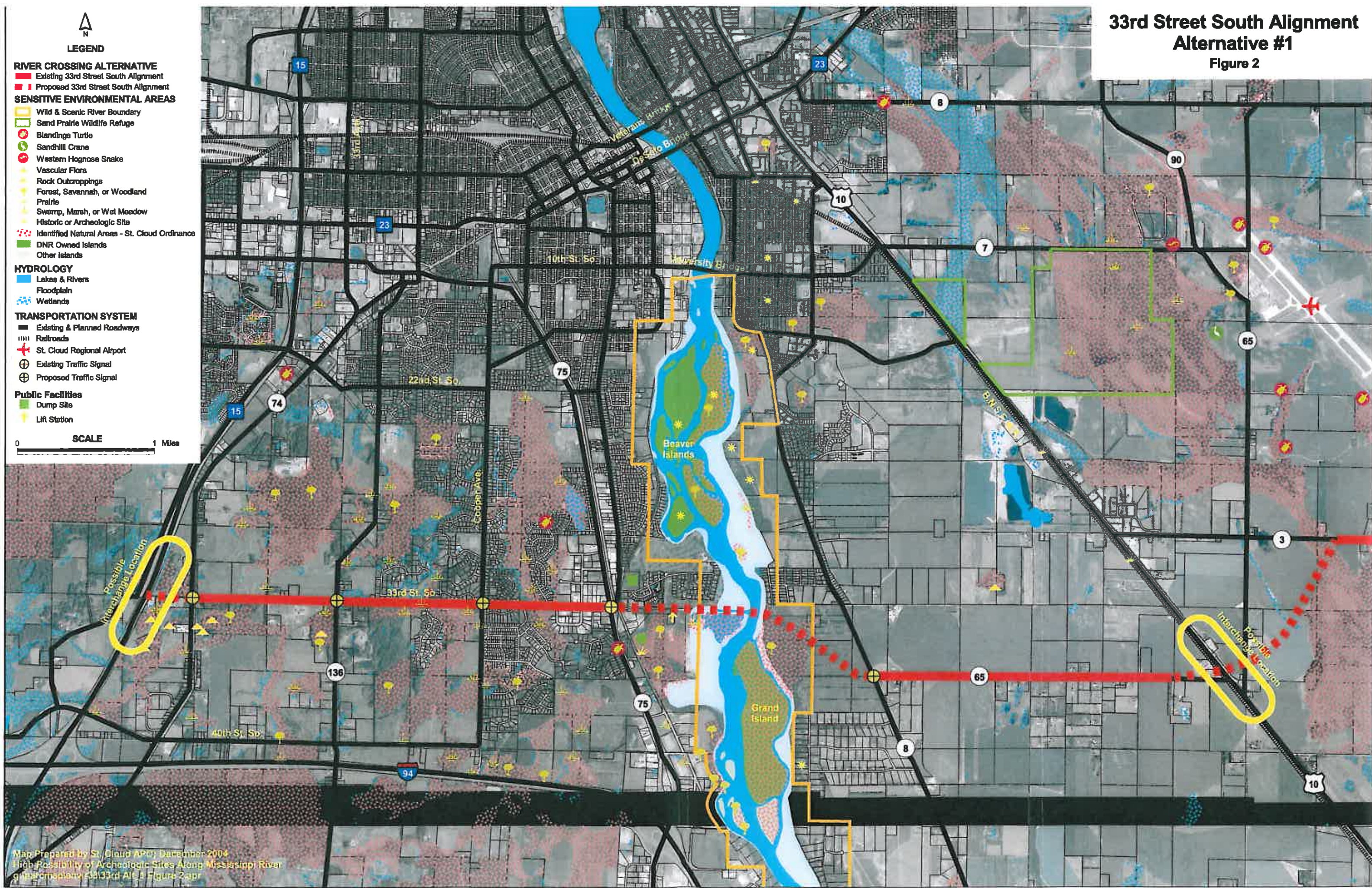
- Existing & Planned Roadways
- Railroads
- St. Cloud Regional Airport
- Existing Traffic Signal
- Proposed Traffic Signal

**Public Facilities**

- Dump Site
- Lift Station

**SCALE**

0 1 Miles



Map Prepared by St. Cloud APO, December 2004  
 High Possibility of Archeologic Sites Along Mississippi River  
 g:\arcom\proj\33rd\33rd Alt #1 Figure 2.apr

# 33rd Street South Alignment Alternative #2 Figure 3

**LEGEND**

**RIVER CROSSING ALTERNATIVE**

- Existing 33rd Street South Alignment
- Proposed 33rd Street South Alignment

**SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS**

- Wild & Scenic River Boundary
- Sand Prairie Wildlife Refuge
- Blandings Turtle
- Sandhill Crane
- Western Hognose Snake
- Vascular Flora
- Rock Outcroppings
- Forest, Savannah, or Woodland
- Prairie
- Swamp, Marsh, or Wet Meadow
- Historic or Archeologic Site
- Identified Natural Areas - St. Cloud Ordinance
- DNR Owned Islands
- Other Islands

**HYDROLOGY**

- Lakes & Rivers
- Floodplain
- Wetlands

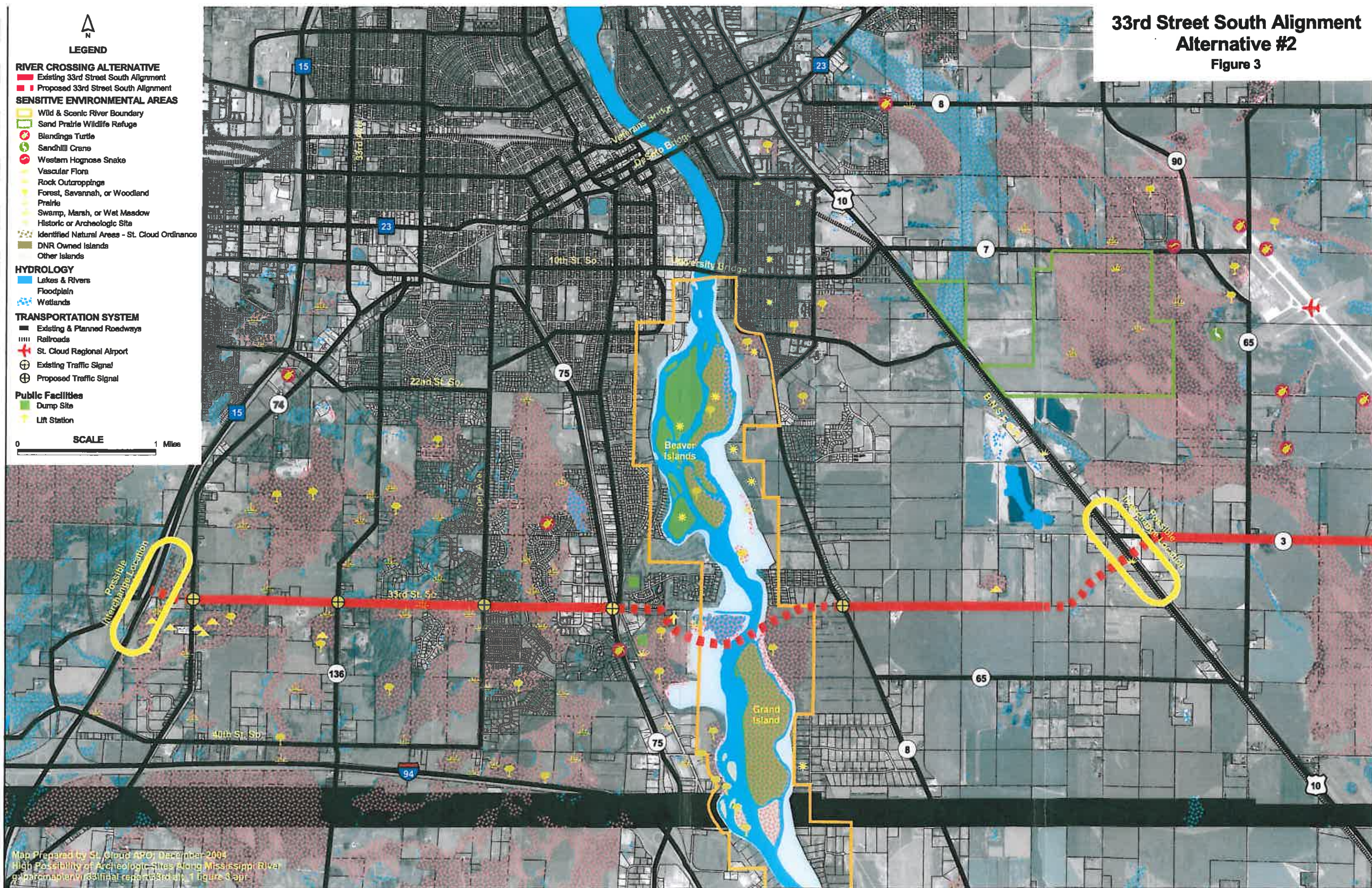
**TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

- Existing & Planned Roadways
- Railroads
- St. Cloud Regional Airport
- Existing Traffic Signal
- Proposed Traffic Signal

**Public Facilities**

- Dump Site
- Lift Station

**SCALE** 0 1 Miles



Map Prepared by St. Cloud APO, December 2004  
 High Possibility of Archeologic Sites Along Mississippi River  
 g:\p\arcmap\env\33rd\final\report\33rdalt\_1 figure 3.apr

# 33rd Street South Alignment Alternative #3

Figure 4

**LEGEND**

**RIVER CROSSING ALTERNATIVE**

- Existing 33rd Street South Alignment
- Proposed 33rd Street South Alignment

**SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS**

- Wild & Scenic River Boundary
- Sand Prairie Wildlife Refuge
- Blindings Turtle
- Sandhill Crane
- Western Hognose Snake
- Vascular Flora
- Rock Outcroppings
- Forest, Savannah, or Woodland
- Prairie
- Swamp, Marsh, or Wet Meadow
- Historic or Archeologic Site
- Identified Natural Areas - St. Cloud Ordinance
- DNR Owned Islands
- Other Islands

**HYDROLOGY**

- Lakes & Rivers
- Floodplain
- Wetlands

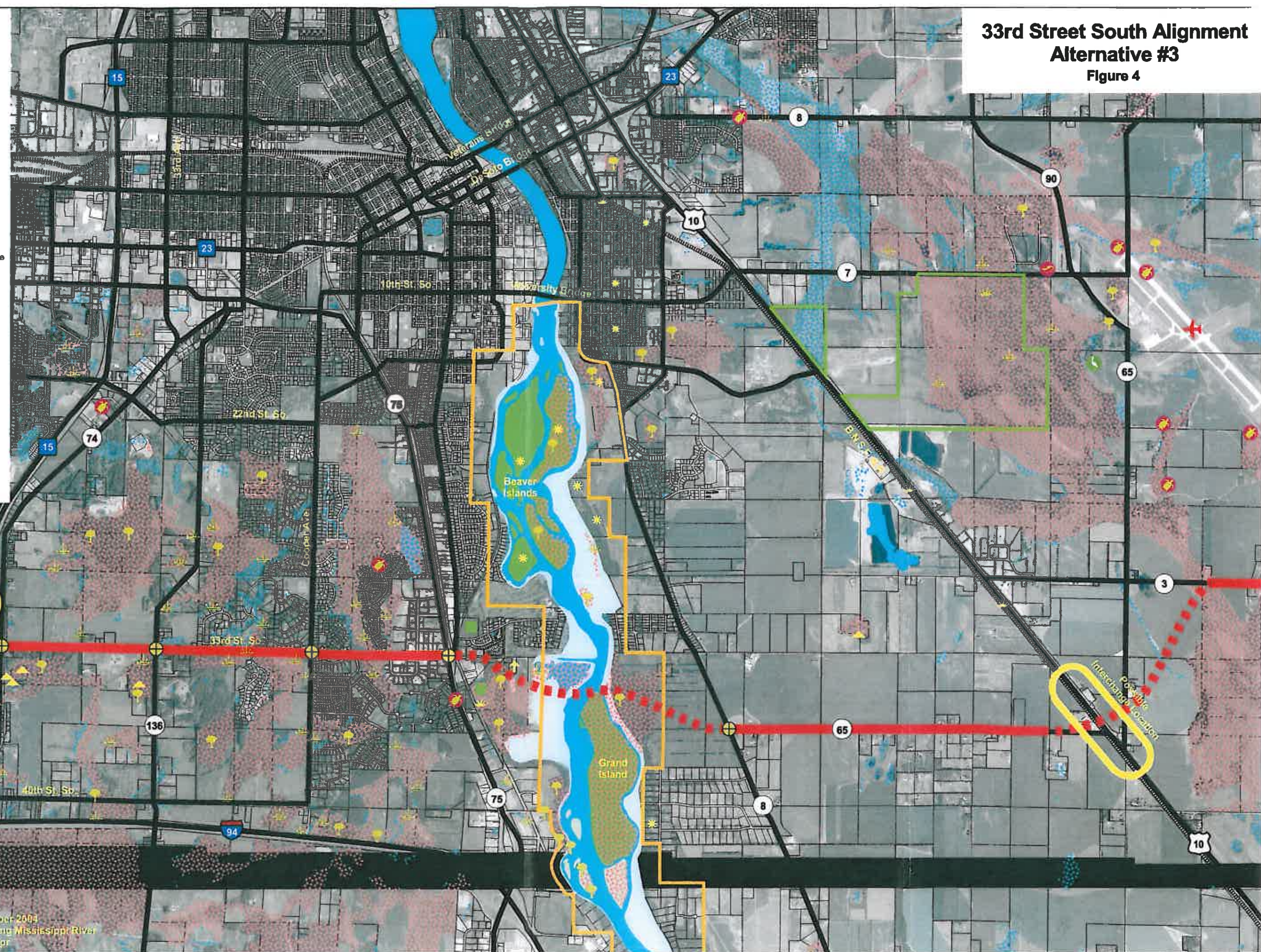
**TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

- Existing & Planned Roadways
- Railroads
- St. Cloud Regional Airport
- Existing Traffic Signal
- Proposed Traffic Signal

**Public Facilities**

- Dump Site
- Lift Station

**SCALE** 0 1 Miles



Map Prepared by St. Cloud APD, December 2004  
 High Possibility of Archeologic Sites Along Mississippi River  
 g:\map\apov\33\33rd Alt. #3 Figure 4.apr



# 33rd Street South Alignment Alternative #4

Figure 5

**LEGEND**

**RIVER CROSSING ALTERNATIVE**

- Existing 33rd Street South Alignment
- Proposed 33rd Street South Alignment

**SENSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS**

- Wild & Scenic River Boundary
- Sand Prairie Wildlife Refuge
- Blandings Turtle
- Sandhill Crane
- Western Hognose Snake
- Vascular Flora
- Rock Outcroppings
- Forest, Savannah, or Woodland
- Prairie
- Swamp, Marsh, or Wet Meadow
- Historic or Archeologic Sites
- Identified Natural Areas - St. Cloud Ordinance
- DNR Owned Islands
- Other Islands

**HYDROLOGY**

- Lakes & Rivers
- Floodplain
- Wetlands

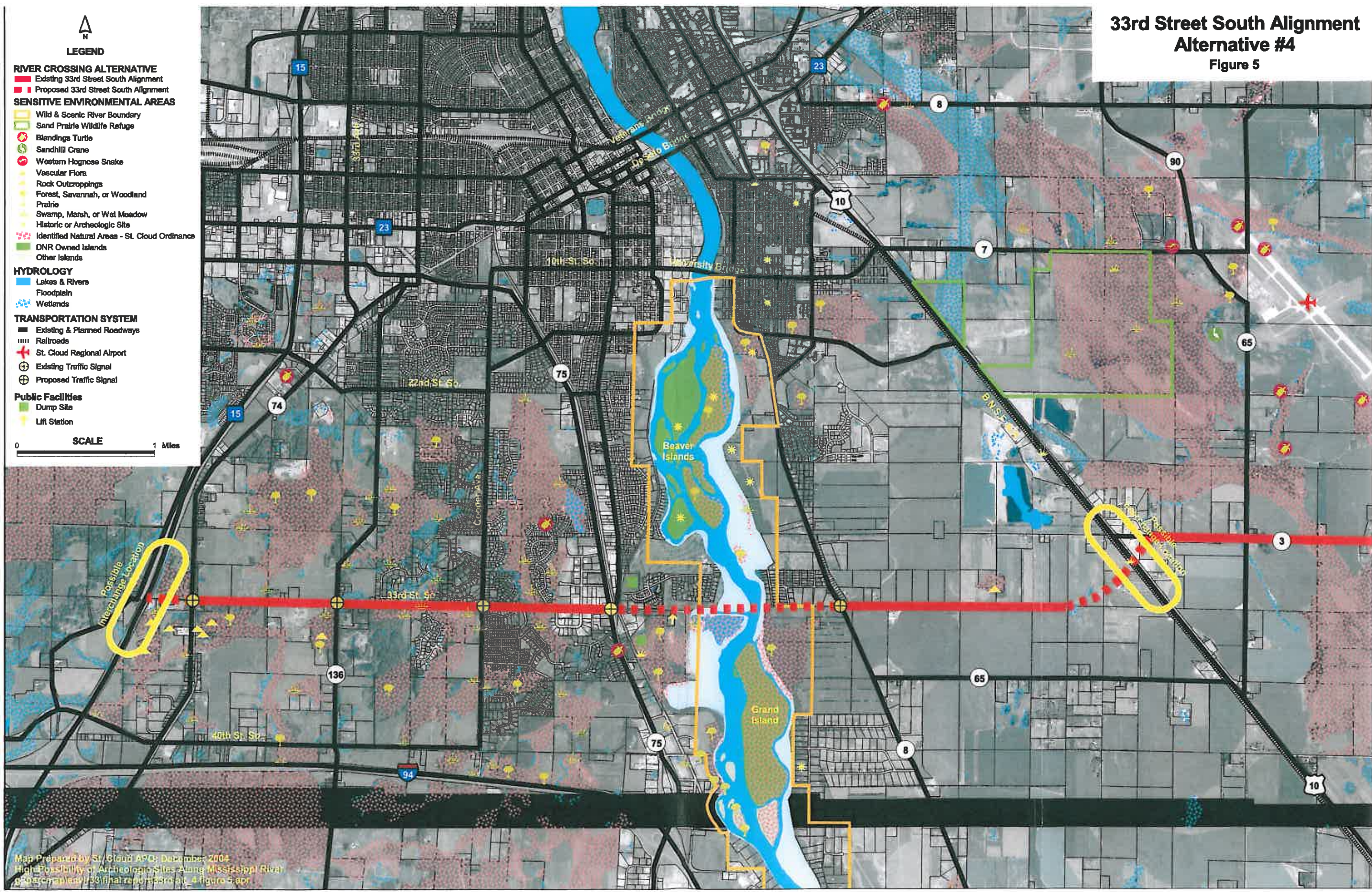
**TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

- Existing & Planned Roadways
- Railroads
- St. Cloud Regional Airport
- Existing Traffic Signal
- Proposed Traffic Signal

**Public Facilities**

- Dump Site
- Lift Station

**SCALE** 0 1 Miles



Map Prepared by St. Cloud APCD, December 2004  
 High Possibility of Archeologic Sites Along Mississippi River  
 Appendix 33 final report 33rd alt. #4 figure 5.apr

### III. Project Cost, Funding Source and Schedule

Preliminary cost estimates have been prepared for the four 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Alignment Alternatives. Construction and right-of-way estimates between Trunk Highway 15 and Trunk Highway 10 range from approximately \$40 million to \$52 million, not including interchanges. Cost estimates will be updated during the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement process. Project funding will involve a combination of federal, State and local funding sources.

The following is a tentative schedule for completion of the project environmental review process:

EIS Scoping	July 2005
Tier 1 EIS	Start Date Undetermined
Tier 2 EIS	Approximately 2020
Construction	Following Tier 2 EIS

### IV. Responsible Government Unit and Project Manager

The Counties of Stearns and Sherburne are designated joint Responsible Government Units (RGUs) for this Scoping Document and for the Tier 1 EIS. However, the St. Cloud APO is managing the project on behalf for these Counties. The APO contact person is:

Contact Person:	Scott M. Mareck, AICP
Title:	Transportation Planning Manager
Agency:	St. Cloud APO
Address:	1040 County Road 4 St. Cloud, Minnesota 56303
Phone:	(320) 252-7568
Fax:	(320) 252-6557

### V. Alternatives to be Studied in Tier 1 EIS

#### A. No-Build Alternative

As illustrated in Figure 1, the No-Build Alternative consists of the existing roadway network and also assumes complete build-out of three existing Mississippi River crossings north of the Study Area, including the following: (1) **Veterans Bridge Corridor**: 4-lanes along 3<sup>rd</sup> Street/2<sup>nd</sup> Street/St. Germain Street from Trunk Highway 15 to Trunk Highway 10, (2) **Desoto Bridge Corridor**: 4-lanes along Trunk Highway 23 from Trunk Highway 15 to 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and 6-lanes along Trunk Highway 23 from 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue North to 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southeast, (3) **University Bridge Corridor**: 4-lanes along Stearns County State Aid Highway 75/10<sup>th</sup> Street South/Michigan Avenue from Trunk Highway 15 to Trunk Highway 10, including a Trunk Highway 10 interchange.

### ***B. Transportation Demand Management Alternative***

The Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Alternative assumes low-cost, low-impact transportation improvement strategies such as increasing transit service, increasing car-pooling, and staggering work hours.

The No-Build Alternative and TDM Alternative will be combined in the Tier 1 EIS. This combined No-Build/TDM Alternative will be incorporated into all alternatives in the Tier 1 EIS.

### ***C. 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Alignment Alternative #1***

The 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Alignment Alternative #1 is a proposed 4-lane alignment located in the City of St. Cloud (Stearns County) west of the Mississippi River, and Haven Township (Sherburne County) east of the Mississippi River. In the City of St. Cloud, Alternative #1 follows the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South existing alignment that currently extends from just east of Trunk Highway 15 to just west of the Mississippi River. As the alignment approaches the Mississippi River, it continues straight east, adjacent to a private golf course, crossing a wetland and floodplain area, then crosses the River and continues southeast to the existing intersection of Sherburne County State Aid Highway 8 and Sherburne County Road 65. The alignment then continues east along County Road 65 existing alignment to Trunk Highway 10. To provide system continuity east of Trunk Highway 10, it is proposed that Sherburne County State Aid Highway 3 be realigned to connect to the Alternative #1 alignment at its intersection with Trunk Highway 10 and County Road 65.

There currently is one signal along the Alternative #1 alignment at Stearns County State Aid Highway 75 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South. Additional signals are proposed long-term under Alternative #1 at Stearns County Road 74 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South, Stearns County Road 136 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South, Cooper Avenue and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South, and Sherburne County State Aid Highway 8 and Sherburne County Road 65. Alternative #1 would likely have an interchange access to Trunk Highway 15 and Trunk Highway 10, consistent with the 2001 St. Cloud Southwest Arterial Alignment Study and the 2003 Trunk Highway 10 Interregional Corridor Partnership Study.

### ***D. 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Alignment Alternative #2***

The 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Alignment Alternative #2 is a proposed 4-lane alignment located in the City of St. Cloud (Stearns County) west of the Mississippi River, and Haven Township (Sherburne County) east of the Mississippi River. In the City of St. Cloud, Alternative #2 follows the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South existing alignment from just east of Trunk Highway 15 to just west of the River. As the alignment approaches the River, it continues southeast, veering away from a residential area, golf course and wetland, crosses a floodplain area, then crosses the River from a southwest to northeast angle, continuing northeast to the existing intersection of Sherburne County State Aid Highway 8 and 37<sup>th</sup> Street Southeast. Alternative #2 continues east of County State Aid Highway

8 to the termini of 37<sup>th</sup> Street Southeast, then continues east on new alignment to the existing Trunk Highway 10 and Sherburne County State Aid Highway 3 intersection.

There currently is one signal along the Alternative #2 alignment at Stearns County State Aid Highway 75 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South. Additional signals are proposed long term under Alternative #2 at Stearns County Road 74 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South, Stearns County Road 136 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South, Cooper Avenue and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South and Sherburne County State Aid Highway 8 and Sherburne County Road 65. Alternative #2 would likely have an interchange access to Trunk Highway 15 and Trunk Highway 10, consistent with the 2001 St. Cloud Southwest Arterial Alignment Study and the 2003 Trunk Highway 10 Interregional Corridor Partnership Study.

**E. 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Alignment Alternative #3**

The 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Alignment Alternative #3 is a proposed 4-lane alignment located in the City of St. Cloud (Stearns County) west of the Mississippi River, and Haven Township (Sherburne County) east of the Mississippi River. In the City of St. Cloud, Alternative #3 follows the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South existing alignment from just east of Trunk Highway 15 to just west of the River. As the alignment approaches the River, it continues southeast, veering away from a residential area, golf course and wetland, crosses a floodplain area, then crosses the River at a perpendicular, continuing southeast to the existing intersection of Sherburne County State Aid Highway 8 and Sherburne County Road 65. The alignment then continues east along County Road 65 existing alignment to Trunk Highway 10. To provide system continuity east of Trunk Highway 10, it is proposed that Sherburne County State Aid Highway 3 be realigned to connect to the Alternative #3 alignment at its intersection with Trunk Highway 10 and Sherburne County Road 65.

There currently is one signal along the Alternative #3 alignment at Stearns County State Aid Highway 75 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South. Additional signals are proposed long term under Alternative #3 at Stearns County Road 74 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South, Stearns County Road 136 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South, Cooper Avenue and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South and Sherburne County State Aid Highway 8 and Sherburne County Road 65. Alternative #3 would likely have an interchange access to Trunk Highway 15 and Trunk Highway 10, consistent with the 2001 St. Cloud Southwest Arterial Alignment Study and the 2003 Trunk Highway 10 Interregional Corridor Partnership Study.

**F. 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Alignment Alternative #4**

Alignment Alternative #4 was added during the comment period for the Scoping Document at the request of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA asked to add this Alternative because they felt it may have less environmental impacts than Alignment Alternatives 1, 2 or 3. Alignment Alternative #4 follows the proposed alignment of Alternative #1 from Trunk Highway 15 to the east River bank, then continues straight east, following the proposed alignment of Alternative #2 to Trunk Highway 10. This Alternative would adequately address the identified transportation

purpose and need. Details pertaining to the Alternative #4 alignment are outlined in the paragraphs that follow.

The 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Alignment Alternative #4 is a proposed 4-lane alignment located in the City of St. Cloud (Stearns County) west of the Mississippi River, and Haven Township (Sherburne County) east of the Mississippi River. In the City of St. Cloud, Alternative #4 follows the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South existing alignment from just east of Trunk Highway 15 to just west of the River. As the alignment approaches the Mississippi River, it continues straight east, adjacent to a golf course, crossing a wetland and floodplain area, then crosses the River and continues due east across Sherburne County State Aid Highway 8 to the termini of 37<sup>th</sup> Street Southeast, then continues on new alignment to the intersection of Sherburne County Road 3 and U.S. Highway 10.

There currently is one signal along the Alternative #4 alignment at Stearns County State Aid Highway 75 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South. Additional signals are proposed long term under Alternative 4 at Stearns County Road 74 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South, Stearns County Road 136 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South, Cooper Avenue and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South and Sherburne County State Aid Highway 8 and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South. Alternative #4 would likely have an interchange access to Trunk Highway 15 and Trunk Highway 10, consistent with the 2001 St. Cloud Southwest Arterial Alignment Study and the 2003 Trunk Highway 10 Interregional Corridor Partnership Study.

#### VI. Issues to be Addressed in Tier 1 EIS

During scoping, a cursory analysis of transportation, social, economic and environmental factors was conducted for the Preferred 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor, along with other corridor alternatives previously discussed. The 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor encompasses the general geographic area of 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Alignment Alternatives 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Based on information obtained during scoping, the following areas of environmental concern will require **special study** (a separate report) in the Tier 1 EIS to better determine the extent of impacts related to the three proposed alternatives:

- Historic Properties

The following issues will require **detailed analysis** in the Tier 1 EIS, but no separate report:

- Contaminated Sites
- Cumulative Impacts
- Economic impacts
- Endangered, threatened, and special concern species
- Environmental justice
- Farmlands
- Fish and wildlife
- Floodplains

- Land use
- Noise
- Park, Recreational, and Section 4(f)/6(f) Lands
- Right-of-way acquisition and relocation
- Social and neighborhood impacts, community facilities
- Stream and water body modification
- Traffic
- Vegetation
- Visual impacts
- Water Quality
- Wetlands
- Wild and Scenic River (State)

The following areas of environmental concern will require  **cursory analysis**  and discussion in the Tier I EIS:

- Air quality
- Bikeways and pedestrians
- Construction
- Earth Borne vibration
- Erosion control and slope stability
- Excess materials
- Groundwater and geology
- Handicapped access
- Irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources
- Short term uses & long term productivity
- Soils, materials, foundations
- Transit
- Utility locations

#### **VII. Issues not to be Addressed in Tier 1 EIS**

The following areas of environmental concern are not relevant to the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor and  **will not be discussed**  in the Tier 1 EIS:

- Coastal zones
- Critical areas

The Tier 1 EIS will focus on issues affecting the alignment location decision for the proposed new river crossing, while the Tier 2 EIS will focus on issues affecting the design decision. Accordingly, some environmental issues cannot be fully addressed in the Tier 1 EIS, but will be discussed further in the Tier 2 environmental analysis, when design concepts are completed in more detail.

### **VIII. Public and Agency Involvement**

Four agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MnDNR) and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) were invited to participate as cooperating agencies during the Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this project. The COE, MnDOT and MnDNR have agreed to be cooperating agencies; however, the MPCA has declined this invitation. The COE has been asked to be a cooperating agency because it issues permits for wetland impacts, which are anticipated for this project. MnDOT has been asked to be a cooperating agency because the proposed project will connect to Minnesota State Highway 15 and U.S. Highway 10, and will likely involve interchanges at these locations. The MnDNR has been asked to be a cooperating agency because it has special expertise in floodplain issues and management policies for the section of the Mississippi River that runs through the project area. This section of the Mississippi River is designated a Wild and Scenic River by the State of Minnesota.

The Scoping Document describes the public involvement activities during scoping. These activities included meetings and correspondence with the public, local government and regulatory agencies to obtain input on alternatives and potential impacts. Similar public involvement activities will continue throughout the remainder of the project development process.

The Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Decision Document was distributed for public and agency comment during a review/comment period from August 16 to September 15, 2004. A public scoping meeting was held on September 2, 2004 to provide an opportunity for public, agency and local government representatives to discuss the scoping study findings, the proposed alternatives and the draft scoping decisions. A number of issues were raised in written comments received during the scoping document comment period and public meetings. Comments received can generally be categorized as follows:

1. Environmental review process and regulations
2. Project purpose and need
3. Alternatives analysis
4. Tier 1 EIS issues
5. Corridor preservation of preferred alignment

Comments within each category are summarized beginning on the following page, along with a response to each comment. Individual comment letters are attached in Appendix A.

## 1. Environmental Review Process and Regulations

### A. Structure of the Tiered EIS

U.S. EPA Comment: The final Scoping Decision Document should clearly identify the Tiered EIS process that will be followed and the documents that will be produced.

Response: Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) state that “agencies are encouraged to tier their environmental impact statements to eliminate repetitive discussions of the same issue and to focus on the actual issues ripe for decision at each level of environmental review” (40 CFR part 1502.20). Since development pressures are requiring that an alignment decision be made now for the proposed project, this action is “ripe for decision”, and therefore, will be evaluated in a Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Tier 1 Record of Decision (ROD). However, since construction is not anticipated for approximately 20 years, implementation issues such as design alternatives and associated environmental mitigation plans are not “ripe for decision” now, and therefore, will be evaluated under a separate Tier 2 EIS and Tier 2 ROD in approximately 15 years.

### B. Timeline for the Tiered EIS

U.S. EPA Comment: When will the Tier 1 EIS be prepared and distributed for public review and comment?

Response: A timeline for initiating the draft Tier 1 EIS will be determined following the scoping process.

### C. Scoping Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW)

MnDNR Comment: The Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Decision Document documentation presented to the DNR does not contain a scoping Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW), as required by Minnesota Rules.

Response: Minnesota Rules 4410.21 state that projects requiring an EIS must have an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) filed with the RGU, and that the EAW shall be the basis for the scoping process. Federal regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) stipulate that an assessment is not necessary if the agency has decided to prepare an environmental impact statement (40 CFR 1501.3). (An environmental impact statement is mandatory for this project). Due to the difference in state rules and federal regulations regarding the need for an assessment, an EAW was not used as a scoping document for this project. Rather, an outline was followed that addresses the purpose of the EIS scoping process and the expectations of a federal EIS. Due to its similar project scope and environmental issues, MnDOT's I-94/TH 10 Regional Connection Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Decision Document, (1997) was used as a model for this Scoping Document/Draft



*Scoping Decision Document. The joint RGUs for this project will coordinate with FHWA, MnDOT State-Aid, and the DNR prior to initiating the Tier 1 EIS to determine the need to prepare an EAW addendum to this Scoping Document/Scoping Decision Document.*

## **2. Project Purpose and Need**

### **A. Project Need/Project Development**

Haven Township Board Comment: The Sherburne County Transportation and Sherburne County land use plans do not show a river crossing. Haven Township has opposed a river crossing. In June, 2002, after a number of meetings questioning whether the bridge crossing should even be studied, Haven Township, Sherburne County, St. Cloud and Stearns County agreed to preserve the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor in Sherburne County and Haven Township from development, but made no decision on whether any Study, beyond a Scoping Document, should proceed.

Response: A new local crossing of the Mississippi River south of 10<sup>th</sup> Street in the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area has been included in various planning documents dating back to 1967. In 2000, the St. Cloud Area Joint Master Plan identified a proposed future Mississippi River Crossing in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Corridor as well as future urban growth in Haven Township extending to the north and south of this Corridor. In 2001, the St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) adopted the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area 2025 Transportation Plan, which reaffirmed the APO's historic commitment to a future Mississippi River crossing south of 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

*Although the Sherburne County transportation and land use plans do not specifically discuss a future river crossing in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Corridor, the County does indicate their desire to encourage development of local (city and township) transportation plans that incorporate long range transportation planning initiatives such as access management, roadway connectivity, and functional classification designations. The County also notes that they will continue to actively participate in the evaluation of existing and alternative transportation corridors.*

*In September, 2002, the City of St. Cloud, Stearns County, Sherburne County and Haven Township entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) stipulating that all parties would suspend participation in the Mississippi River Crossing Study south of 10<sup>th</sup> Street beyond preparation and completion of the "Scoping Document" pending the outcome of the Highway 10 Study and the outcome of the I-94/T.H. 10 Regional River Crossing Study. The Highway 10 Study is completed, and a Draft I-94/TH 10 EIS is also complete. Accordingly, at some point after completion of this Scoping Decision Document, the St. Cloud APO, Stearns County, Sherburne County, the City of St. Cloud and Haven Township should enter into a dialog to discuss a mutually agreed upon timeline for the future Tier 1 EIS.*

Haven Township Citizen Comment: It appears premature to start making plans for a crossing without proof of need.

*Response: The purpose and need section of the Scoping Document fully explains the need for the proposed project. Project development work is beginning now so a preferred crossing alignment can be preserved from development. Construction is not anticipated for approximately twenty (20) years.*

Haven Township Citizen Comment: How many vehicles will be using the proposed bridge route and how was it determined?

*Response: The forecasted 2025 traffic volume for crossing alignments within the preferred 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Corridor is approximately 13,000 vehicles per day. This forecasted volume was derived from a 2025 land use based travel demand model.*

Haven Township Citizen Comment: The maximum capacity of the bridges already present (including the Sauk Rapids Bridge and the MnDOT proposed bridge) should be studied.

*Response: The travel demand modeling for this study assumed full build-out of three existing river crossing corridors immediately north of the study area (4-lane Michigan Avenue/10<sup>th</sup> Street/CSAH 75 from TH 10 to TH 15, 6-lane TH 23 from 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southeast to the Lake George Interchange, and 4-lane St. Germain/2<sup>nd</sup> Street/3<sup>rd</sup> Street from TH 10 to 33<sup>rd</sup> Avenue), and also assumed an expanded four lane Sauk Rapids Bridge. Modeling completed as part of the 2003 "Cumulative Impacts Study for the Mississippi Scenic Riverway: St. Cloud (10<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge) to Anoka-Champlin (TH 169 Bridge)" indicated that the proposed 33<sup>rd</sup> Street River Crossing will still be needed after the I-94/TH 10 interregional connection is made.*

Haven Township Citizen Comment: Alternative forms of transportation should be considered.

*Response: The Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Alternative considers low-cost, low-impact transportation improvement strategies such as increasing transit service, increasing car-pooling, and staggering work hours. This alternative alone does not address the identified purpose and need of the proposed project, but will be evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS as a supplement to build alternative options, in addition to the identified No Build Alternative improvements.*

Haven Township Citizen Comment: The only conclusion that can be reached by reviewing the Scoping Document is that the "No-Build" option is the only option that is available in light of the lack of transportation study, the overwhelming environmental obstacles presented by parks, Scenic River, golf courses, businesses and opposition by area residents to a bridge and highway.

*Response: As outlined in the Purpose and Need section of the Scoping Document, from a transportation perspective, there is justification for a new river crossing south of the existing 10<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. However, as required by federal law, consideration of a No Build/TDM Alternative will also be forwarded into the Tier 1 EIS process. During the Tier 1 EIS process, a more detailed evaluation of transportation, social, economic and environmental factors will be undertaken for the four build alignment alternatives within the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Preferred Corridor.*

#### **B. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Alternative**

**U.S. EPA Comment:** Based on the purpose and need in the SD/DSDD, we question why the APO proposes to carry forward the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Alternative into the Tiered EIS? Consequently, we question whether the SD/DSDD purpose and need statement is too narrow? If the TDM Alternative is carried forward for detailed evaluation in the Tiered EIS, we strongly recommend that the TDM Alternative include all elements of the No-Build Alternative (e.g. build out of the three existing river crossings).

*Response: The identified purpose of the project is to preserve from development an environmentally and culturally sensitive alignment for a future (20+) year 4-lane minor arterial roadway and Mississippi River bridge connecting Trunk Highway 15 to Trunk Highway 10. The need for the project is based upon deficient east/west system continuity south of 10<sup>th</sup> Street, forecasted land use growth, and forecasted congestion on existing bridges.*

*Implementation of TDM measures (i.e. staggered work hours, signal timing efficiencies, transit improvements, etc.) were not included in the purpose statement because it was determined early-on in the scoping process that these types of measures would not provide measurable improvement to the identified transportation needs. As suggested, the Tier 1 EIS will combine the TDM and No-Build Alternatives into one Alternative. This TDM/No-Build Alternative will be used as a baseline to compare the performance of the build 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Alignment Alternatives.*

### **3. Alternatives Analysis**

#### **A. Additional 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Alignment Alternative**

**U.S. EPA Comment:** The following additional alignment alternative (i.e. 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Alignment Alternative #4) should be identified and considered for detailed evaluation in the Tier 1 EIS, along with the three 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Alignment Alternatives identified in the SD/SDD: west alignment the same as Alignment Alternative #1, east alignment the same as Alignment Alternative #2.

*Response: An Alignment Alternative #4, as described above, will be added to the alternatives to be evaluated in the Tier 1 EIS.*

## B. No-Build Alternative

MnDNR Comment: The No-Build Alternative should be assessed and ranked in the scoring matrix used in scoping.

*Response: As outlined in the Purpose and Need section of the Scoping Document, the No Build Alternative does not adequately address the identified transportation purpose and need, and therefore, assigning a score to the No Build Alternative in the scoring matrix would have no relevance to a decision regarding a preferred alternative. The purpose of the scoring matrix was to compare the relative performance of build alternatives that, to varying degrees, did address the transportation purpose and need.*

## C. Corridor Alternatives Scoring Matrix

MPCA Comment: The application of the scoring methodology should include a means to re-evaluate the metrics of the scoping process in the event that environmental, land use and steering committee issues change over time. Based on current land use changes and population growth characteristics, the existing environmental conditions in the area may change substantially in 20 years. As a result, the scoring methodology will be difficult to use for future decision-making purposes if the evaluation method does not integrate scoring features that will be adaptive to the dynamic nature of the various systems of concern (e.g. environmental, economic, transportation and development).

*Response: The scoring methodology used in this Scoping Document was not intended to be used for future decision-making beyond scoping, but rather, to assist in a decision now to select a preferred build corridor alternative for Tier1 EIS analysis. The purpose of this scoring methodology has been achieved by virtue of this Scoping Decision Document identifying the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Corridor Alternative as the preferred corridor alternative for Tier 1 EIS analysis. The Tier 1 EIS will develop its own scoping methodology to assess social, economic and environmental impacts in order to select a preferred alignment from the four (4) alignment alternatives within the preferred 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Corridor.*

MPCA Comment: If a weighted decision methodology will be employed to screen alternatives, then rationale for the weighted allotments should be presented and justified to demonstrate that they will not conflict with the requirements in M.S. 116D, subpart 6 for the need to evaluate and select prudent and feasible alternatives, which are potentially superior to the project with respect to environmental impacts.

*Response: The scoring methodology and weighting used for this Scoping Study placed a 50 percent weight on social and environmental considerations, a 40 percent weight on transportation considerations and a 10 percent weight on economic considerations. When considering the results of this scoring methodology in addition to the following key decision-making factors in other build corridor alternatives, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Corridor Alternative was determined to clearly be the only prudent and feasible build alternative for Tier 1 EIS analysis:*

- 16<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor: Talahi Park and Riverside Park Section 4(f) impacts
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Street Corridor: Beaver Islands Section 4(f) impacts
- 24<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor: Beaver Islands Section 4(f) impacts
- Sportsman Island Road Corridor: Golf Course Section 4(f) impacts
- 40<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor: Grand Island Section, and no TH 15 access

#### 4. Tier 1 EIS Issues

##### A. Drinking Water Supplies

U.S. EPA Comment: The Tier 1 EIS should identify and assess possible impacts to drinking water supplies, including wellhead protection areas.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address this issue.*

##### B. Cumulative Impacts

U.S. EPA Comment: A cumulative impacts analysis should be undertaken in the Tier 1 EIS. The Tier 1 cumulative impacts analysis will need to be brought up-to-date in the Tier 2 EIS.

*Response: A cumulative impact study was completed for the Mississippi Scenic Riverway (Cumulative Impacts Study for the Mississippi Scenic Riverway: St. Cloud (10<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge) to Anoka-Champlin (TH 169 Bridge), MnDOT, June 2003). The purpose of this study was to focus on the cumulative impacts of up to five new river crossings, including the proposed 33<sup>rd</sup> Street River Crossing, plus other anticipated actions in the study area (i.e., anticipated future development) that could impact this 53-mile segment of the Mississippi River in recognition of its inclusion in the state Wild and Scenic River system. Since the proposed 33<sup>rd</sup> Street River Crossing and the I-94/TH 10 Interregional Connection share similar environmental issues and have overlapping study areas, the Tier 1 EIS for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Crossing will use the I-94/TH 10 EIS as a model for cumulative impacts discussion. If necessary, a discussion regarding an expanded scope for cumulative impacts analysis can occur prior to initiating the Tier 1 EIS.*

##### C. Clean Water Act

U.S. EPA Comment: There is no guidance on how to conduct a tiered NEPA process and adequately take into consideration the requirements of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Accordingly, we advise that the tiered EIS process be closely coordinated with the appropriate resource agencies, including, but not limited to: the Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the MnDNR, the MnPCA and the U.S. EPA.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address this issue.*

D. Wetlands

U.S. EPA Comment: The Tier 1 Draft EIS should contain a sufficient level of detailed information concerning the location, type and amount of wetlands that will be directly and/or indirectly impacted by each of the alignment alternatives.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address this issue.*

U.S. EPA Comment: The Tier 1 Draft EIS should include a wetlands functions and values assessment for all potentially affected wetlands. This information should be used to identify the Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA) alignment during the Tier 1 EIS.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address this issue.*

U.S. EPA Comment: We strongly recommend that the Tier 1 EIS identify potential wetland mitigation compensation sites and the steps that will be taken to preserve those sites at the conclusion of the Tier 1 EIS.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address this issue.*

E. Storm Water Runoff

U.S. EPA Comment: We recommend that the Tier 1 EIS include sufficient information concerning water quality and stormwater runoff in order to identify the potential types and locations of stormwater treatment systems that will be needed in order to adequately treat stormwater runoff in order to preserve or enhance surface and ground water quality. We strongly recommend that the potential stormwater treatment locations be preserved at the same time as the preferred alternative alignment.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address this issue.*

MPCA Comment: In order to assure that an adequate corridor is preserved with enough area for water quality treatments, an initial assessment for adequately sized treatment ponds should be included in Tier 1 discussions. The Tier 1 water quality discussion should also include considerations that the bridge deck stormwater and surface water deck drainage will be directed to an off end drainage system that includes provisions for containment of toxic or hazardous material spills that will prevent direct runoff of such substances to the Mississippi River and adjacent lands.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address this issue.*

F. 4(f) and 6(f) Impacts

MnDNR Comment: A detailed analysis of the potential 4(f) and 6(f) impacts will be needed in the EIS to assess potential impacts to properties acquired with Federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LAWCON) funds.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address this issue.*

G. Noise Impacts

MnDNR Comment: A detailed analysis of noise impacts should be conducted in the EIS to assess the potential impact on the Mississippi Wild and Scenic River and other recreational facilities in the vicinity.

*Response: A noise analysis will be completed on the people, not the resources.*

H. State Wild and Scenic River

MnDNR Comment: The EIS should discuss the current management plan and all potential impacts to the State designated Mississippi Wild and Scenic River.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address this issue.*

Izaak Walton League Comment: We of the Central Minnesota Chapter of the Izaak Walton League of America would like to strongly suggest the APO and the City of St. Cloud make every effort to preserve and protect the scenic portion of the Mississippi River.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address this issue.*

I. Induced Cumulative Impacts

MnDNR Comment: The EIS needs to fully assess induced cumulative impacts that will result from this project. This assessment should be done through a special study. MnDOT conducted a cumulative impact study of the array of proposed bridge crossings being contemplated between St. Cloud and Dayton. However, that study focused on the "cumulative impacts to the Mississippi Riverway resource". The new cumulative impact study should focus on the Wild and Scenic Riverway. The special study should follow the outline in the Council on Environmental Quality's Considering Cumulative Effects under the Environmental Policy Act (1997).

*Response: The conclusions discussed in the 2003 MnDOT/FHWA cumulative impacts study referenced above were used as the basis for cumulative impacts discussion in the I-94/TH 10 Interregional Connection EIS completed in 2004. Since the proposed 33<sup>rd</sup> Street River Crossing and the I-94/TH 10 Interregional Connection share similar environmental issues and have overlapping study areas, the Tier 1 EIS for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Street*

*Crossing will use the I-94/TH 10 EIS as a model for cumulative impacts discussion. If necessary, a discussion regarding an expanded scope for cumulative impacts analysis can occur prior to initiating the Tier 1 EIS.*

**J. Fisheries Habitat**

**MnDNR Comment:** The EIS should include a detailed analysis of fisheries habitat.

*Response: Fish and wildlife have been identified for detailed analysis in the Tier 1 EIS.*

**K. Secondary Impacts**

**MPCA Comment:** The Scoping Document indicates the preferred routing for the new road construction and indicates that development is expected to occur in this corridor. The EIS-T1 should consider this development as a secondary impact resulting from this preferred alternative and evaluate the development potential impact to wetlands adjacent to the new corridor.

*Response: The Tier 1 EIS will address secondary or indirect impacts.*

**L. Miscellaneous Issues**

**Izaak Walton League Comment:** A bridge through the River corridor will damage or destroy significant and high-quality riparian wildlife, plant and fish communities, which include state-designated "species of special concern" such as the bald eagle, osprey, blanding's turtle, and red-shouldered hawk. A bridge will seriously damage the migratory corridor for many more species of fish and wildlife. We are concerned about the visual impact of the new bridge, the associated runoff, noise and air pollution. Also, the bridge would damage the historical character of the area.

*Response: All of the aforementioned issues will be addressed in the Tier 1 EIS.*

**5. Corridor Preservation of Preferred Alignment**

**A. Timeline for Right-of-Way Acquisition**

**U.S. EPA Comment:** The final Scoping Decision Document and Tiered EIS should identify when during the Tiered EIS process right-of-way will be purchased for the preferred alternative alignment identified in Tier 1.

*Response: Following completion of the Tier 1 EIS and Tier 1 ROD, official mapping will be prepared to identify with surveyor's accuracy the precise right-of-way location of the preferred alignment alternative. An official map will be filed in the Sherburne County and Stearns County recorder offices, and will be used as a tool to protect right-of-way for the preferred alignment. As plats are proposed, right-of-way dedication will be*



requested consistent with the official map. The need to purchase right-of-way will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

**IX. Permits and Approvals**

Permits and approvals that may be required for the proposed project are listed below in Table 1.

**Table 1  
Agency Permits and Approvals that May be Required**

Unite of Government	Type of Permit or Approval
<b>Federal</b>	
Federal Highway Administration	EIS Approval Record of Decision
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Section 404 Permit
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	Section 106 Concurrence (if needed)
<b>State</b>	
Minnesota Department of Transportation	TH 10 and 15 Access Modification Approvals EIS Document Approval
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	Protected Waters Permit Groundwater Appropriation Permit (if needed)
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	401 Water Quality Certification Air Quality Indirect Source Permit (if needed) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit
Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office	Section 106 Concurrence
<b>Regional/Metropolitan</b>	
Local Watershed Districts	Coordination of Grading and Drainage Plans
St. Cloud APO	Inclusion in 20 Year MPO Transportation Plan
<b>Local</b>	
Stearns and Sherburne Counties (RGUs)	Tier 1 and Tier 2 EIS Adequacy Determination
City of St. Cloud, Stearns County, Sherburne County	Review and Approve Alignment and Design/ Municipal Consent

**X. Level of Action**

Based upon the input received during the scoping process, there has been no change in the level of action for this project from that stated in the Scoping Document. That is, a tiered environmental review process will be utilized. A Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared following the scoping process to address the environmental consequences of a location decision and to identify a preferred 33<sup>rd</sup> Street South Mississippi River crossing alignment. Appropriate measures such as official mapping, property dedication through the platting process, zoning setbacks and property acquisition can then be implemented to protect this preferred alignment for future construction. The Tier 2 Environmental Impact Statement process will be initiated in approximately fifteen (15) years. The Tier 2 process will address specific design issues and focus on these design issues as they relate to environmental impacts and mitigation.