

**SCOPING DOCUMENT
AND
DRAFT SCOPING DECISION DOCUMENT**

SOUTHWEST BELTWAY PROJECT

**Future County State Aid Highway 84
Stearns County, Minnesota**

November 2008

SRF No. 0076050

SCOPING DOCUMENT/DRAFT SCOPING DECISION DOCUMENT
STEARNS COUNTY SOUTHWEST BELTWAY (FUTURE CSAH 84)

STEARNS COUNTY
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

State Project Number: 73-684-03
Minnesota Project Number: [TO BE ASSIGNED]

The project proposes construction of a new minor arterial roadway within the greater southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area between County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 4/CSAH 133 and Trunk Highway (TH) 15 (approximately 8.2 miles).

Townships: St. Joseph, St. Wendel, Le Sauk
Cities: St. Joseph, Waite Park
County: Stearns

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NOVEMBER 25, 2008
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF SCOPING DOCUMENT

The proposed action is the construction of a new minor arterial roadway connecting County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 4/CSAH 133 to Trunk Highway (TH) 15 within the southwest greater St. Cloud Metropolitan Area¹ in Stearns County, Minnesota (Southwest Beltway Project; see Figures 1 and 2). The environmental review process for the Southwest Beltway Project assumes that construction would likely use some combination of local, state, and/or federal funding sources. As such, the project planning and environmental review process is being conducted in conformance with State and Federal environmental review requirements.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires that social, economic, and environmental considerations be included in the planning of projects that receive federal funding and involve other federal actions. Similarly, the Minnesota Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) requires review of potential environmental impacts for proposed projects that exceed state regulatory thresholds. The proposed action meets the State requirements for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.4400 Subp. 16 (construction of a road on a new location which is four or more lanes in width and two or more miles in length).

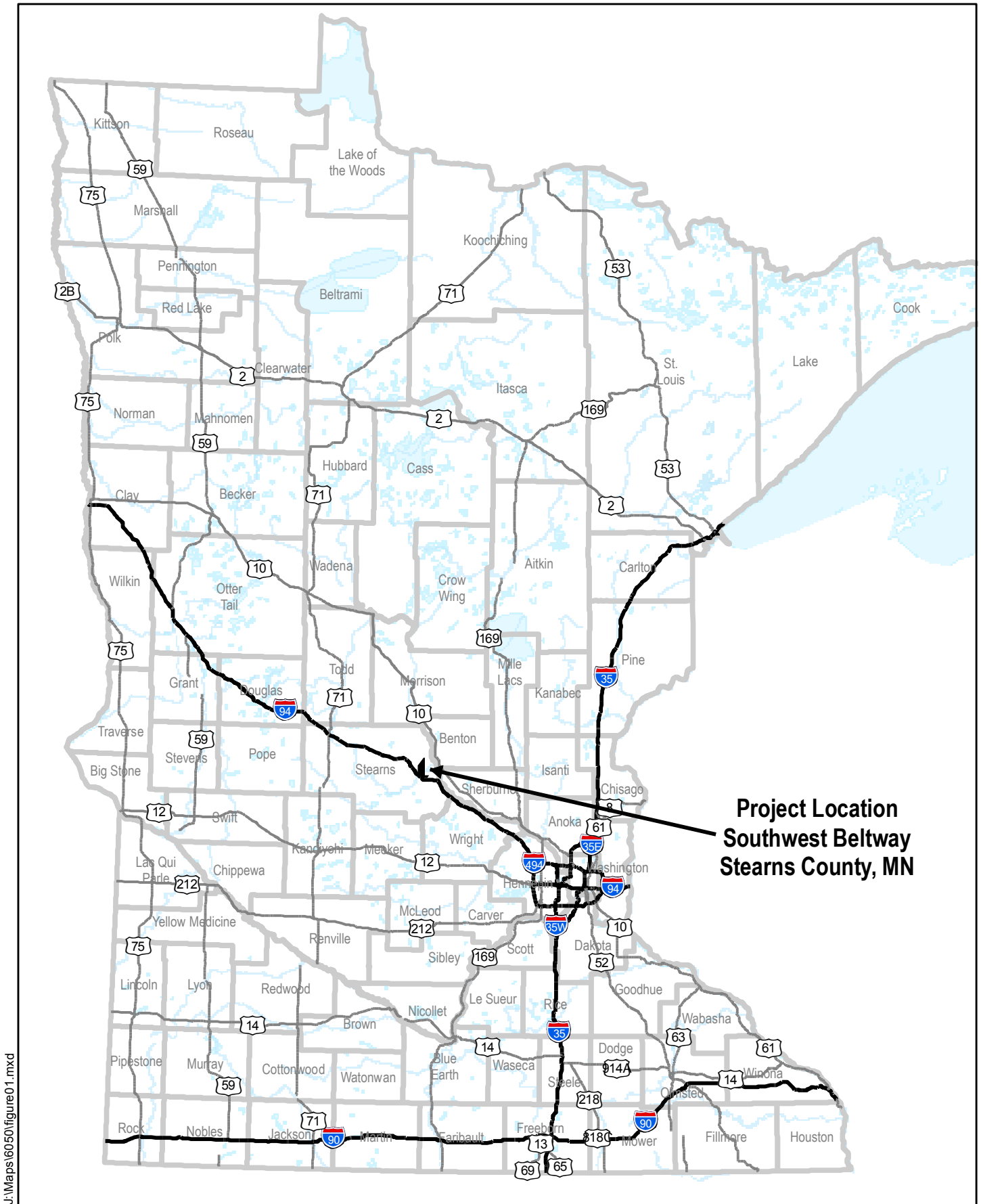
This Scoping Document and Draft Scoping Decision Document (SD/DSDD) has been prepared as part of the federal NEPA process and state environmental review processes to fulfill requirements of 42 USC 4321 et. seq., 23 USC § 139, and Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.2000. The SD/DSDD is distributed to federal, state and local agencies and the public to provide an opportunity for review and comment prior to the preparation of a Final Scoping Decision Document. A 30-day comment period will begin when the availability notice for the SD/DSDD is published in the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) *Monitor*. A scoping meeting will be held during the 30-day comment period (as required by Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.2100 Subpart 3) which will provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the SD/DSDD.

A final Scoping Decision (SD) will be made by Stearns County, in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) after the public scoping meeting and at the end of the 30-day comment period. Following completion of the scoping process, an EIS will be prepared in accordance with the findings of the SD and SDD.

The Southwest Beltway Project Scoping Document provides a discussion of the following:

- Purpose of and need for the proposed action;
- Alternatives considered;

¹ The St. Cloud Metropolitan Area consists of the cities of Sartell, Sauk Rapids, St. Cloud, St. Joseph, and Waite Park, as well as Haven, Le Sauk, Minden, St. Augusta, St. Joseph, St. Wendel, and Sauk Rapids townships (*St. Cloud Area Joint Planning District Plan*, May 2000). The southwest portion of the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is defined as the cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park, and portions of St. Joseph Township northeast of I-94. See Section 3.0.



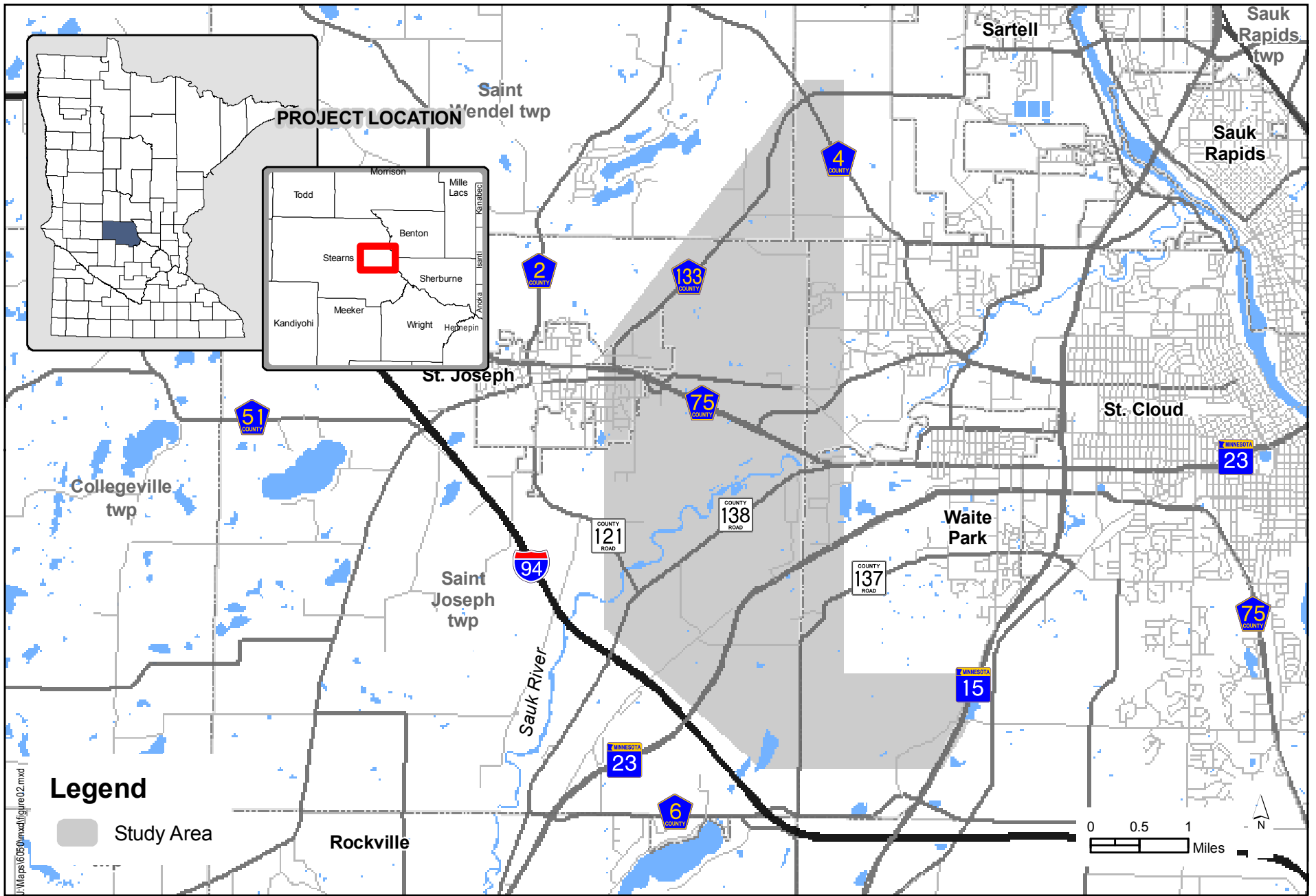
**Project Location
Southwest Beltway
Stearns County, MN**

STATE LOCATION MAP

Southwest Beltway Scoping Document
SP 73-684-03
Stearns County

Figure 1

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Area and Project Location Map

Figure 2

- Potential social, economic, and environmental impacts and discussion of the methodology used to address each issue in the EIS;
- Permits and approvals likely to be needed prior to construction of the proposed action;
- Public and agency coordination plan; and
- Agencies and other stakeholders consulted during the environmental review process.

The scoping process is used prior to the preparation of an EIS to reduce the scope and bulk of an EIS and by identifying the appropriate level of detail for studying issues and impacts. The scoping process is also used to allow cooperating and participating agency input and public input into the development of the purpose and need for the project and in identifying the reasonable range of alternatives to be studied in the EIS.

1.2 PLANNING HISTORY

The Southwest Beltway project is part of larger arterial ring-road concept that connects the greater St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, including communities such as Sartell, St. Joseph, Sauk Rapids, Waite Park, and St. Cloud. The Southwest Beltway project is the southwestern portion of this larger arterial ring-road concept.

An arterial facility within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area has been identified in St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) transportation plans, dating back to the *St. Cloud APO 2010 Transportation Plan* (adopted 1991). At the time, this arterial facility was identified as a long-range (20+ years) improvement. An arterial facility within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area has been illustrated in subsequent APO transportation plans, including the *St. Cloud APO 2015 Transportation Plan* (adopted 1995), the *St. Cloud APO 2020 Transportation Plan* (adopted 1998), the *St. Cloud Metropolitan Area 2025 Transportation Plan* (adopted 2001), and the *St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan* (adopted 2005).

The *1998 Stearns County Transportation Plan* examined the long-term transportation needs within the county. One of the major elements identified in the *1998 Stearns County Transportation Plan* was an arterial facility within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. The needs for this arterial facility as identified in the 1998 Transportation Plan are summarized in Section 2.1.

Completion of the 1998 Stearns County Transportation Plan ultimately led to the Southwest Arterial Alignment Study in 2000 and 2001 (hereafter referred to as the 2001 Study). This study was undertaken by Stearns County, in association with the cities of St. Cloud, Waite Park, and St. Joseph, St. Joseph Township, St. Cloud APO, and Mn/DOT. The outcome of this study was the report *St. Cloud Southwest Arterial Alignment Study*. The 2001 Study examined potential alignments for a minor arterial roadway within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, and recommended an arterial facility alignment between County Road (CR) 137 and TH 15. The 2001 Study further recommended that alignments for this arterial roadway between CR 137 and CSAH 133 be addressed in a future study.

This scoping process is intended to identify and evaluate a range of alternatives for the project based on current considerations.

1.3 RELATIONSHIP OF SOUTHWEST BELTWAY SCOPING TO OTHER PROJECTS IN THE PROJECT AREA

Several other transportation studies have been recently completed or are underway within the project area. The location of these projects, relative to the Southwest Beltway project area, is illustrated in Figure 3 and described below.²

Mn/DOT District 3 recently completed corridor planning studies for TH 23/CSAH 75³ and for TH 15⁴ in March 2007. The study limits for both corridor planning studies were confined to the segments of TH 23/CSAH 75 and TH 15 within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. The purpose of these studies was to identify improvements that would address the long-term transportation needs (e.g., traffic demand) to maintain and enhance mobility on both corridors, and to identify a strategy that would provide for the implementation of improvements over time. The recommendations of both studies would also serve to help guide local transportation and land use decisions along the TH 23/CSAH 75 and TH 15 corridors.

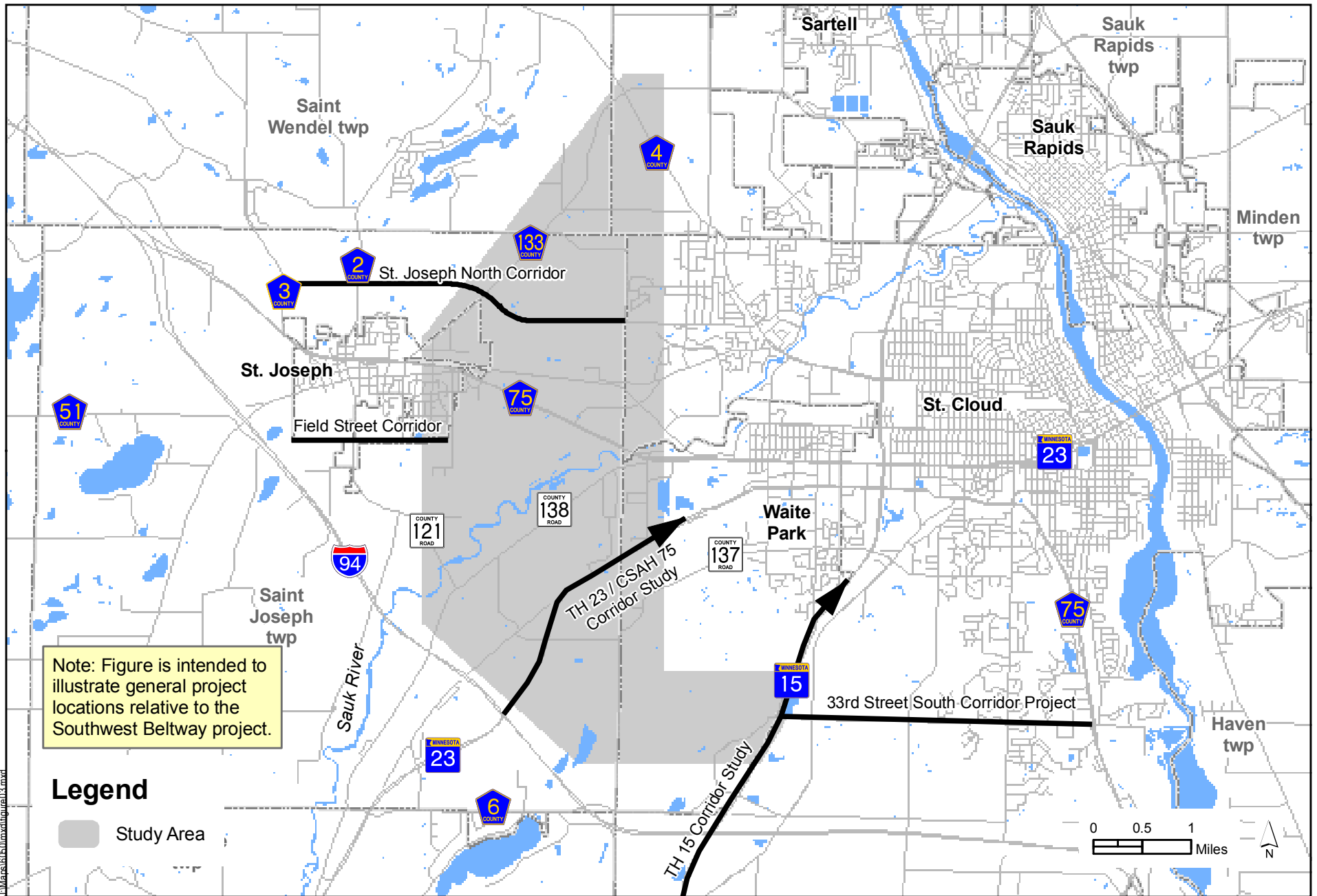
The City of St. Joseph recently completed a corridor study (*North Corridor and CSAH 2 Realignment Corridor Study Report*, December 2006) for an arterial roadway along the north side of the City from I-94 to the St. Cloud city limits. The portion of the St. Joseph North Corridor between CSAH 133 and St. Cloud bisects the Southwest Beltway project area north of CSAH 75. The St. Joseph North Corridor project is identified as an illustrative project in the St. Cloud APO 2030 *Transportation Plan*. Illustrative projects cannot be included in the St. Cloud APO's fiscally constrained plan because it is anticipated that funds will not be available for these projects within the plan's timeframe based on projected revenue streams. Illustrative projects are those projects that are only eligible to compete for high priority project (HPP) funding from Congress. Environmental documentation for the St. Joseph North Corridor is currently underway.

The City of St. Joseph is also completing studies for a collector roadway (Field Street) along the south side of the City from CSAH 2 east to 20th Street. The eastern terminus of the Field Street study is located within the Southwest Beltway study area. The St. Joseph Field Street project is identified as a financially-constrained project in the St. Cloud APO 2030 *Transportation Plan*. Financially-constrained projects are those eligible to compete for federal formula funds through the District 3 Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) or HPP funding from Congress, where the APO has anticipated federal funding before 2030 based on projected revenue streams. Environmental documentation for the St. Joseph Field Street corridor is underway.

² Figure 3 does not illustrate all transportation projects or studies underway within the St. Cloud APO planning area. Figure 3 illustrates other transportation studies directly within or adjacent to the Southwest Beltway project area only.

³ *TH 23 and CSAH 75 Corridor Study*. March 2007. Prepared for Mn/DOT District 3, St. Cloud, and Stearns County. Partnered with Stearns County, St. Cloud Area Planning Organization, St. Joseph Township, St. Augusta, St. Cloud and Waite Park. Prepared by WSB & Associates.

⁴ *TH 15 Corridor Study*. March 2007. Prepared for Mn/DOT District 3. Partnered with St. Cloud Area Planning Organization, Stearns County, St. Augusta, St. Cloud, Waite Park, Sartell, and Sauk Rapids. Prepared by WSB & Associates.



Other Transportation Projects in the Study Area

Figure 3

As discussed in Section 1.2, the 2001 Study provided an assessment of transportation system needs within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. The area included in the 2001 Study extended from St. Joseph and CSAH 75 south and east to TH 15, consistent with the study area described in this SD/DSDD, but also included the area east of TH 15 to CSAH 75 and the Mississippi River. The outcome of the 2001 Study was the recommendation of three separate transportation projects within the south and southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area: (1) improvements to existing 33rd Street South (33rd Street) east of TH 15; (2) a grade-separated interchange at TH 15 and 33rd Street; and (3) an arterial roadway west of TH 15.

Stearns County, the City of St. Cloud, and Mn/DOT District 3 are currently planning improvements to 33rd Street east of TH 15, including a TH 15/33rd Street interchange (i.e., 33rd Street South Project). Consideration of interchange concepts at TH 15 is consistent with the recommendations identified in the Mn/DOT District 3 *TH 15 Corridor Study*. The 33rd Street improvements are identified as a financially-constrained project in the St. Cloud APO *2030 Transportation Plan*. The TH 15/33rd Street interchange is programmed in the Stearns County 2007-2011 Five Year Road Program for construction in 2011, but is not included in the Mn/DOT District 3 fiscally-constrained 2030 Transportation Plan. It is anticipated that construction for the 33rd Street corridor would begin with the proposed TH 15/33rd Street interchange and continue to the east towards the Mississippi River.

The Southwest Beltway project that is the subject of this scoping document is intended to address long-term transportation needs within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area (Cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park) between CSAH 4/133 and TH 15 by preserving a corridor for future use. The Southwest Beltway project represents a separate action from other projects currently being implemented or planned for the future. The portion of the Southwest Beltway from CR 137 to CSAH 133 is included in the St. Cloud APO 2030 Amended Roadway Plan (January 2008) as an illustrative project (i.e., all projects without financial constraint requirements). The portion of the Southwest Beltway from CR 137 to TH 15 is included in the APO's fiscally-constrained plan (i.e., projects eligible to compete for federal formula funds).

There are no immediate project or construction funds programmed for the Southwest Beltway project. The project could be programmed, funded, and constructed in phases over a number of years. Preservation of a corridor for future use at this time is a proactive planning tool that would facilitate orderly development within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area and avoid future social, environmental, and economic impacts that could result when constructing a roadway through an area that has already been developed.

1.4 PROJECT SCHEDULE

The following lists the anticipated schedule for completion of project activities:

Federal Notice of Intent	Fall 2007
Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Decision Document	Fall 2008
Public Scoping Meeting	Winter 2009
Scoping Decision Document	Spring 2009
Draft Environmental Impact Statement	2009 – 2010

Draft Environmental Impact Statement Public Hearing	2010
Identification of Preferred Alternative	2010
Final Environmental Impact Statement	2011
Stearns County Adequacy Determination	2012
FHWA Record of Decision (ROD)	2012
Corridor Preservation	2012 – ongoing
Final Design and Construction	Dependent upon funding availability

1.5 RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENTAL UNIT

The FHWA is the lead Federal agency under NEPA. Mn/DOT, as the direct recipient of Federal funds for the project, is a joint lead agency under NEPA. Stearns County, as project sponsor ultimately responsible for design and construction of the proposed project, and as the sub-recipient of Federal funds, is also a joint lead agency under NEPA. The contact person for FHWA is listed below.

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Stearns County is the project proposer and Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) under Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.0500 for the purposes of this SD/DSDD, and for the EIS, with respect to State environmental review requirements. The contact person for Stearns County is listed below.

Mitchell Anderson, P.E.
Stearns County Engineer
Stearns County Department of Public Works
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(320) 252-6180
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2.0 PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The need to provide transportation infrastructure improvements in the greater southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area has been recognized since the 1980s. The 2001 Southwest Arterial Alignment Study further examined the role of and need for infrastructure improvements to serve future transportation demand within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. The following sections discuss the project purpose and the project need, including issues identified in previous transportation studies, and the needs analysis prepared for this study.

2.2 TRANSPORTATION PLANNING HISTORY AND PREVIOUSLY-IDENTIFIED TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

2.2.1 1998 Stearns County Transportation Plan

The regional transportation issues in the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area were described in the *1998 Stearns County Transportation Plan*. The transportation issues within the west and southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area as described in the 1998 Transportation Plan is reproduced below.

A review of the existing functional classification and the APO's 2015 TSM Plan (currently being updated) showed a need for a bypass south of St. Cloud. This need is included in the APO's TSM Plan and has been prompted by dense development along TH 23 and CSAH 75, coupled with continued development to the south. As part of the development of the County Transportation Plan, conceptual alternatives were reviewed in detail to determine a potential alignment. The proposed beltway alignment is presented in Figure VI-15. It uses the existing Thirty-third Street South Alignment to the west of TH 15. It is proposed because of its logical spacing with I-94 and TH 23/CSAH 75 and its location relative to future development.

The future route would be designated as a minor arterial, as it would serve larger travel sheds by providing high mobility and limited access. It would keep local trips off I-94 and serve as an alternate route to TH 23 and CSAH 75.⁵

2.2.2 2001 St. Cloud Southwest Arterial Alignment Study

As discussed in Section 1.2, studies conducted in 2000 and 2001 provided an updated assessment of transportation issues within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area since completion of the *1998 Stearns County Transportation Plan*. These issues were documented in the *St. Cloud Southwest Arterial Alignment Study* (2001) and are summarized below.

⁵ Stearns County Comprehensive Plan. 1998. Chapter 6: Transportation. Pg. VI-19.

- Regional growth trends: Based on the St. Cloud APO's 2025 transportation plan available at the time, the population of the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area's population was expected to increase by 45 percent during the 20-year period from 1995 to 2025. During this same period, a 51 percent increase in employment was projected for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. Because the St. Cloud urban core cannot reasonably accommodate this anticipated growth, much of this growth would likely occur outside of the urban core in the surrounding areas.
- Facility spacing: Spacing guidelines for developing areas suggest that minor arterial roadways in developing areas should be spaced every one to two miles. Arterial roadways should be continuous facilities that move traffic from one area to another. There are few continuous east-west arterial facilities and other existing facilities do not provide connections to regional facilities (e.g., CSAH 75, TH 23, TH 15, etc.).
- Previous planning efforts: A regional arterial facility has been identified in comprehensive plans and/or transportation plans adopted by communities, Stearns County, and St. Cloud APO. These planning documents describe the local communities' desire for a future arterial transportation facility based on general planning concepts such as growth trends, facility spacing, and access needs.

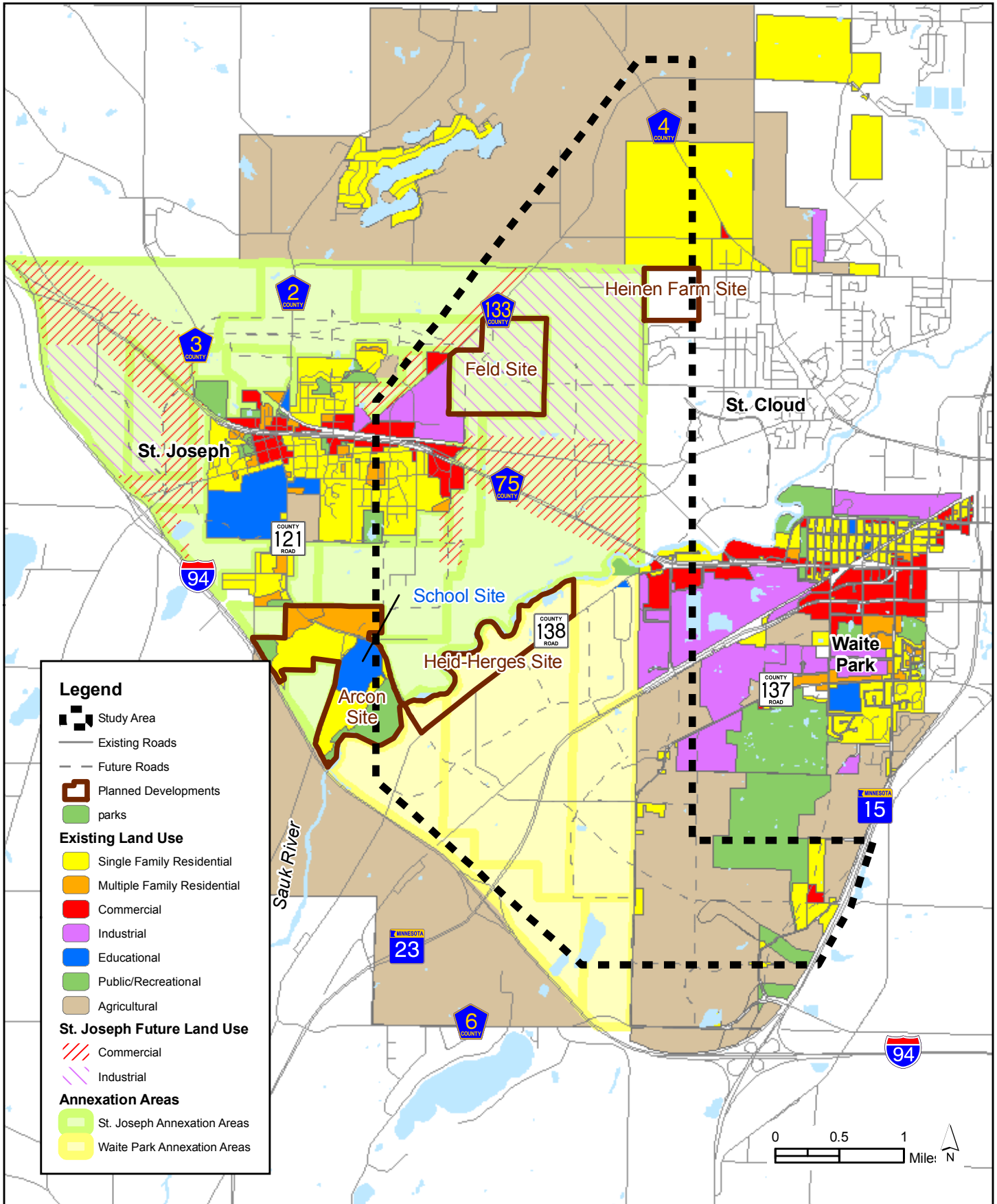
As recommended by the 2001 Study, studies are ongoing to address improvements to 33rd Street east of TH 15, and to identify a preferred interchange design for TH 15/33rd Street (33rd Street South Project, City of St. Cloud). While the transportation needs of 33rd Street east of TH 15 are being addressed in a separate study, the need to serve future travel demand within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas west of TH 15 persists.

2.3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON PLANNED GROWTH, FUTURE LAND USES AND LOCAL PLANS FOR THE SOUTHWEST ST. CLOUD METROPOLITAN AREA

The southwest portion of the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, which includes the cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park, is experiencing population growth and development. The cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park are expected to expand towards one another – the City of St. Joseph is expanding to the east and northeast and the City of Waite Park is expanding to the west and south. Figure 4 illustrates existing land use within the study area.⁶ Figure 5 illustrates urbanized and urbanizing areas within the study area.

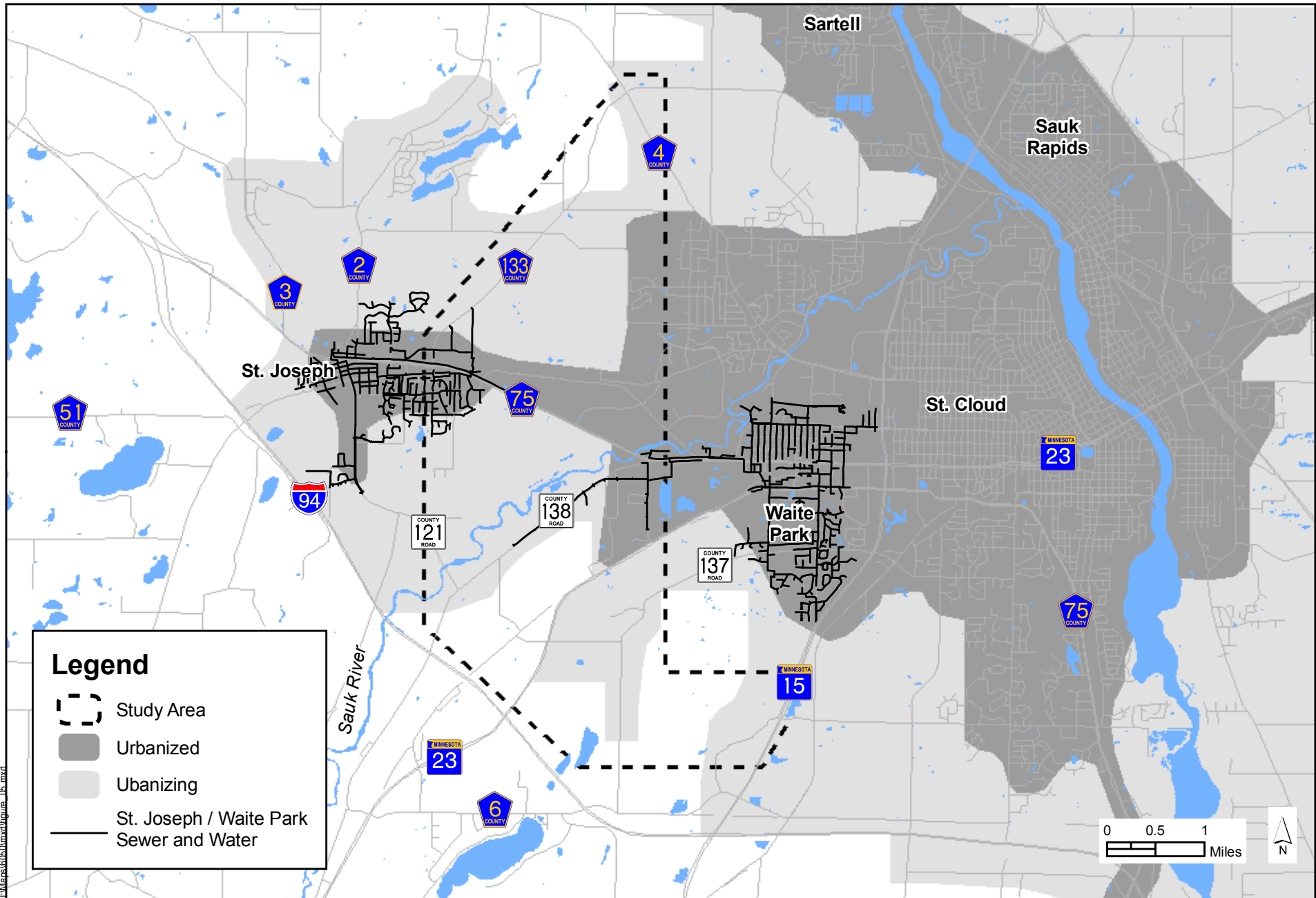
Evidence of these growth patterns is illustrated in demographic statistics (e.g., population growth, employment growth), the St. Cloud Area Joint Planning Project District Plan, City of St. Joseph and City of Waite Park comprehensive land use and annexation plans, and municipal services and recent developments within the project area. These items are described below.

⁶ Land use boundaries for Quarry Park and Nature Preserve (including the Quarry Park State Natural Area) from 2001 Stearns County GIS data. Since creation of this data layer, the Quarry Park and Quarry Park State Natural Area boundaries have expanded to the south and west.



Existing Land Uses and Planned Developments Within the Study Area

Figure 4



Urbanized and Urbanizing Areas

Southwest Beltway Scoping Document
 SP 73-684-03
 Stearns County

Figure 5

Population Growth, Household Projections and Building Permit Trends

The St. Cloud Metropolitan Area and the communities within the west and southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area have undergone rapid population growth and development within the past two decades (1980-2000). Population growth during this period within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area and the cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park is illustrated in Table 1.

**TABLE 1
HISTORIC POPULATION GROWTH (1980-2000) WITHIN THE STUDY AREA**

	Population Year 1980 ⁽¹⁾	Population Year 1990 ⁽¹⁾	Percent Growth (1980-1990)	Population Year 2000 ⁽²⁾	Percent Growth (1990-2000)
St. Cloud Metropolitan Area	76,614	91,962	20%	113,292	23%
City of Waite Park	3,496	5,020	44%	6,568	31%
City of St. Joseph	2,994	3,294	10%	4,681	42%

⁽¹⁾ St. Cloud Area Joint Planning Project Background Report. 2000. Section 1: Demographic Trends and Projections.

⁽²⁾ Minnesota State Demographic Center. 2007. The Minnesota State Demographic Center Web Site (online). Minnesota Population Estimates: Number and Characteristics of the Current Population accessed 2007-09-25 at <http://www.demography.state.mn.us/estimates.html>.

The State Demographer, the St. Cloud APO and local agencies project continued population and employment growth within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. Expected population growth within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area and local communities within the study area (Waite Park and St. Joseph) are tabulated in Table 2. Although the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is comprised of communities from Stearns County, Benton County, and Sherburne County, a majority of the land within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is located within Stearns County. As such, a majority of the population growth that is anticipated for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is accounted for by growth anticipated within Stearns County.

**TABLE 2
FUTURE POPULATION GROWTH WITHIN THE STUDY AREA**

	Population Year 2000 ⁽¹⁾	Population (Year 2006) ⁽¹⁾	Future Population (Year 2020)	Percent Growth (2000-2020)	Future Population (Year 2030)	Percent Growth (2000-2030)
St. Cloud Metropolitan Area ⁽²⁾	113,292	117,574	152,255 ⁽³⁾	34%	173,161 ⁽³⁾	53%
Stearns County (portion in St. Cloud Metro. Area)	81,238	85,364	107,118 ⁽³⁾	32%	120,208 ⁽³⁾	28%
City of Waite Park	6,568	6,738	10,397 ⁽⁴⁾	58%	N/A	N/A
City of St. Joseph	4,681	5,873	12,808 ⁽⁵⁾	173%	15,753 ⁽⁵⁾	263%

N/A = not applicable.

⁽¹⁾ Minnesota State Demographic Center.

⁽²⁾ Includes portions of Stearns County, Benton County, and Sherburne County.

⁽³⁾ St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan. Chapter 3: Land Use Plan.

⁽⁴⁾ 2005 Waite Park Comprehensive Plan. 2005. Year 2020 population estimates do not take into account the additional population resulting from the possible annexation of already developed land from St. Joseph Township.

⁽⁵⁾ 2008 City of St. Joseph Comprehensive Plan. May 2008 Draft. Population projections described in the draft Comprehensive Plan relied on projections used for the St. Cloud Area Wastewater Treatment Plant Facilities Plan.

Building permit information provided by Stearns County, the St. Cloud APO, and the City of St. Joseph is summarized in Table 3. Building permit issuance from 2000 to 2006 for the cities of Waite Park and St. Joseph shows somewhat steady growth over this 7-year period, with the exception of more recent declines in 2005 and 2006. Both Waite Park and St. Joseph expect continued household growth within the next several decades as documented within their comprehensive plans.

**TABLE 3
RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMIT ACTIVITY (NEW CONSTRUCTION: 2000 TO 2006)**

Municipality/ Jurisdiction	Number of Residential Units ⁽¹⁾ Permitted by Year						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
City of Waite Park	61	72	54	61	43	22	14
City of St. Joseph	23	54	58	108	78 ⁽²⁾	156	85

Source: *St. Cloud APO 2007 Surveillance Report* and *2008 City of St. Joseph Comprehensive Plan* (May 2008 Draft).

N/A = not available.

⁽¹⁾ Number of residential units per year for single-family residences unless otherwise noted.

⁽²⁾ Number of residential building permits in 2004 for City of St. Joseph includes single-family and multi-family units.

Employment Growth

According to socioeconomic forecasts documented in the *St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan*, employment (i.e., number of jobs) grew from 54,674 jobs in 1990 to 65,750 jobs in 2000. According to planning estimates, the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is anticipated to add an additional 27,000 jobs from year 2000 to year 2030, an increase of approximately 40 percent.

St. Cloud Area Joint Planning Project District Plan

In 2000, the St. Cloud Area Joint Planning District Board approved the *St. Cloud Area Joint Planning Project District Plan* (May 18, 2000). The St. Cloud Area Joint District Plan was conducted pursuant to the Community-Based Planning Act passed by the 1997 Minnesota State Legislature. The Community-Based Planning Act encouraged voluntary, cooperative land-use planning among local governments. The St. Cloud Joint Planning District Plan creates an area wide framework for on-going planning activities by the five cities (St. Cloud, Waite Park, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, and St. Joseph) and three counties (Stearns, Benton, and Sherburne) covered by the Plan.

The St. Cloud Area Master Plan component of the St. Cloud Area Joint District Plan addresses the planned urban area and service area for the communities within the project area: the cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park, as well as St. Joseph and St. Wendel Townships. As noted on page 6-1 of the St. Cloud Area Joint Planning Project District Plan, the St. Cloud Area Master Plan was created to “provide the framework from which the nature and pattern of future development could be based.” The St. Cloud Area Joint Planning District Plan identifies the following:

- Planned Urban Areas (Primary and Secondary),
- An Ultimate Service Area,
- Future Major Roadway Corridors, and
- Future Sewer Interceptors.

The St. Cloud Master Area Plan identifies most of the lands within the Southwest Beltway project area as secondary planned urban areas. Secondary urban areas, as defined in the St. Cloud Master Plan, are those areas not expected to urbanize until beyond the 20-year time horizon considered in the Master Area Plan (2000 to 2020), but that still need to be preserved for urban development. The very northern end of the project area along CSAH 133 in St. Wendel Township, while not located within the secondary planned urban area, is identified within the ultimate service area. The ultimate service area is the area that could be provided with wastewater services from the St. Cloud treatment plant, but is not expected to be used for urban development within a 50-year timeframe.

The St. Cloud Master Plan also identifies the service area that can be provided with wastewater services from the St. Cloud wastewater treatment plant. The planning and extension of wastewater services is an important element in planning for and managing future development. The current service area boundaries include already developed areas, as well as areas that have been annexed by the cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park. The entire project area is located within the service area boundary of the St. Cloud treatment plan. Specific examples of recent municipal utility expansion within the project area are described in the sections below.

Waite Park and St. Joseph Annexation Areas

As previously noted, the study area is located within annexation areas for the City of Waite Park and the City of St. Joseph. At the middle and southern portions of the project area, the cities of Waite Park and St. Joseph are currently separated from one another by St. Joseph Township. At the north end of the project area, the City of St. Joseph is currently separated from the City of St. Cloud by St. Joseph Township and St. Wendel Township.

Both cities of Waite Park and St. Joseph have annexation agreements with St. Joseph Township. An annexation agreement provides a timeframe for when city services would be made available to township residents. These timeframes act as a planning guide and do not necessarily represent specific dates. The City of Waite Park's annexation agreement with St. Joseph Township divides the annexation area into a 15-year area, with annexation occurring within 5-year increments. The City of Waite Park's annexation area extends from the Sauk River east to the existing municipal limits, and includes approximately 4.7 square miles, or approximately 3,000 acres. Existing land uses within this annexation area varies, and includes open space, agriculture, commercial/industrial (including quarry/gravel mining), and residential uses. For the purposes of this document, this area of Waite Park is referred to as the Waite Park growth area.

The City of St. Joseph's annexation area with St. Joseph Township includes the northern and western portions of the study area. North of CSAH 75, the annexation area includes lands between CSAH 133 and the western municipal limits of the City of St. Cloud. South of CSAH 75, the annexation area includes lands between CR 121 and the Sauk River. For the purposes of this document, this area of St. Joseph is referred to as the St. Joseph growth area.

The City of St. Joseph's annexation agreement with St. Joseph Township divides the annexation area into orderly annexation zones. The timing for these orderly annexation zones varies by proximity to the current St. Joseph municipal boundaries, with annexation occurring in 5-year increments (e.g., 1998 through 2002; 2003 through 2007) for areas closer to the existing city limits, and in longer increments (e.g., 2008 through 2017) for the remaining areas.

The St. Cloud APO publishes a metropolitan-wide Surveillance Plan as a mechanism to monitor changes in the St. Cloud area transportation system, socioeconomic conditions, and land use. The *2007 St. Cloud Area Planning Organization Surveillance Report* was prepared in October 2007. According to this report, for the year 2006, the City of Waite Park annexed approximately 118 acres and the City of St. Joseph annexed approximately 397 acres.

Recent Development and Expansion of Municipal Services within the Project Area

Evidence of the expected growth within the west and southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is illustrated by development activity within the growth areas of Waite Park and St. Joseph. Several residential, commercial, and industrial developments are currently under construction, have been platted, or are planned within and adjacent to the project area. These developments, and their current status, are described below. The location of these developments in relation to the project area is illustrated in Figure 4.

Northeast of St. Joseph along CSAH 133 is the planned Feld Development site (see Figure 4). The Feld Development is a 300-acre site that is currently in agricultural uses that was annexed by the City of St. Joseph in 2006. The Feld site is planned for future mixed used development, with commercial and industrial development on the southern half of the site and residential land uses on the north half of the site. The western 55 acres of the Feld site along CSAH 133 is referred to as the Parkway Business Center, a light-industrial/commercial planned unit development. An Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) was completed for the Parkway Business Center in March 2007. The preliminary plat for the Parkway Business Center has been approved and work is underway on the final plat approval. Municipal services have been extended along CSAH 133 and will serve the Parkway Business Center, ultimately serving the entire Feld site. A future Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) is planned by the City of St. Joseph for the Feld site to address issues associated with land use changes as a result of development of the Feld site.

The Heinen Farm Development site is located within the northwest corner of the City of St. Cloud between CSAH 133 and CSAH 4. The total size of the Heinen Farm Development site is approximately 130 acres, and is planned for residential development. This site is currently zoned as agricultural by the City of St. Cloud.

The ARCON Development site is located within an area annexed by City of St. Joseph, and is bound by the Sauk River on the south, I-94 on the west, and CR 121 on the east. A Final AUAR was completed for this development in August 2004 (*Arcon St. Joseph Final AUAR and Mitigation Plan*). The total size of the ARCON Development is 464 acres, and consists of mixed-density residential development. Municipal services (water, sanitary sewer) have been extended to serve the ARCON Development area.

St. Cloud Area School District 742 (ISD 742) serves the greater St. Cloud Metropolitan Area including the communities of St. Joseph and Waite Park and the project area. ISD 742 is currently constructing a new elementary school on a 71-acre site within the ARCON Development AUAR area at the intersection of Jade Road and CR 121. Construction of this new elementary school was started in spring 2007. The new school opened in September 2008.

Southwest of the urban core of the City of Waite Park is the Heid Herges Development. The Heid Herges Development is a proposed 117-acre residential development between CR 138 and the Sauk River, north of CR 121. This area was annexed by the City of Waite Park, and an EAW was completed for the Heid Herges Development in 2005. The City of Waite Park also recently extended municipal services (water, sanitary sewer) along CR 138 to the Heid Herges Development site when CR 138 was reconstructed by Stearns County (see Figure 5). The Heid Herges Development site has not been platted at this point.

Waite Park and St. Joseph Future Land Use Plans

Waite Park Land Use Plans

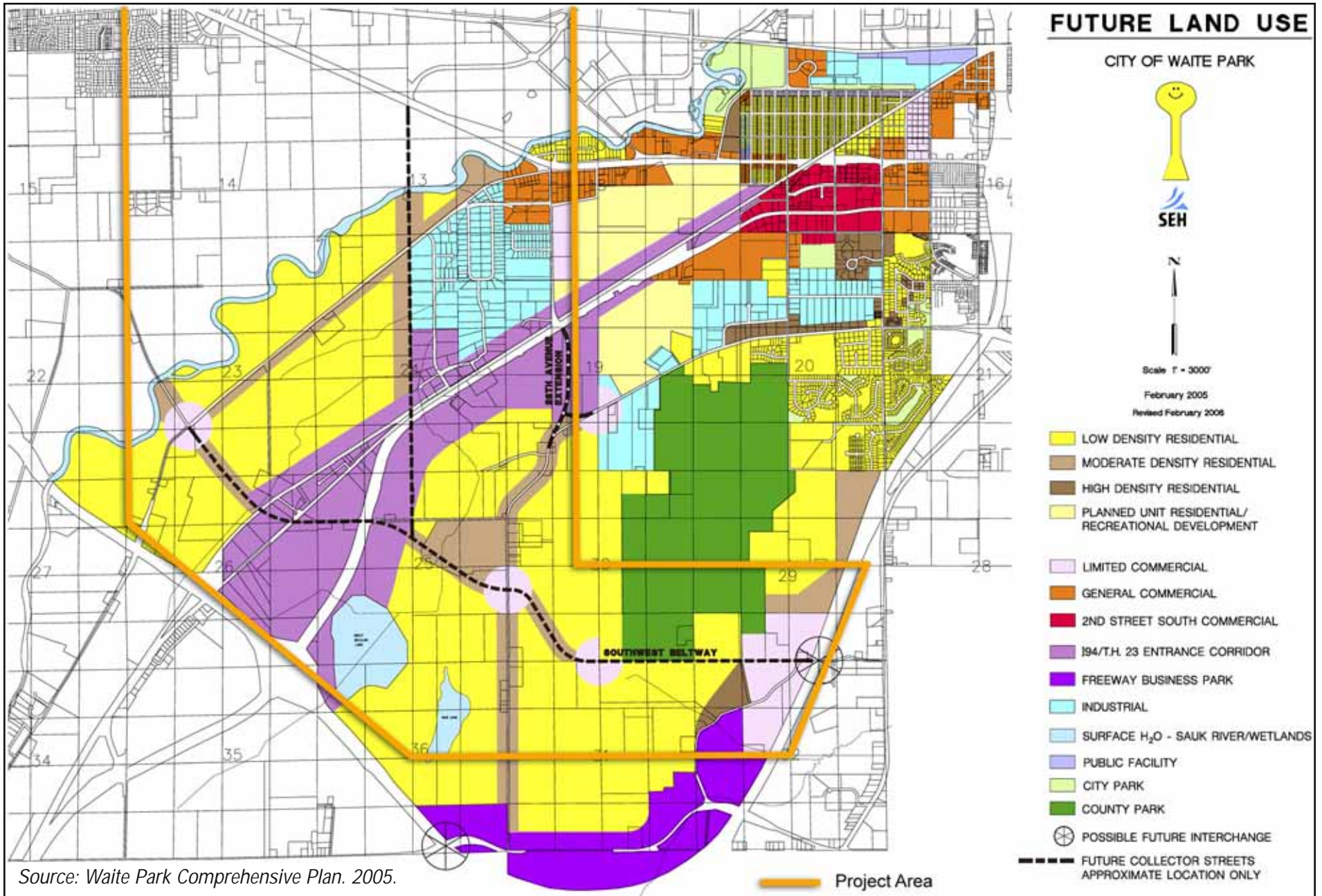
The City of Waite Park published the most-recent version of their comprehensive plan in February 2005. A copy of the Waite Park future land use map (revised February 2006) is shown in Figure 6.⁷ The Southwest Beltway project limits are also illustrated in Figure 6. The Southwest Beltway project area comprises the south and southwestern portions of the City of Waite Park.

The Waite Park future land use map is consistent with their orderly annexation area boundaries with St. Joseph Township. Planned land uses in the Waite Park growth area (south and west of Quarry Park) include low- to moderate-density residential uses, business-oriented uses along I-94, limited commercial uses at the nodes of transportation corridors, and the I-94/TH 23 entrance corridor. According to the *2005 City of Waite Park Comprehensive Plan* (2005), the future planned land uses take into account previously-approved land uses, as well as encourage compact, contiguous development.⁸

Portions of the Waite Park growth area are currently used for quarry and gravel mining operations. According to the Waite Park Comprehensive Plan, these operations function as a physical barrier to development and redevelopment of the Waite Park growth area. The Waite Park Comprehensive Plan identifies the need to coordinate with the mining operators regarding future land uses within Waite Park growth area. While many social, economic, and environmental factors may affect the timing of planned land use changes in the Waite Park growth area, the lifespan of quarry operations will also be an important consideration in the timing of the future land use changes identified in the Waite Park comprehensive land use plan.

⁷ The City of Waite Park future land use map was revised in February 2006. The land uses in this figure do not represent the current boundaries of Quarry Park and Nature Preserve.

⁸ *2005 City of Waite Park Comprehensive Plan*. February 2005. Chapter 4, Page 8.



Graphics/Support/6050/Figures

Waite Park Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Southwest Beltway Scoping Document
SP 73-684-03
Stearns County

Figure 6

St. Joseph Future Land Use Plans

The City of St. Joseph is currently in the process of updating their comprehensive plan. A copy of the St. Joseph future land use map (June 9, 2008 version) is shown in Figure 7. The Southwest Beltway project limits are also illustrated in Figure 7. The Southwest Beltway project area comprises the southeast and eastern portions of the City of St. Joseph.

The *2008 City of St. Joseph Comprehensive Plan* (May 2008 draft version) notes that the future land use map likely represents more acreage than will be consumed by year 2030 (the time horizon for the comprehensive plan update). However, the boundaries illustrated in the future land use map are consistent with the orderly annexation area boundaries with St. Joseph Township. The draft St. Joseph Comprehensive Plan also notes that future planned land uses take into consideration previously-approved land uses, as well as encourage compact contiguous development.⁹

Planned land uses in the St. Joseph growth area south of CSAH 75 between CR 121 and the Sauk River include low- to medium-density residential uses, open space, and park and preservation areas. Recent studies have identified cultural resources within the St. Joseph growth area that are potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. These areas are identified in the comprehensive land use plan map (see Figure 7). Planned land uses in the St. Joseph growth area north of CSAH 75 between CSAH 133 and St. Cloud city limits include low- and high-density residential uses, commercial and industrial uses, and open space/preservation areas. Commercial and industrial land uses are currently in-place along the CSAH 75 corridor. A large wetland complex is also located in this area along CSAH 75. Additional commercial and industrial land uses, as well as a wetland preservation area, are envisioned for the CSAH 75 corridor in the St. Joseph comprehensive land use plan.

2.4 PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROJECT

2.4.1 Purpose of the Project

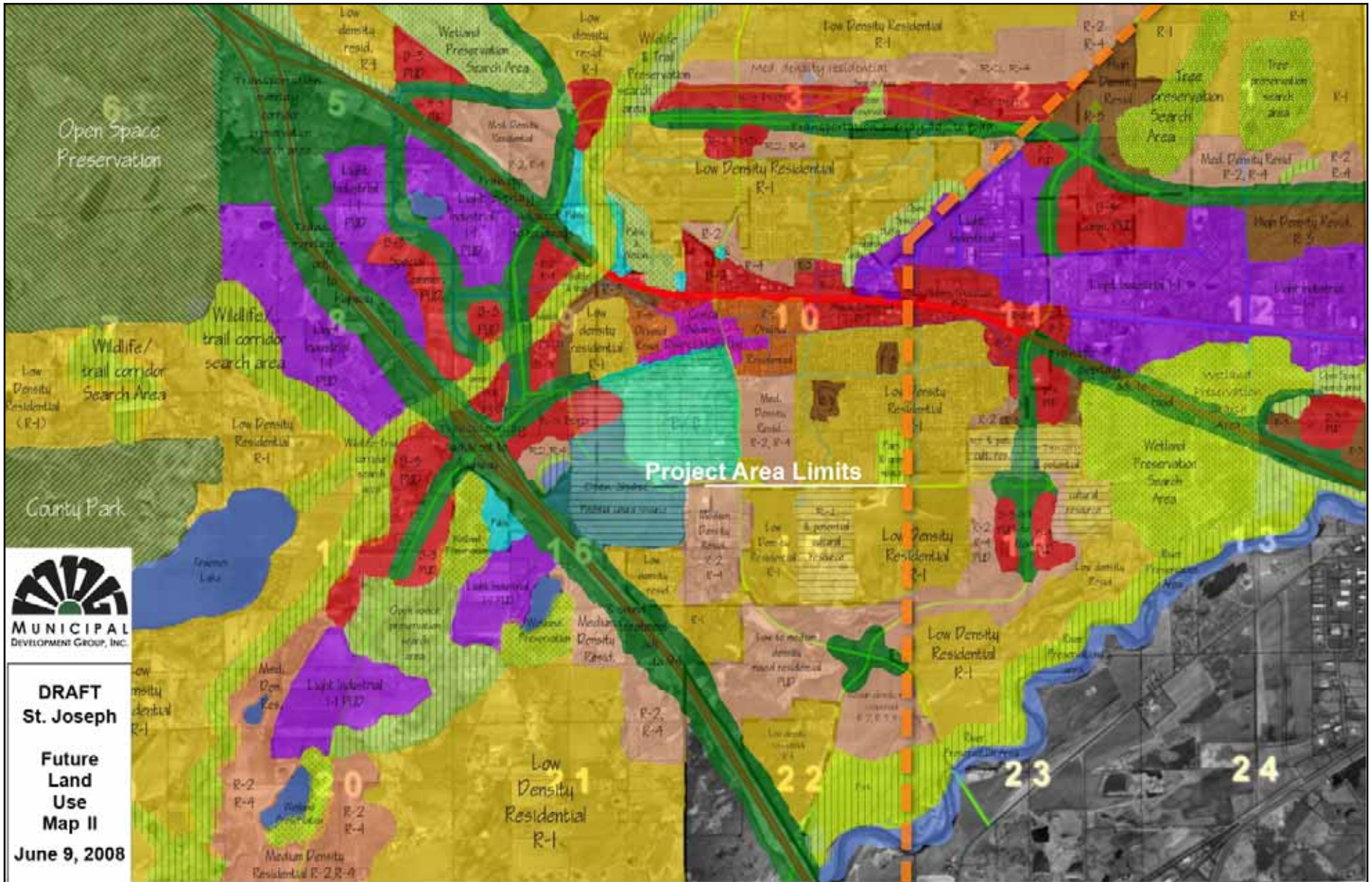
The purpose of the proposed action is to provide the necessary transportation infrastructure and facilities to serve forecast increases in travel demand in the planned growth areas of Waite Park and St. Joseph within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area.

2.4.2 Need for the Project

As described in Section 2.3, the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is projected to experience population and employment growth. The proposed project is needed to respond to forecast increases in travel demand within the project area.

Documentation of the transportation need for the project is described below. Other project transportation goals and objectives are described in Section 2.4.3. A summary of the purpose and need is included in Section 2.5. Evaluation criteria are summarized in Section 2.6.

⁹ *2008 City of St. Joseph Comprehensive Plan*. May 2008 Draft Version. Chapter 4, Page 14.



Source: City of St. Joseph Comprehensive Plan. 2008 (draft version).

St. Joseph Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Southwest Beltway Scoping Document
 SP 73-684-03
 Stearns County

Figure 7

Forecast Travel Demand within the Project Area

Travel demand forecasts were completed for existing conditions (year 2000), year 2030 conditions, and future conditions beyond year 2030 under the No-Build scenario to evaluate the future travel demands within the Southwest Beltway project area. Year 2030 conditions represent land use and socioeconomic forecasts based on the APO's 2030 Transportation Plan. Land uses in the APO's 2030 Transportation Plan are tied to local comprehensive land use plans, as well as other factors, and distributed throughout the APO's planning area based on year 2030 demographic forecasts. Future conditions beyond year 2030 assume full build-out of planned land uses for the growth areas of Waite Park and St. Joseph based on the comprehensive land use plans for both cities.

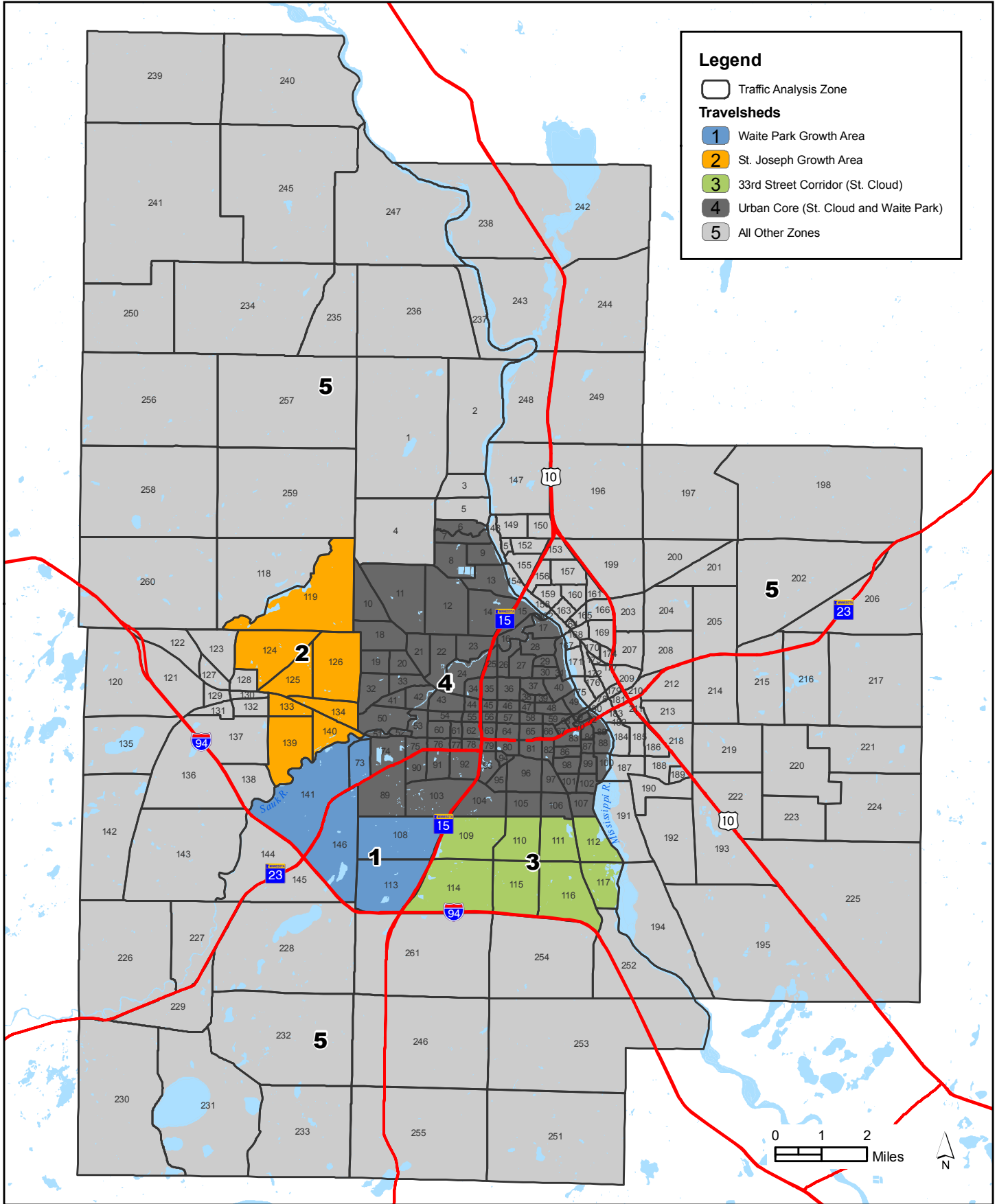
The travel demand forecasts were completed using the travel demand model developed and approved by the St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) for use in the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. The project area and adjacent areas were organized to represent geographic regions, or travelsheds. These travelsheds are described below and are illustrated in Figure 8. Travelshed 1 (Waite Park growth area) and Travelshed 2 (St. Joseph growth area) correspond to the Southwest Beltway project area.

- Travelshed 1: Waite Park growth area
- Travelshed 2: St. Joseph growth area
- Travelshed 3: St. Cloud 33rd Street South Corridor
- Travelshed 4: Urban core (St. Cloud and Waite Park)
- Travelshed 5: All other transportation analysis zones (TAZs) within the St. Cloud APO's planning area

Land Use Forecast Growth

The St. Cloud APO maintains a land use database for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. Using existing land use patterns, knowledge of the planning area, and the land use comprehensive plans for participating cities, the APO projects future lands uses for the St. Cloud Planning Area for use in the travel demand model. Land uses are organized into different categories, including residential (single and multi-family), commercial/retail, office, industrial, etc. The complete list of land use categories in the St. Cloud APO travel demand model is provided in Chapter 3 (Land Use) of the *St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan*.

The amount of residential, commercial/retail, office, and industrial land uses was identified for the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas using data from the St. Cloud APO. Residential uses were measured in number of dwelling units. Commercial/retail, office and industrial land uses were measured in square feet.



J:\Maps\6050\mxd\figure_08.mxd

St. Cloud APO Traffic Analysis Zones and Southwest Beltway Analysis Travelsheds

Figure 8

Figure 9 illustrates the number of existing residential units and planned growth in residential units for the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas. From existing conditions to year 2030, the Waite Park growth area is forecast to accommodate an additional 1,500 residential dwelling units. Based on planned future land uses, the Waite Park growth area is forecast to accommodate over 7,500 residential dwelling units. A majority of the growth in residential uses for the Waite Park growth area, as identified by the St. Cloud APO, is currently forecast to occur beyond year 2030.

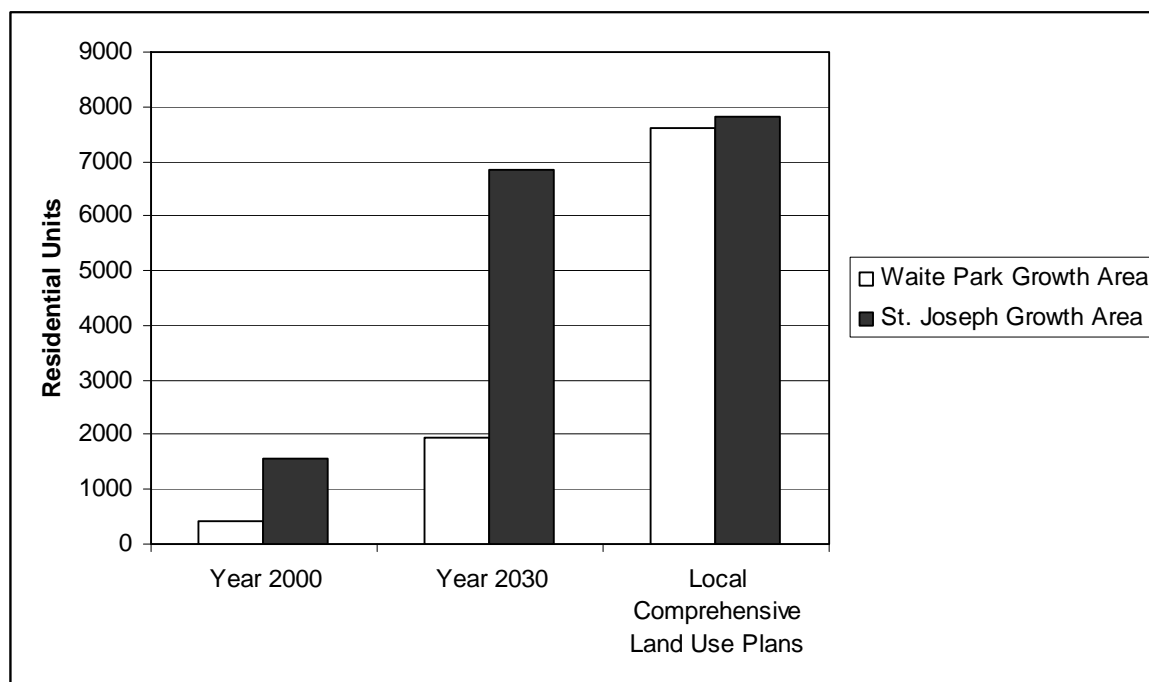


Figure 9: Existing and Forecast Residential Units For The Waite Park and St. Joseph Growth Areas

From existing conditions to year 2030, the St. Joseph growth area is forecast to accommodate more than 5,000 additional residential dwelling units. Based on planned future land uses, the St. Joseph growth area is forecast to accommodate over 7,500 residential dwelling units, similar to the number of residential units forecast for the Waite Park growth area. However, a majority of the growth in residential dwellings units in the St. Joseph growth area is forecast to occur by year 2030.

Figure 10 illustrates the amount of commercial/retail, office, and industrial land uses forecast for the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas. The amount of commercial, office, and industrial uses are forecast to increase more than 30-fold in the Waite Park growth area and increase approximately three-fold in the St. Joseph growth area from existing conditions (year 2000) to future conditions based on local comprehensive land use plans. The Waite Park growth area is forecast to experience a substantial expansion of commercial, office, and industrial uses beyond year 2030, consistent with the I-94 freeway business park and I-94/TH 23 commercial corridor planned land uses illustrated in the Waite Park comprehensive land use plan (see Figure 6).

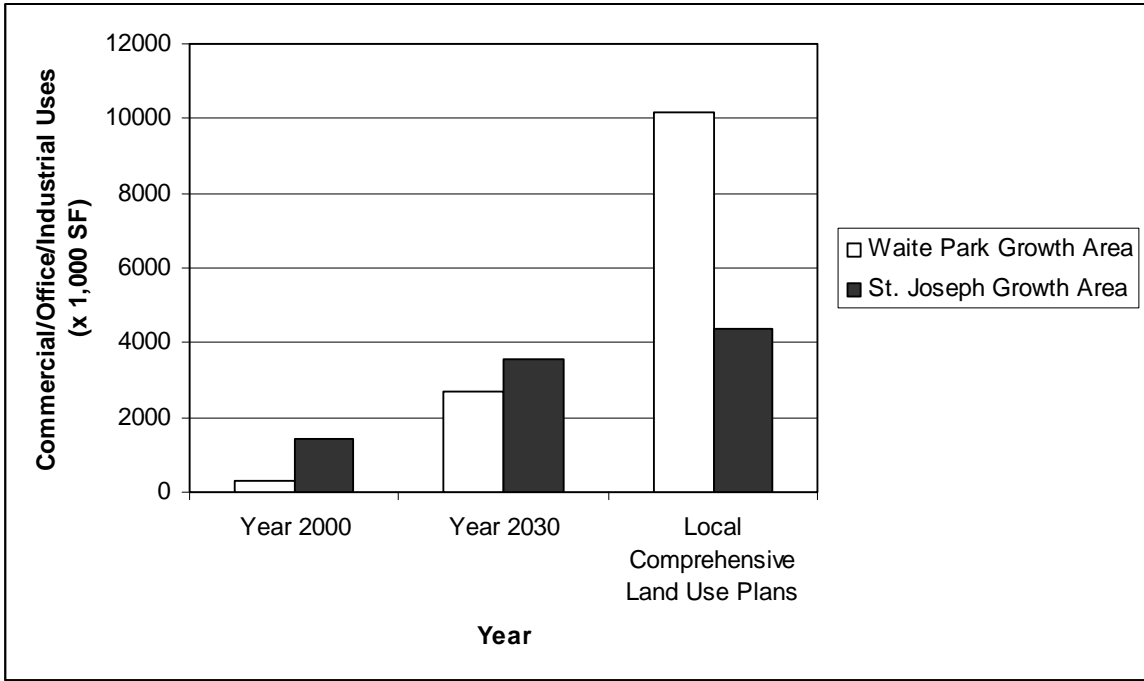


Figure 10: Existing and Forecast Commercial, Office, and Industrial Land Uses (Square Feet) For The Waite Park and St. Joseph Growth Areas

Trip Generation and Distribution

Planned changes in land uses in the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are forecast to result in additional traffic. Under year 2030 conditions, the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are forecast to generate more than 230,000 daily trips (trip ends to or from growth areas).¹⁰ Under future conditions beyond year 2030 based on local comprehensive land use plans, over 440,000 daily trip ends are forecast within the Waite Park growth area, whereas over 160,000 daily trip ends are forecast within the St. Joseph growth area. Combined, this is almost three times the number of trip ends forecast for year 2030 conditions. This is also more than 430,000 additional daily trip ends compared to existing conditions in the Waite Park growth area, and more than 120,000 additional daily trip ends for the St. Joseph growth area (see Figure 11).

Travel (forecast number and percentage of daily trips) within the Waite Park growth area is tabulated in Table 4 for existing (year 2000), year 2030, and future conditions beyond year 2030 based on planned land uses described in the Waite Park Comprehensive Plan. The percentage of trip ends within the Waite Park growth area (i.e., internal trips that originate within the Waite Park growth area that are destined for attractions within the growth area) is projected to increase over time. Almost 50 percent of trip ends within the Waite Park growth area, or more than 208,000 trip ends, are internal trips forecast to remain within the Waite Park growth area under future planned land use conditions (see Figure 12).

¹⁰ Trips are produced by or attracted to a particular travel analysis zone, depending upon the type of trip (e.g., home/work trip). Each trip has two ends. A trip end is the beginning or end point of a particular trip.

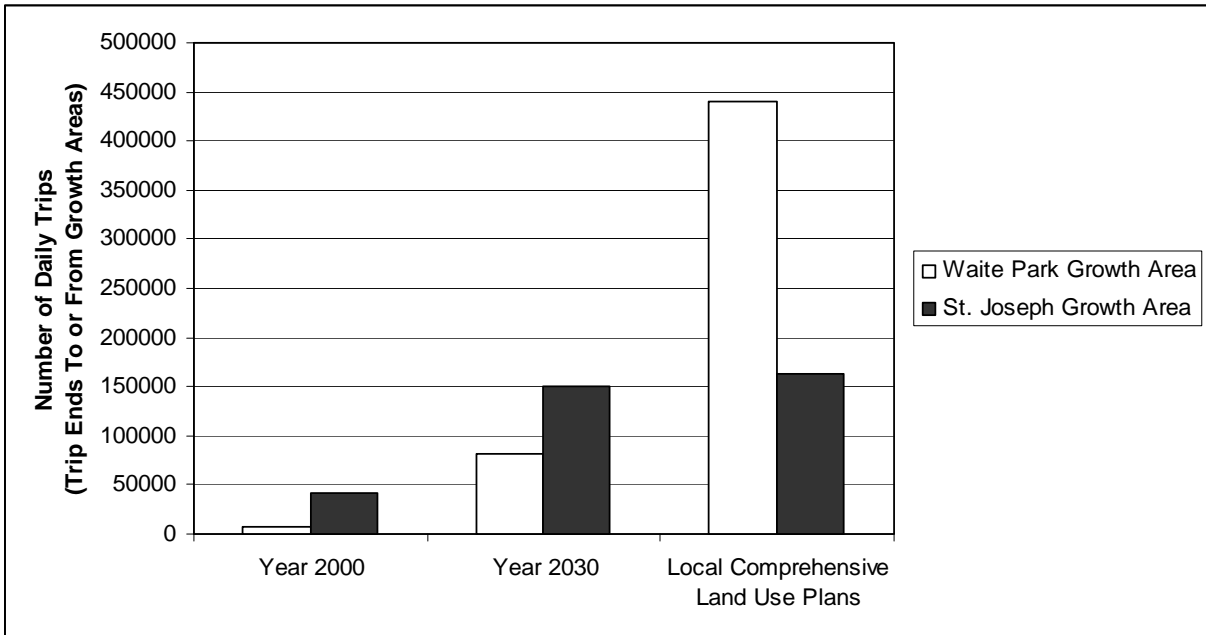


Figure 11: Total Number Of Daily Trips Produced By and Attracted To The Waite Park and St. Joseph Growth Areas Under Year 2000, Year 2030, and Future Land Use Plan Conditions

The percentage of trip ends within the Waite Park growth area that are projected to travel to or from the St. Joseph growth area and the 33rd Street Corridor in St. Cloud represent a small percentage (less than 10 percent) of all daily trips. As the Waite Park growth area transitions from a rural to suburban/urban environment over time, the percentage of trip ends to or from the St. Cloud urban core becomes a smaller percentage of the total number of trips. Using future planned land uses, 14 percent of Waite Park growth area trip ends are to or from the St. Cloud urban core, compared to nearly 60 percent of daily trip ends under existing conditions (see Table 4).

**TABLE 4
TRIP DISTRIBUTION FOR THE WAITE PARK GROWTH AREA**

	Number and Percent of Trip Ends ⁽¹⁾		
	Year 2000	Year 2030	Comprehensive Land Use Plan
Within Waite Park Growth Area	6% (400)	31% (25,000)	47% (208,200)
To or From St. Joseph Growth Area	3% (200)	5% (4,100)	3% (12,600)
To or From 33rd Street Corridor (St. Cloud)	3% (200)	2% (1,700)	4% (19,600)
To or From St. Cloud Urban Core	57% (4,000)	29% (23,700)	14% (62,400)
To or From All Other Locations	31% (2,200)	33% (26,800)	31% (137,900)
TOTAL	100% (7,000)	100% (81,300)	100% (440,700)

⁽¹⁾ Number in parentheses represents number of trip ends (beginning or ending in Waite Park growth area).

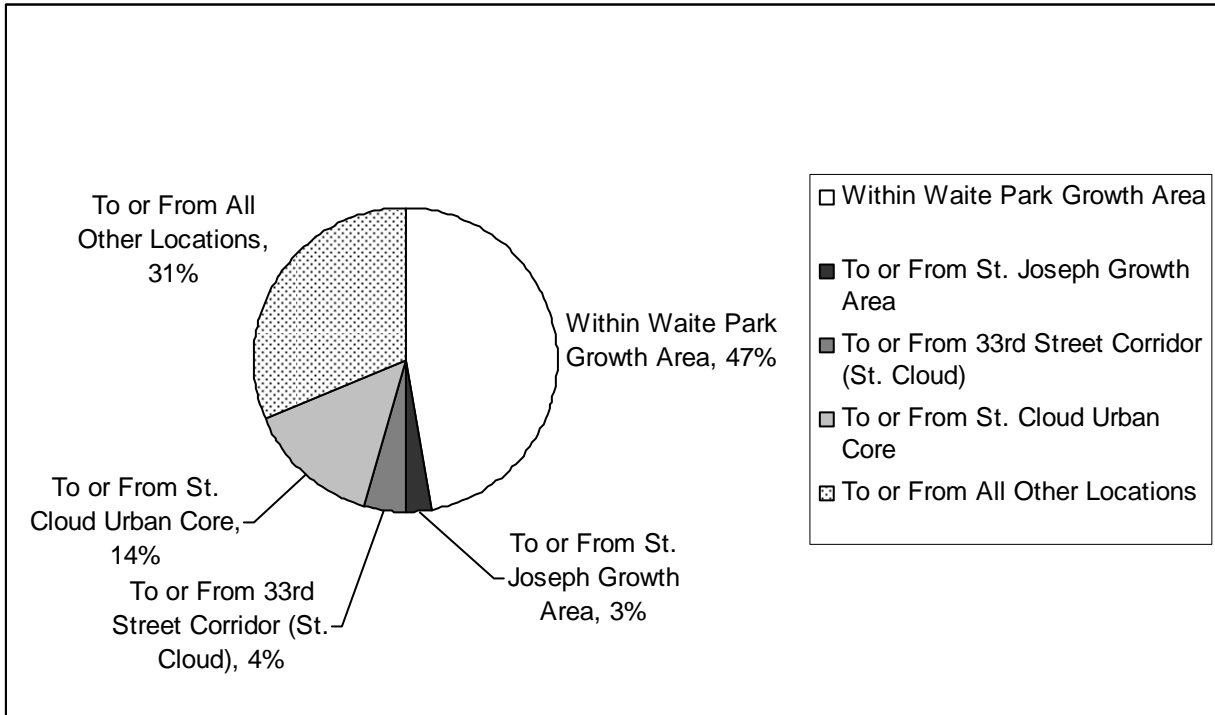


Figure 12: Forecast Trip Distribution For The Waite Park Growth Area Based On Comprehensive Plan Land Uses

Travel (forecast number and percentage of daily trips) for the St. Joseph growth area is tabulated in Table 5 for existing (year 2000), year 2030, and future conditions beyond year 2030 based on planned land uses described in the St. Joseph Comprehensive Plan. Figure 13 illustrates these percentages under comprehensive plan land use conditions. Almost 30 percent of all trip ends within the St. Joseph growth area, or greater than 45,000 trip ends, are internal trips forecast to remain within the St. Joseph growth area under future conditions.

**TABLE 5
TRIP DISTRIBUTION FOR THE ST. JOSEPH GROWTH AREA**

	Number and Percent of Trip Ends ⁽¹⁾		
	Year 2000	Year 2030	Comprehensive Land Use Plan
Within St. Joseph Growth Area	29% (12,200)	38% (57,800)	28% (45,900)
To or From Waite Park Growth Area	<1 % (200)	3% (4,100)	8% (12,600)
To or From 33rd Street Corridor (St. Cloud)	< 1% (200)	< 1% (900)	2% (3,700)
To or From St. Cloud Urban Core	39% (16,400)	27% (40,900)	21% (34,200)
To or From All Other Locations	31% (12,800)	37% (47,200)	41% (67,300)
TOTAL	100% (41,800)	100% (150,900)	100% (163,700)

⁽¹⁾ Number in parentheses represents number of trip ends (beginning or ending in St. Joseph growth area).

Similar to the Waite Park growth area, as the St. Joseph growth area develops over time, the percentage of daily travel to or from the St. Cloud urban core becomes a smaller percentage of the total number of daily trips. Under future planned land uses, 21 percent of St. Joseph growth area trips are forecast to or from the St. Cloud urban core, compared to nearly 40 percent of all daily trips under existing conditions (see Table 5).

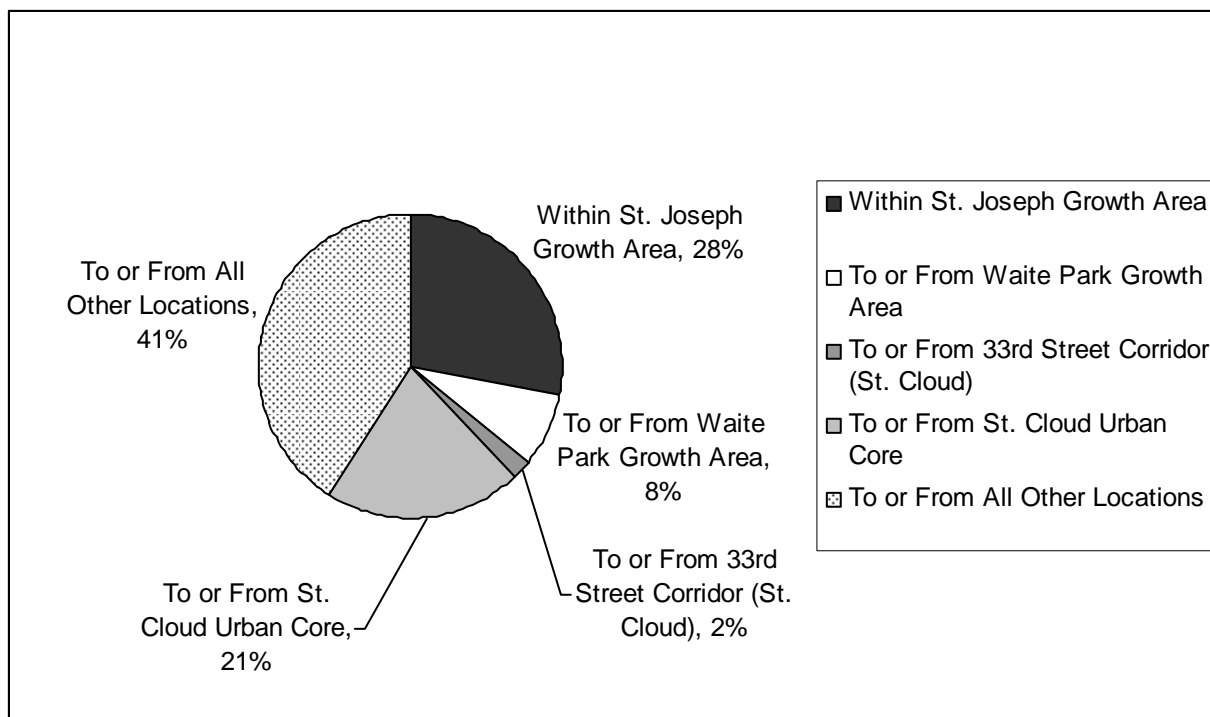
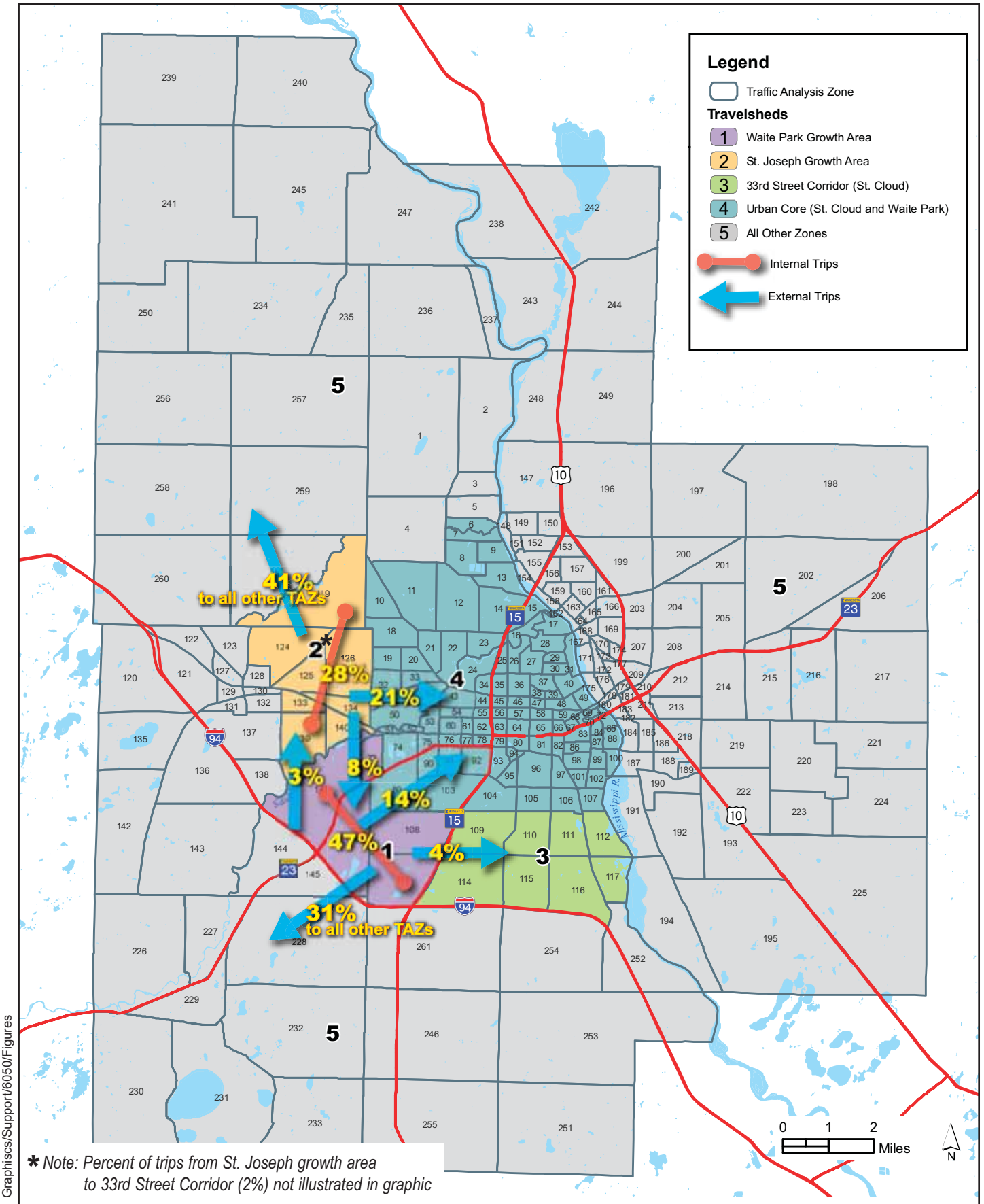


Figure 13: Forecast Trip Distribution For The St. Joseph Growth Area Based On Comprehensive Plan Land Uses

Figure 14 illustrates forecast trip distribution, using the percentages in Tables 5 and 6, for the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas based on future land use described in local comprehensive land use plans.

Existing Transportation System Network

The existing transportation system within the Southwest Beltway project area is characterized by principal arterial and minor arterial routes that connect the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area to the downtown, urban core of St. Cloud. These routes are described below and are illustrated in Figure 14 (see Section 2.4.3.1). Additional detail regarding the function of these routes within the larger regional transportation system is located in Section 3.2.



Trip Distribution Patterns

Figure 14

Trunk Highway (TH) 15 is a north-south principal arterial route located along the eastern boundary of the Southwest Beltway project area. TH 15 bisects the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, connecting TH 10 at the north end of the Metropolitan Area to I-94 at the south end of the Metropolitan Area. TH 23 is an east-west route that bisects the project area through the Waite Park growth area. TH 23 also bisects the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, providing access through the developed St. Cloud urban core. TH 15 and TH 23 intersect one another near the boundary between Waite Park and St. Cloud.

County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 75 is an east-west route that bisects the St. Joseph portion of the Southwest Beltway project area, continuing east through Waite Park and the St. Cloud urban core.¹¹ CSAH 133 is a north-south route located along the northwest boundary of the project area. CSAH 133 connects St. Joseph to other communities (e.g., Sartell, Sauk Rapids) in the northeast portion of the St. Cloud APO planning area. CSAH 4 is located at the very northern portion of the project area. CSAH 4 extends from the northwest portion of the St. Cloud APO planning area, through western St. Cloud, to the St. Cloud urban core.

Within the Southwest Beltway project area, there are three county roads that provide connections to existing regional transportation system. County Road (CR) 137 is an east-west route that is located between TH 23 and Quarry Park. CR 137 extends from the southern portion of the project area to the St. Cloud urban core. CR 138 an east-west route that bisects the project area parallel to TH 23 and the Sauk River. CR 138 intersects with CSAH 75 in Waite Park. CR 134 is an east-west route that bisects the St. Joseph growth area north of CSAH 75.

Need for the Proposed Action

The need for the proposed action, based on forecast travel demand for the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, is described below.

- As described in Section 2.3, the cities of Waite Park and St. Joseph are experiencing population growth and development. Both cities have orderly annexation agreements with St. Joseph Township to accommodate this growth as the cities expand toward one another. The annexation agreements provide a timeframe for when municipal services (e.g., sewer and water) would be made available. These timeframes act as a planning guide for local communities and do not necessary represent specific dates in the future.
- Waite Park and St. Joseph have identified future land uses in the growth areas between the two cities as documented in their comprehensive land use plans. Based on the future land uses identified in comprehensive land use plans, the Waite Park growth area is projected to accommodate an additional 7,000 residential dwelling units and more than 9 million square feet of additional commercial/retail, industrial, and office space. The St. Joseph growth area is projected to accommodate an additional 6,000 residential units and almost 3 million square feet of additional commercial/retail, industrial, and office space.

¹¹ CSAH 75 extends from its western interchange with I-94 west of St. Joseph to its eastern interchange with I-94 southeast of St. Cloud. CSAH 75 is classified as a minor arterial roadway from St. Joseph to Waite Park. CSAH 75 is classified as a principal arterial from Waite Park to its eastern interchange with I-94.

- The Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are forecast to produce or attract more than 440,000 and 163,000 daily trip ends, respectively, for a combined total of more than 600,000 daily trip ends, based on future land uses identified in local comprehensive plans. Of the trip ends within the Waite Park growth area, nearly 50 percent (or approximately 208,000 trip ends) are internal trips within Waite Park growth area. Of the trip ends within the St. Joseph growth area, nearly 30 percent (or approximately 46,000 trip ends) are internal trips within the St. Joseph growth area. At the same time, as land uses change within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas, the number of trip ends to or from the St. Cloud urban core is forecast to represent a smaller percentage of the overall number of daily trips (see Tables 6 and 7).
- Existing principal arterial routes (TH 15, TH 23 and CSAH 75) bisect the project area and serve to move trips entering, exiting, and passing through the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. Existing minor arterial routes (CSAH 133 and CSAH 4) provide connections on the periphery of the project area, connections to the St. Cloud urban core, or connections to other communities in the St. Cloud APO planning area.
- There is no continuous transportation facility that connects the east and west ends of the Waite Park growth area, and there is also no continuous transportation facility that connects the north and south ends of the St. Joseph growth area. As such, there is no transportation facility to serve the 254,000 daily trip ends¹² forecast within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas based on future land use plans. Therefore, there is a need to provide transportation infrastructure and facilities to respond to forecast increases in travel demand resulting from planned growth within the project area.

2.4.3 Additional Goals and Objectives

In addition to the transportation purpose and need described above, the proposed project should also address other goals and objectives. Transportation goals and objectives were identified during the scoping process that as important considerations in defining and evaluating alternatives and were identified as necessary for Stearns County's responsibilities in providing a local transportation network. These additional transportation goals and objectives include transportation system spacing, connectivity to the existing regional transportation system, accessibility and connectivity to local roadways, right of way preservation, and consistency with adopted transportation plans. The additional goals and objectives identified during the scoping process are described in the following sections.

2.4.3.1 Transportation System Spacing

According to FHWA functional classification guidelines, “[f]unctional classification is the process by which streets and highways are grouped into classes, or systems, according to the character of service they are intended to provide”.¹³ Roadway functional classification consists

¹² 208,200 daily trip ends are forecast for the Waite Park growth area under full build out conditions. 45,900 daily trip ends are forecast for the St. Joseph growth area under full build out conditions. Therefore, the combined total for the project area (Waite Park growth area + St. Joseph growth area) is 254,100 daily trip ends.

¹³ Federal Highway Administration. 2007. The Federal Highway Administration Web Site (online). FHWA Functional Classification Guidelines accessed 2007-10-12 at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/ftoc.htm>.

of principal arterials, minor arterials, collectors, and local streets. Chapter 6 (Access Management) of the St. Cloud APO 2030 *Transportation Plan* describes the roadway types function within the overall transportation system. For example, principal arterial roadways function in the transportation system to serve trips entering and leaving urban areas, and are designed as high-volume roadways with controlled access, emphasizing mobility. Minor arterials, conversely, function to complement the principal arterial system by serving more local trips of a shorter length, and with a lower level of mobility compared to a principal arterial roadway. A minor arterial roadway provides some level of accessibility that is not provided with a controlled-access principal arterial roadway.

St. Cloud APO has adopted guidelines for system spacing within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area based on roadway functional classification. These system spacing guidelines are also based on the existing and planned land uses for the surrounding area. The proper balance and spacing of facilities is necessary to maximize the efficiency of the roadway network. As noted in the 2001 Study, inadequate spacing of facilities can result in poor access to other regional facilities and poor operations on these facilities, and can cause other facilities to become over capacity.

The existing and planned land use categories used to define system spacing guidelines for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area are listed below.¹⁴

- Urban areas: fully developed with a tight woven network of public streets.
- Urbanizing areas: the next ring of development just outside the urban core likely to have become urban by the year 2030.
- Rural areas: agricultural and forestry land uses are prominent. Rural areas are characterized by very low-density development primarily residential in nature and urban services (e.g., water, sewer) are not anticipated within the next 20 years.

The study area for the Southwest Beltway Project fits within the “urbanizing areas” category. The study area is located west and southwest of the urban core of Waite Park and St. Cloud. As described in Section 2.4.3, the cities of Waite Park and St. Joseph have annexation agreements for lands within the study area, and municipal services have been previously extended to the study area. The St. Cloud APO system spacing guidelines for an urbanizing area are illustrated in Table 6.

¹⁴ Chapter 6. Access Management. St. Cloud APO 2030 *Transportation Plan*.

**TABLE 6
ST. CLOUD APO SYSTEM SPACING GUIDELINES: URBANIZING AREAS**

Functional Classification	Facility Type	Facility Spacing (Miles)
Principal Arterial	Interstate/Freeway	2 to 5 miles
	Non-Freeway	2 to 3 miles
Minor Arterial	4-lane divided or 4-lane undivided	0.7 to 1.5 mile
Collector	4-lane undivided, 3-lane, or 2-lane	0.3 to 1 mile

Existing facility spacing within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is illustrated in Figure 15. The spacing between existing north-south minor arterial roadways (CSAH 133 and CSAH 4) at CSAH 75 is greater than three miles. At the western limits of Waite Park, the spacing between TH 23 and CSAH 6, an east-west principal arterial and minor arterial, respectively, is greater than 2.5 miles. The spacing between TH 23 and I-94, both east-west principal arterials, approaches three miles at the existing Waite Park city limits. The distance between Quarry Park and Nature Preserve, a physical barrier to east-west travel within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, and CSAH 6 is approximately one mile.

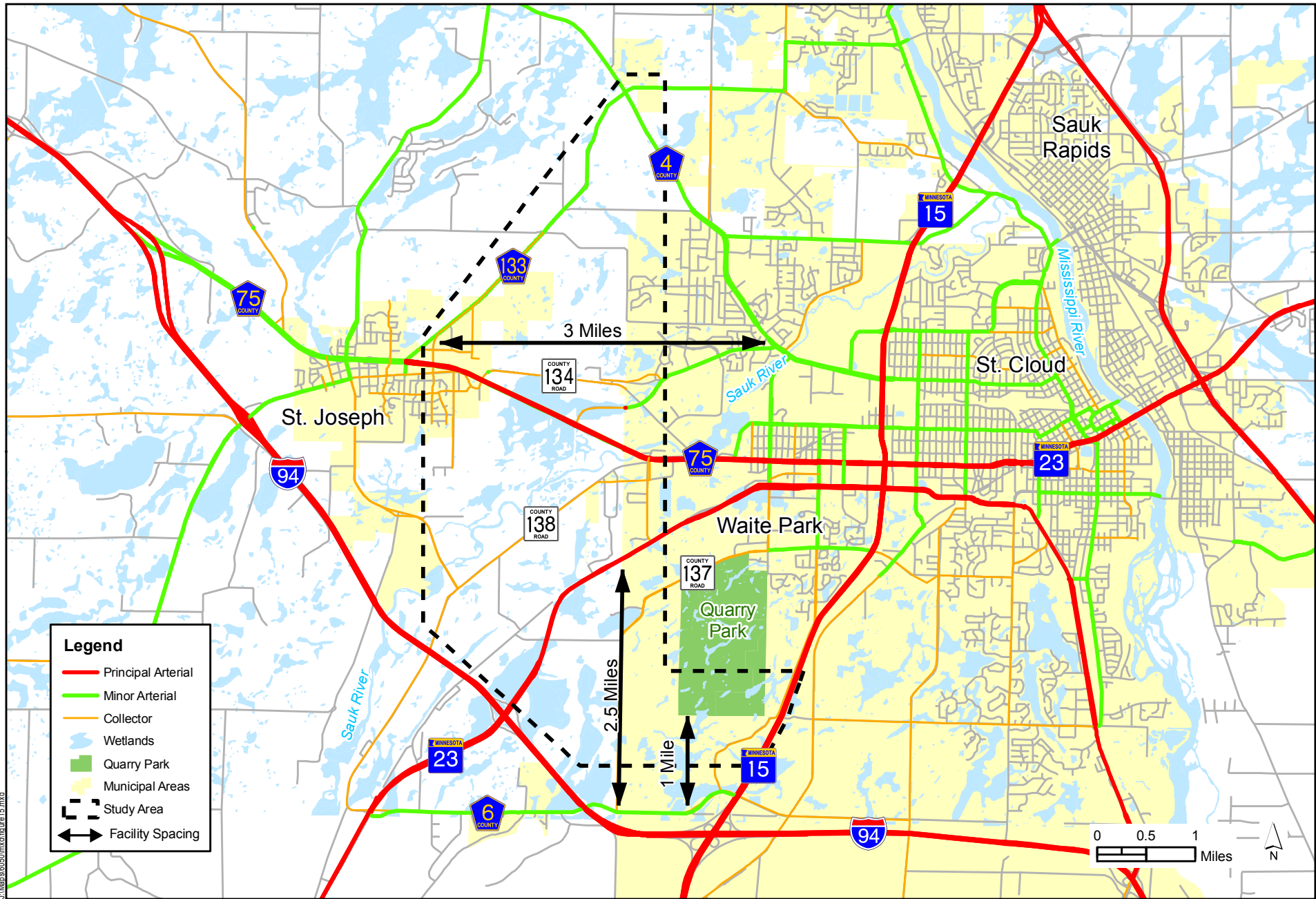
Given the existing system spacing described above for the project area, future studied alternatives should be consistent with St. Cloud APO system spacing guidelines to maximize transportation system efficiency in the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area.

2.4.3.2 Connectivity to the Regional Transportation System

As described in Section 2.4.2, the project area is bisected by several regional transportation facilities, including TH 15, TH 23, CSAH 75, and CSAH 133. Collectively, these routes comprise the backbone of the existing transportation system within the project area.

In addition to their roles as backbone routes within the study area and the larger St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, TH 23 and TH 15 are also classified within Mn/DOT’s Interregional Corridor (IRC) system as a medium priority interregional corridor and a regional corridor, respectively. TH 23 and TH 15 serve to connect the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, a primary regional trade center, with secondary regional trade centers such as Willmar and Marshall.

While these routes are connected outside of the project area, there are limited connections to the existing regional system within the project area. As described in Section 2.4.2, more than 600,000 daily trip ends are forecast to or from the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas. However, more than 200,000 daily trip ends within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are forecast to or from other locations within the St. Cloud APO planning area under future planned land use conditions. Another 100,000 daily trips are forecast to or from the St. Cloud urban core (see Tables 6 and 7).



Existing Roadway System and Facility Spacing

Figure 15

Because more than 300,000 daily trips within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are destined to or attracted from locations outside of the project area, studied future alternatives should also provide for efficient connections to existing regional facilities within the project area to serve these external trips. Moreover, connectivity to existing regional facilities should be consistent with regional plans for the project area (see Section 2.4.3.5).

2.4.3.3 Accessibility and Planned Land Uses

As described in Section 2.4.2, the need for the proposed action is to serve forecast trips within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas. Based on future land uses as identified in local comprehensive land use plans, approximately 254,000 daily trips produced within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are destined for attractions within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas. Collectively, this represents approximately 42 percent of all daily trips generated within the project area. The purpose and need for the project is to serve forecast increases in daily trips generated by future planned land uses. As such, studied alternatives should also provide adequate accessibility to planned land uses by accommodating connections to collector and local roadways where appropriate.

2.4.3.4 Right of Way Preservation in Response to Planned Growth

Sections 2.3 and 2.4.2 of this Scoping Document describe the existing and planned development and anticipated growth within the cities of Waite Park and St. Joseph. The comprehensive land use plans for Waite Park and St. Joseph describe future land uses that are consistent with the orderly annexation boundaries for both cities. As indicated in local comprehensive land use plans and supported by data from the St. Cloud APO travel demand model (see Section 2.4.2), it is possible that the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas may not be fully-developed by year 2030. For example, the majority of growth in residential dwelling units and commercial/retail, industrial, and office space in the Waite Park growth area is forecast to occur beyond year 2030. This is also reflected in the St. Cloud APO's *2030 Transportation Plan*. As previously noted, there are no immediate project or construction funds programmed for the Southwest Beltway project.

However, as described in the comprehensive plans for both Waite Park and St. Joseph, the rate and timing of growth within a community are influenced by numerous factors. Some of these factors include (but are not limited to): economics (local and regional economies, employment), property values and the price of land and housing, availability of developable land and accessibility, land use controls (local zoning, permitting), availability of sewer treatment/water water capacity, and quality of life factors (schools, recreational opportunities).

Therefore, in view of this anticipated growth, studied alternatives should accommodate right of way preservation, if applicable. Right of way preservation at this time in response to growth patterns can minimize future impacts and costs that can occur when transportation infrastructure improvements are constructed through a developed area.

2.4.3.5 Consistency with Transportation Plans

State, regional, and local plans have recognized the role of a future Southwest Beltway in serving the transportation needs of the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. These plans have also recognized the role of the proposed Southwest Beltway in serving the transportation needs of the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. Studied alternatives should be consistent with regional and local plans as described below.

Regional Plans

Mn/DOT District 3

The Mn/DOT District 3 corridor plan for TH 23 has identified three locations (Bel Clare Road; Julip Road; 28th Avenue) for a future minor arterial connection within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. These locations have been identified based on access spacing guidelines to preserve mobility on TH 23. The TH 23 corridor study plan also notes that the intersection control options (e.g., at-grade intersection; roundabout; grade-separated interchange) for TH 23 and a southwest beltway minor arterial roadway should be evaluated in future studies.

St. Cloud APO

As discussed in Section 1.2, a Southwest Beltway has been identified in St. Cloud APO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan dating back to the *St. Cloud APO 2010 Transportation Plan* that was adopted in 1991. The St. Cloud APO's *2030 Metropolitan Transportation Plan* identifies a north-south arterial connection between CSAH 133 and TH 23 as an "illustrative project", and an east-west arterial connection between TH 23 and TH 15 as a "financially constrained project". As previously described, illustrative projects are not included in the APO's fiscally constrained plan, and are only eligible to compete for federal HPP funding. Financially constrained projects are those projects eligible to compete for federal formula funds through the Mn/DOT District 3 Area Transportation Partnership (ATP) or through federal HPP funding.

St. Cloud Area Joint Planning District Plan

The St. Cloud Area Master Plan section of the *St. Cloud Area Joint Planning District Plan* includes a transportation component. This transportation component identifies major roadways within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area that are needed to serve future growth. One of these roadways identified in the St. Cloud Area Master Plan is a circumferential beltway around the St. Cloud Urban Area as noted in Section 1.2. The Southwest Beltway comprises the west and southwest portion of the metropolitan beltway described in the St. Cloud Joint Planning District Plan.

The St. Cloud Area Master Plan notes that the primary purpose for each segment of the beltway would be based on more localized conditions such as development pressure and existing constraints (environmental and social), along with the short-term access requirements for the area. The Master Plan also recommends "...the new connecting roadways are contemplated to be arterials with limited access and no grade-separation. Speed limits would be typical of county roadways, and be 45-55 mph. They would be planned in combination with land use studies considering the forecast long-term growth of the specific sub-area, with local government units having ultimate land-use control."

Local Plans

Stearns County

Stearns County's transportation plan recognizes the importance of a beltway to provide improved circulation in and around the St. Cloud metropolitan area. In addition, the plan also recognizes the need for a north-south arterial roadway to support TH 15. As noted in the *Stearns County Transportation Plan* (1998), the location of the Southwest Beltway is proposed because of its logical spacing with I-94 and TH 23/CSAH 75 and its location relative to future development. The Plan also notes that the Southwest Beltway could also serve to keep local trips off I-94 and function as an alternate route to TH 23 and CSAH 75.

Stearns County is currently updating their comprehensive plan. Chapter 6 of the updated comprehensive plan includes the Stearns County Transportation Plan. The *Stearns County Transportation Plan* (March 2008) recognizes the growth and development within the study area (the land between St. Joseph and Waite Park is identified for urban expansion in the Comprehensive Plan Update) and notes the importance in identifying and protecting transportation corridors.

City of Waite Park

The City of Waite Park completed an update of their transportation plan in February 2007. The *Waite Park Transportation Plan* (February 2007) acknowledges the regional significance of a Southwest Beltway. The City of Waite Park's most recent comprehensive plan (February 2005) expresses support for a future Southwest Beltway and includes recommendations for planning land uses and transportation facilities in support of this roadway. It is anticipated that the City of Waite Park's transportation plan would be updated at some point following completion of the Southwest Beltway environmental review.

City of St. Joseph

The City of St. Joseph completed an update of their transportation plan in December 2006. The *City of St. Joseph Transportation Plan* (revised January 2007) acknowledges the regional significance of a new arterial roadway, and that the north-south portion of the Southwest Beltway could be located through or near the City. It is anticipated that the City of St. Joseph's transportation plan would be updated at some point following completion of the Southwest Beltway environmental review.

The City of St. Joseph is in the process of updating their comprehensive plan. This comprehensive plan update is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2008.

2.3.4.6 Social, Economic and Environmental Considerations

In addition to the transportation goals and objectives listed above, it is also necessary to consider social, economic, and environmental resource impacts as part of the project development process. Qualitative and quantitative measurements of potential social, economic, and environmental impacts have been identified and will be refined throughout the project

development process. Section 6.0 describes social, economic and environmental issues that will be studied in greater detail, and the methodologies used to evaluate social, economic and environmental considerations during the EIS review process.

2.5 SUMMARY OF PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The previous sections describe in detail the purpose and need for the Southwest Beltway project. The basic transportation need for transportation infrastructure improvements in the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is to serve future travel demand as described below:

1. Trip Generation and Trip Distribution: Approximately 440,000 daily trip ends are forecast to or from Waite Park growth area based on planned, future land uses. Of these trip ends, nearly 50 percent, or approximately 208,000 trip ends, are internal trip ends forecast within the Waite Park growth area.

Approximately 164,000 daily trip ends are forecast to or from the St. Joseph growth area based on future land uses. Of these trip ends, nearly 30 percent, or approximately 45,900 trip ends, are internal trip ends forecast within the St. Joseph growth area.
2. Existing Transportation System: While the existing transportation system accommodates trips entering, exiting, and passing through the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, or accommodates trips on the periphery of the project area, there is no continuous east-west transportation facility between TH 23 and TH 15, and no continuous north-south transportation facility between TH 23 and CSAH 4/133, to service the forecast increase in trips within the project area.
3. Serve Forecast Travel Demand: Therefore, based on the forecast increase trip generation and distribution, and the travel movements supported by the existing transportation system, there is a need to provide transportation infrastructure improvements that will serve the future increase in travel demand within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas.

This need should be met in a manner that is consistent with goals and objectives established for the project, which were identified as important considerations in defining and evaluating alternatives and were identified as necessary for Stearns County's responsibilities in providing a local transportation network. These goals and objectives include: consistency with system spacing guidelines for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, provides connectivity to existing regional transportation facilities, provides accessibility for future planned land uses, is consistent with state, regional, and local plans, and avoids or minimizes impacts to key resources (e.g., social, economic, and environmental) within the project area.

2.6 IDENTIFICATION OF EVALUATION CRITERIA

Two levels of objectives and evaluation criteria have been identified for the screening of alternatives. These criteria are summarized in Table 7. The Level I criterion defines the basic transportation need of the proposed action (see Section 2.4.2 and 2.5). The Level I criterion is absolute in nature, meaning that if an option or alternative would not address the basic transportation needs for the project, it was recommended for elimination from further consideration.

The Level II criteria address other transportation objectives and social, economic, and environmental (natural and cultural resources) impacts. Social, economic, and environmental resource considerations are described in greater detail in Section 6.0. Level II criteria are not absolute in nature, but rather provide the framework to compare alternatives to one another. Level II criteria also involve trade-offs among impacts on key natural and cultural resources and transportation benefits and/or design considerations. The Level II criteria were developed to provide guidance for engineering/design considerations, and to identify some of the key impacts associated with the alternatives recommended for further study in the DEIS.

**TABLE 7
SOUTHWEST BELTWAY EVALUATION CRITERIA**

Evaluation Criteria		
Level I Transportation Need	Level II Other Objectives and Considerations	
	Other Transportation Objectives	Social, Economic, and Environmental (SEE) Impacts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The studied alternatives serve forecast increases in travel demand (local trips) within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas in the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The studied alternatives are consistent with St. Cloud APO and Stearns County system spacing guidelines • The studied alternatives provide connectivity to the regional transportation system (TH 15, TH 23, CSAH 75, CSAH 133) • The studied alternatives provide accessibility to the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas and accommodate connections to local roadways • The studied alternatives are consistent with Mn/DOT District 3 TH 15 and TH 23 Corridor Plans, APO plans, and local (County and City) plans • The studied alternatives accommodate right of way preservation • Project cost (relative comparison among studied alternatives) • Other design issues identified in concept development, such as access considerations (access spacing guidelines), interchange or intersection spacing, design standards, Sauk River crossing, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The studied alternatives avoid, and if not possible to avoid, minimize SEE impacts, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Quarry Park and Scientific and Natural Areas – Natural resources – Cultural resources – Environmental justice (low income and/or minority populations)

3.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

3.1 PROJECT LOCATION

The Southwest Beltway Project study area is located within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area in Stearns County (see Figure 1). The St. Cloud Metropolitan Area consists of the cities of Sartell, Sauk Rapids, St. Cloud, St. Joseph, and Waite Park, as well as Haven, Le Sauk, Minden, St. Augusta, St. Joseph, St. Wendel, and Sauk Rapids townships (*St. Cloud Area Joint Planning District Plan*, May 2000). The southwest portion of the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is defined as the cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park, and the portion of St. Joseph Township northeast of I-94.

In general, CSAH 4 and CSAH 133 borders the Southwest Beltway study area on the north and I-94 borders the study area on the south. The study area limits extend to TH 15 to the southeast. County Road 121 and the existing City of St. Joseph municipal limits border the study area to the west.

3.2 PROJECT SETTING

Existing Roadway Network

As summarized in Section 2.4.2, The existing transportation system within the study area is characterized by principal arterial and minor arterial routes that connect the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area to the downtown, urban core of St. Cloud. These routes are described in greater detail below.

Trunk Highway (TH) 15, located east of the project area, is a principal arterial route that provides regional access across the State of Minnesota from the border with Iowa to TH 10 north of St. Cloud. TH 15 is identified as a Regional Corridor in the Mn/DOT IRC System. Regional corridors provide access between secondary trade centers and St. Cloud, a primary trade center. As a principal arterial roadway, TH 15 functions to provide a high-speed, high-mobility facility for regional trips. TH 15 also provides connections to other principal arterial roadways in the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area.

Trunk Highway (TH) 23 bisects the project area from the southwest to the northeast. TH 23 is classified as a principal arterial route and is also identified as medium priority Interregional Corridor (IRC). TH 23 is also classified as a National Highway System route. TH 23 extends across the State of Minnesota from I-90 in southwest Minnesota to I-35 in northeast Minnesota. As a medium priority IRC, TH 23 serves to connect St. Cloud, a primary trade center, to other regional trade centers around Minnesota. As a principal arterial, TH 23 functions to provide mobility for high speed, longer-distance trips.

County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 75 bisects the northern portion of the project area between St. Joseph and Waite Park. CSAH 75 extends from I-94 northwest of St. Joseph, through the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, to the Stearns County border with Wright County. CSAH 75 is classified as a minor arterial roadway within the project area, but is classified as a principal arterial roadway through Waite Park to its eastern interchange with I-94.

County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 133 and its intersection with CSAH 4 form the northern project terminus. CSAH 133 extends northeast from St. Joseph to the City of Sartell. CSAH 133 is classified as a minor arterial roadway. CSAH 4, also classified as a minor arterial roadway, extends to the southeast from its intersection with CSAH 133 to the downtown St. Cloud urban core.

Within the boundaries of the study area, there are two existing crossings of the Sauk River: County Road (CR) 121 south of St. Joseph and CSAH 75 in the northwest corner of Waite Park.

Existing Land Use Patterns

The study area is currently characterized by a mix of urban- and suburban-type development, agricultural activities, and natural resource areas and open space. Figure 4 depicts the existing land use patterns within the project area. As discussed in Section 2.4.3, the populations of St. Joseph and Waite Park grew by more than 30 percent in the 1990s. This population growth trend is expected to continue into the future. As such, the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are identified as an urban expansion area in regional and local plans (see Figure 5).

4.0 ALTERNATIVES

4.1 DEVELOPMENT OF SCOPING ALTERNATIVES

The alternatives considered in this scoping study were determined by identifying and evaluating a range of possible alternatives. Development and evaluation of alternatives in this scoping study was informed by, but not limited to, alternatives identified in previous studies. The process used to develop possible alternatives for this scoping study included the following steps:

- Identification of study area limits (Section 4.1.1)
- Public and agency input into the alternatives identification process (Section 4.1.2)
- Identification of Scoping Alternatives (Section 4.2)
- Identification and Evaluation of Scoping Alternative Alignments (Section 4.3)

4.1.1 Identification of Study Area Limits and Project Termini

The study area limits are defined by existing transportation facilities, physical limitations, or existing resources within the study area. The project limits extend approximately 8.5 miles from CSAH 4/133 in St. Wendel and Le Sauk Townships to TH 15 in the cities of Waite Park and St. Cloud. In general, eastern study area limit is located adjacent to the west edge of the City of St. Cloud and the City of Waite Park. East of TH 23, Quarry Park and Nature Preserve is the northern limits of the study area. I-94, between TH 15 and the Sauk River, is the southern limit of the study area. The east edge of the City of St. Joseph from I-94 to CSAH 133 is the western limit of the study area. The scoping process limited exploration of potential alternatives to locations within these boundaries.

While CSAH 133 is generally identified as the northern study limit, Build Alternatives could include improvements to CSAH 133 and the CSAH 4/133 intersection, depending upon the Build

Alternative alignment location. The design and transition from the Southwest Beltway Build Alternative alignments to CSAH 133 will be identified with design and traffic studies completed during the DEIS.

4.1.2 Public and Agency Input Into the Scoping Alternatives Development Process

Section 7.0, Public and Agency Involvement, lists the cooperating and participating agencies involved in the alternatives development process, and describes input received from cooperating and participating agencies during development of the scoping alternatives.

In August 2007, a public open house and focus group meeting were held at Waite Park City Hall to familiarize the public with the project. A draft outline of the project goals was presented, along with alignments that were identified in the 2001 Study. At this meeting, the public was encouraged to provide comments and suggestions regarding the project need, the corridor design criteria, as well as identifying the preliminary range of alternatives to be considered in scoping.

4.2 IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF SCOPING ALTERNATIVES

The first step in the identification and evaluation of scoping alternatives was comparison of the No-Build Alternative (including identification of the No-Build Alternative assumptions using information from the *St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan*), a transportation demand management alternative, and a Build Alternative corridor against the transportation purpose and need. The process of identifying Build Alternative corridors included an initial screening of alternatives and identification of the Build Alternative facility type. Potential Build Alternative facility types (see Section 4.3.2) were evaluated to provide an assessment of the Build Alternative design criteria (i.e., corridor vision). Past studies (2001 Study) and transportation plans (St. Cloud APO Transportation Plan, Stearns County Transportation Plan, Waite Park and St. Joseph transportation plans) identify the proposed Southwest Beltway as a minor arterial roadway. The purpose of this evaluation was to review design-type decisions documented in past studies and transportation plans.

4.2.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative is defined as the existing transportation network plus programmed improvements within the St. Cloud APO's fiscally constrained regional transportation system. The No-Build Alternative does not include future roadways that are identified in the St. Cloud APO's illustrative network (i.e., not funded or programmed through year 2030), and does not include future collector roadways identified in the local transportation plans for the cities of Waite Park and St. Joseph.

The No-Build Alternative would not meet the basic transportation need (Level I evaluation criteria) of the proposed project. More than 600,000 trip ends are forecast to or from the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas based on future planned land uses. Of these forecast daily trip ends, approximately 254,000 trip ends to or from Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are internal trip ends within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas (i.e., local trips). The existing transportation system consists of principal and minor arterial roadways that are oriented

perpendicular to/bisect the project area. Other minor arterial roadways are located along the periphery of the project area. Existing roadways that bisect the project area function to serve trips entering, exiting, and traveling through the St. Cloud urban core.

Under future No-Build conditions, there is no transportation facility or facilities within the project area to serve the forecast volume of local trips within the project area. Because of the lack of accessibility for local trips within the project area, these trips would have to travel longer distances to reach their destinations, with a resulting reduction in travel efficiencies (see Section 4.2.3).

The No-Build Alternative will be carried forward into the EIS as per NEPA and MEPA procedures as a baseline comparison for the other EIS alternatives.

4.2.2 Transportation Demand Management Measures

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) includes strategies to reduce travel demand by changing travel behavior, with the goal of reducing the need for major capital investments. The following describes existing TDM measures within the project area as well as consideration of future TDM measures.

Existing Multi-Modal Transportation System

Transportation systems often include other modes that supplement roadways and offer a transportation choice to users. In the project area, existing multi-modal systems include transit services and pedestrian/bicycle facilities.

St. Cloud Metro Bus operates a fixed route and dial-a-ride (call for pickup; not route specific) service to persons living in the cities of Waite Park, Sauk Rapids, Sartell, and St. Cloud. However, existing St. Cloud Metro Bus fixed routes do not serve the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas. Tri-Cap Transit Connection provides dial-a-ride service in Stearns County to communities and areas that are not served by the Metro Bus, including the City of St. Joseph and St. Joseph Township.

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities for recreational or commuter use in the project area are also limited. There are no separate facilities for bicyclists or pedestrians in the project area, although the existing terminus of the Lake Wobegon Trail is within the project area north of CSAH 75.

Stearns County Parks Department recently completed a trail feasibility study to examine opportunities to extend two regional trails within the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area: the Lake Wobegon Trail and the proposed Rocori Trail. The Lake Wobegon Trail currently extends from the City of Sauk Centre to the eastern limits of the City of St. Joseph. Extension of the Lake Wobegon Trail would connect St. Joseph to the Mississippi River in St. Cloud.

The proposed Rocori Trail extends from the City of Cold Spring to the southwest portion of St. Joseph Township. The Rocori Trail extension would connect the Rocori Trail through St. Joseph Township to the City of Waite Park and the City of St. Cloud. The Rocori Trail extension would ultimately join the Lake Wobegon Trail in the City of St. Cloud. The recommendations of the feasibility study were documented in the report *Feasibility Study for Stearns County Rails with Trails* (May 2007).

Future Multi-Modal Transportation

St. Cloud APO regional transit plans do not include a substantial increase in transit service in the future. According to the *St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan*, continued growth will require future investments in service frequency, and will create opportunities for adding additional capacity to the existing system such as suburban transit services. Metro Bus service changes identified in the *St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan* include expansion of fixed-route and dial-a-ride services to St. Joseph. Fixed-route services to St. Joseph would provide the opportunity for connections to other portions of the fixed route network.

TDM strategies do not address the need for transportation system improvements in the project area as summarized below:

- The St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is considered a small- to mid-sized market with respect to TDM strategies, including transit. As noted in Section 2.3, the year 2030 population forecast for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is approximately 173,000 persons. TDM measures, in general, would result in limited reductions in travel demand for markets of this size.
- More than 600,000 daily trip ends are forecast to or from the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas beyond year 2030 under future planned land uses. The unserved travel demand in the project area is internal local trips, not trips to or from the downtown St. Cloud urban core. As previously noted, approximately 254,000 future trip ends within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are internal trip ends within the growth areas (i.e., local suburban-to-suburban trips within project area travelsheds). More than 200,000 future trip ends to or from the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are forecast for other suburban or rural locations surrounding the downtown St. Cloud urban core (see Section 2.4.3). Transit does not adequately serve these local, suburban-to-suburban type trips.
- Work-related trips (i.e, between homes and places of employment) receive the greatest benefit from TDM measures. However, work-related trips represent only a fraction of all forecast trips. While TDM measures can remove some trips from the project area, forecast community growth will result in more trips than can be absorbed by multi-modal transportation alternatives. As such, TDM measures would not be able to serve all forecast trips generated within the project area.
- In addition to the items listed above, there is no transportation link within the existing transportation system that could be efficiently utilized by multi-modal transportation alternatives (i.e., transit) in serving the forecast increase in local trips within in the project area.

Accommodate Other Transportation Modes

While TDM strategies alone would not address the transportation need for the project, the proposed action should preserve opportunities for multi-modal transportation alternatives as described below.

Transit

Studied alternatives should ultimately be designed to accommodate transit (e.g., bus-only shoulders, etc.), if warranted, to be consistent with any future transit plan changes for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. This is consistent with travel demand measures identified in the *2030 St. Cloud APO Transportation Plan* (Chapter 10: Transit Plan).

Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

As described above, the existing terminus of the Lake Wobegon Trail is within the project area. The Lake Wobegon Trail extension crosses through the northern half of the study area north of CSAH 75. The Rocori Trail extension through St. Joseph Township to Waite Park crosses through the middle of the Southwest Beltway study area adjacent to TH 23. Studied alternatives should accommodate a pedestrian and bicycle trail that provides the secondary benefit of linking the Lake Wobegon Trail extension and Rocori Trail extension within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area.

4.2.3 Identification of the Build Alternative (Southwest Beltway Concept)

As described in Section 1.2, St. Cloud APO transportation plans have identified an arterial roadway concept in the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas dating back nearly 20 years. More recently, an arterial roadway concept was also described in local planning documents (e.g., *1998 Stearns County Transportation Plan*) to serve future transportation demands in the growing and developing southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. This arterial road concept for the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas was later refined in the *2001 Southwest Arterial Alignment Study*.

An arterial roadway from TH 15 in the Waite Park growth area to CSAH 133 in the St. Joseph growth area would address the project purpose and need as described below.

- Forecast Travel Demand: The un-served future travel market within the project area is internal, local trips (i.e., trips generated within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas destined for attractions within the growth areas). Approximately 254,000 future trip ends within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas are internal trips within the growth areas. There are no existing roadways within the existing transportation system that provide a continuous north-south and east-west link within and between the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas to efficiently serve this forecast increase in travel demand. Consequently, local trips within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas would have to rely, in part, on regional facilities (e.g., TH 23, TH 15) to reach destinations within the project area. The Southwest Beltway provides a convenient link within the transportation system to serve the increase in forecast travel demand within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas.

The consequence of not planning for a roadway to serve this forecast increase in travel demand is that the future roadway network within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas would be designed and constructed as specific areas develop. The transportation system would be developed “piece-meal”, resulting in transportation inefficiencies as opportunities to provide essential connections become limited or restricted by physical barriers. Opportunities to avoid or minimize impacts to social, historic/archaeological, and environmental resources also become limited as development precludes avoidance and/or minimization alternatives.

- **Traffic Volume Forecasts:** Traffic volume forecasts were prepared using the St. Cloud APO travel demand model representing the level of travel likely to occur on a Southwest Beltway arterial roadway in year 2030 and future conditions beyond year 2030 based on local comprehensive land use plans. Table 8 tabulates the results of traffic volume forecasts for a Southwest Beltway roadway. An arterial link within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area would serve from approximately 13,000-26,000 vehicles per day under year 2030 conditions. This same arterial link would serve up to 50,000 vehicles per day under future conditions beyond year 2030.

**TABLE 8
SOUTHWEST BELTWAY TRAFFIC VOLUME FORECASTS**

Roadway Segment	Forecast ADT ⁽¹⁾ Year 2030 (vehicles/day)	Forecast ADT ⁽¹⁾ Beyond Year 2030 (vehicles/day)
Waite Park Growth Area (East-West Segment)		
TH 23 to TH 15	16,000-26,000	39,000-49,000
St. Joseph Growth Area (North-South Segment)		
TH 23 to CSAH 75	19,000-21,000	43,000-45,000
CSAH 75 to CSAH 133	13,000-16,000	30,000-53,000

⁽¹⁾ St. Cloud APO illustrative roadway network.

- **Transportation System Efficiency:** In addition to traffic volume forecasts, travel demand models also forecast vehicle hours traveled and vehicle miles traveled. Vehicle hours of travel and vehicle miles of travel, or VHT and VMT, provide an indication of benefits and overall system efficiency compared to the No-Build Alternative. For the No-Build Alternative, the lack of a link within the transportation system would likely require traveling longer distances for local, internal trips within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area because the existing network does not provide a continuous connection within the project area. Traveling longer distances would likely result in reduced travel efficiencies.

A preliminary analysis of VMT and VHT for a Southwest Beltway arterial link was compared to VHT and VMT under No-Build conditions. This analysis was completed for year 2030 conditions and future conditions beyond year 2030 based on local comprehensive land use plans. This analysis was completed for the St. Cloud APO planning area and assumed the St. Cloud APO's illustrative roadway network.

Results indicate that the No-Build conditions has poorer performance compared to Build conditions. Under year 2030 conditions, overall VHT is forecast to decrease by 3,000 vehicle hours of travel per day under the Build scenario (i.e., with the Southwest Beltway link). Additionally, overall VMT is forecast to decrease by over 22,000 vehicle miles of travel per day under the Build scenario compared to the No-Build scenario.

Beyond year 2030 (local land use plan conditions), overall VHT is forecast to decrease by more than 164,000 vehicle hours of travel per day under the Build scenario compared to the No-Build scenario. Overall VMT is also forecast to decrease by more than 208,000 vehicle miles of travel per day under the Build scenario compared to the No-Build scenario. These results indicate that an arterial roadway link within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area would reduce overall travel distances, and consequently improve transportation system efficiency by providing a continuous transportation system link within the project area.

The identification and evaluation of Southwest Beltway alignment alternatives is described in the following section.

4.3 IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF BUILD ALIGNMENT ALTERNATIVES

The identification and evaluation of build alignment alternatives involved a comprehensive process that included the following steps:

- Review of past transportation planning efforts and previous studies (Section 4.3.1).
- Preliminary review and evaluation of a broad range of build alternative alignment concepts (Section 4.3.2).
- Consolidation of alignments that share similar characteristics and identification of alternative alignments representing a range of feasible route locations for study in the EIS (Section 4.3.3).
- Preliminary review and evaluation of potential design types (Section 4.3.4).

The results of the alignment alternatives identification process are described below.

4.3.1 Previous Alignment Alternatives (2001)

The 2001 Study developed a series of initial alignments based on known transportation and social, economic, and environmental constraints (e.g., interchange spacing on TH 15, Quarry Park and Nature Preserve, wetland complexes, granite outcroppings, etc.). The 2001 Study concluded that an arterial-type facility within the southwest portion of the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area would be in the public's interest to adequately serve and support the forecast increases in travel demand within the area. These previously-identified alignments formed the basis for the identification of Build alignments for this scoping study.

The 2001 Study alignments were displayed at the August 2007 focus group and public information meetings to communicate concepts identified in past studies. At these meetings, focus group members and the public generated several additional concepts for consideration in the identification of the Build Alternative alignments.

4.3.2 Evaluation of Build Alignment Alternatives

The Build alignment evaluation process developed during scoping involved a two-step process:

1. Review and evaluation of individual segments against the purpose and need, transportation goals and objectives, and potential social, environmental, and economic impacts (where applicable); and
2. Consolidation of alignments that share similar characteristics into a range of unique alternatives for consideration in the EIS.

Because the Build alignments share many common components, the Build alignments were broken into individual segments. Each segment was given a unique identification number. Several segments were then combined to form an individual alignment. This allowed for the evaluation and comparison of individual segments. Because an alignment could be comprised of several different segments, eliminating a particular segment from further consideration in the DEIS would not necessarily eliminate the alignment as a whole from further consideration in the DEIS. This process and the findings of this process were reviewed with PMT and AC members during meetings held in fall 2007.

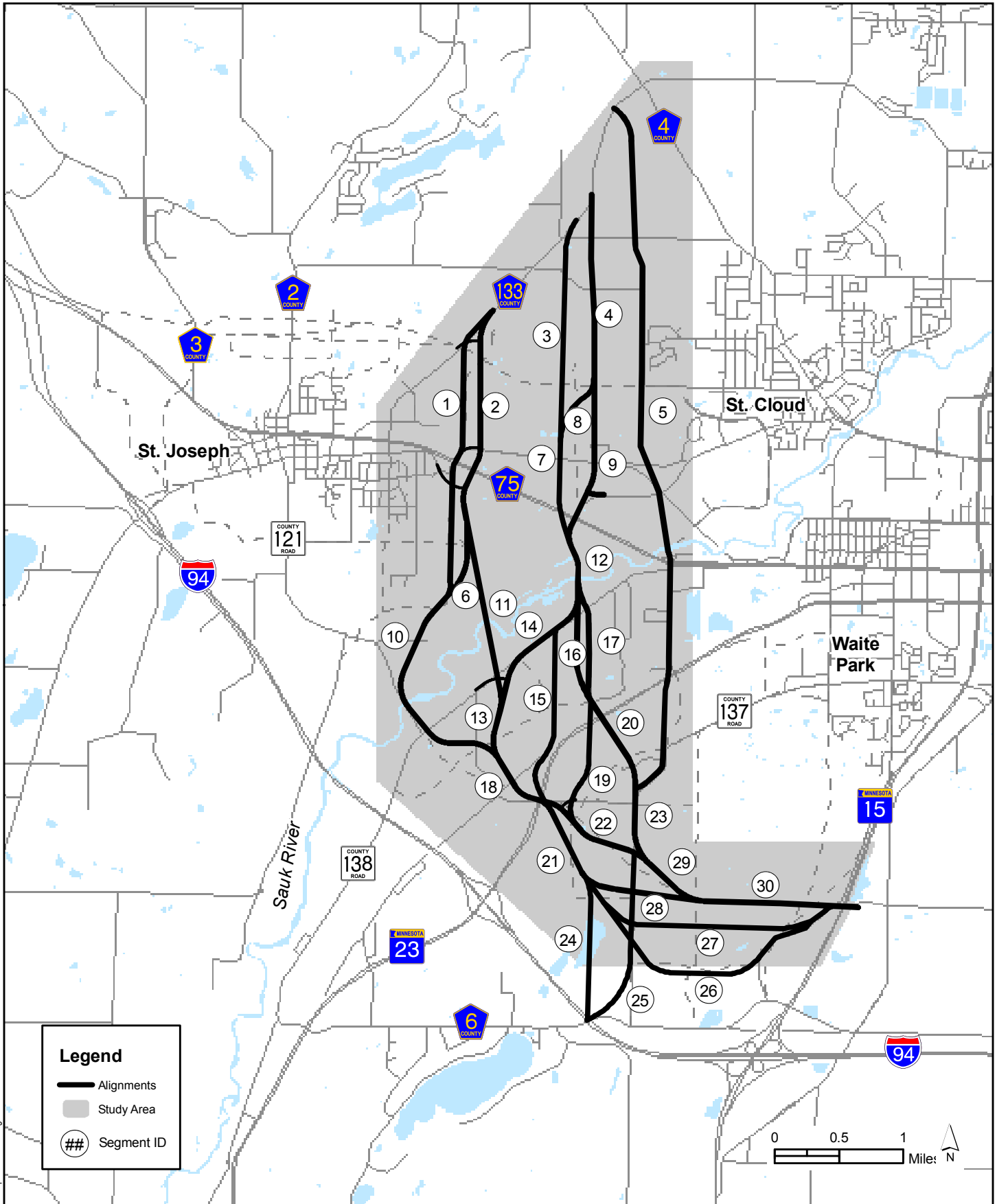
Figure 16 illustrates the segments and alignments that were identified during past studies, along with concepts identified from public input. These segments and alignments formed the basis for the evaluation and identification of the range of alternatives recommended for detailed evaluation in the EIS. These individual segments were reviewed and evaluated against transportation need (Level I criteria), other transportation goals and objectives, basic engineering and design principles/policies, and potential social and environmental impacts (Level II design criteria) as described below.

Review and Evaluation of Individual Segments

The first step in evaluating the Build alignment alternatives was to evaluate the individual alignment segments against the project purpose and need (Level I criterion). In general, most all of the contributing segments of the Build alignment alternatives were determined to meet the transportation need for the project. Each of the segments would contribute to an east-west link and north-south link to serve future increases in travel demand within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas, respectively. However, four of the individual segments in the Waite Park growth area were identified as not addressing the project purpose and need or being inconsistent with other transportation goals and objectives. These segments are discussed below.

Segment 24 and Segment 25

Segment 24 and Segment 25 are similar in that both include a common connection to I-94 at the existing CSAH 6 overpass. Segment 24 and Segment 25 would include an interchange with I-94 at this location, and continue north to TH 23. Segment 24 follows a parcel line north to TH 23. Segment 25 follows the existing CR 137 alignment along the City of Waite Park/St. Joseph Township boundary. CR 137 is an existing collector roadway that extends from CSAH 6 to north of Quarry Park. These two segments were identified following public input from the August 2007 open house as alternatives to an east-west connection between TH 23 and TH 15.



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Initial Build Alignments

Figure 16

Segment 24 and Segment 25 are not consistent with the transportation need, based on a qualitative evaluation, as described below:

- The transportation need for the project is to serve forecast increases in travel demand within the project area (i.e., to serve local trips generated within and destined for attractions within the project area). There is no link within the transportation system to serve the trip desire between TH 23 and TH 15 in the Waite Park growth area. Planned future land uses in the Waite Park growth area west of TH 15 and south of Quarry Park include commercial, business, and residential land uses. A connection that serves travel demand generated by these planned land uses would still be necessary even with a north-south connection represented by Segments 24 and 25 because there is no existing east-west roadway between Quarry Park and CSAH 6 (see Figure 6).
- Segment 24 and Segment 25 provide a new connection to I-94, and do not include an easterly component that connects to TH 15. Existing facilities (TH 23 and TH 15 interchanges) located south of the project area provide connections to I-94. A new connection to I-94 is not part of the identified transportation need for the proposed Southwest Beltway project.

In addition to not addressing the transportation needs of the project, Segment 24 and Segment 25 are not consistent with other transportation goals and objectives as described below:

- Federal Policies: Segments 24 and 25 would connect indirectly to TH 15 by the Interstate system (I-94). As a result, local forecast trips within the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas would be diverted to the Interstate system. FHWA controls all approval rights for access to the Interstate system. According to FHWA policy requirements for Interstate access, capacity for local traffic is not an adequate need for Interstate access. Because the transportation need for the project is to serve increases in travel demand within the project area, Segment 24 and Segment 25 are inconsistent with FHWA policy as they would divert local trips to the Interstate system.
- State Transportation Plans: Segments 24 and 25 are not consistent with Mn/DOT's transportation plan for the I-94 interregional corridor. Mn/DOT completed a corridor management plan (CMP) in 2002 for approximately 60 miles of I-94 from the I-94/494 interchange in the City of Maple Grove to Collegeville Township (*I-94 Interregional Corridor Management Plan*, May 2002). The I-94 IRC includes the segment of I-94 between TH 23 and TH 15 south of the Southwest Beltway project area. A total of eight potential new interchanges are identified in the I-94 CMP. An interchange at CSAH 6 between TH 23 and TH 15 was not identified as the location of a future interchange in the I-94 CMP; as such, Segment 24 and Segment 25 are inconsistent with the Mn/DOT I-94 CMP.

Segment 26

Segment 26 was identified as an alternative to the previously-identified segments along the south boundary of Quarry Park and Natural Area between TH 23 and TH 15. Segment 26 is located

approximately ½-mile north of CSAH 6 between TH 15 and CR 137. Segment 26 was eliminated from further consideration because it is not consistent with transportation goals and objectives as described below:

- Transportation System Spacing: CSAH 6 is currently classified as a minor arterial roadway. Stearns County future roadway functional classification also identifies CSAH 6 as a minor arterial roadway. St. Cloud APO system spacing guidelines for minor arterial roadways ranges from ⅔- to 1 mile. Segment 26 is located approximately ½-mile north of CSAH 6, and is less consistent (compared to other alternatives) with system spacing principles for an urbanizing area.
- Local Transportation Plans: Segment 26 is not consistent with local transportation plans for the study area. The *City of Waite Park Transportation Plan* identifies a series of north-south and east-west collector roadways that would connect CSAH 6 to a Southwest Beltway alignment that is located south of Quarry Park and Natural Area. A Southwest Beltway alignment located in close proximity to CSAH 6 (minor arterial roadway) would reduce the overall transportation system efficiency and effectiveness for the future transportation network to support the Waite Park growth area.

Segment 15

Basic engineering and design principles were applied to the proposed segments and alignments illustrated in Figure 15. The intent of this process was to begin to identify any potential design issues (Level II transportation objectives, see Section 2.6) associated with individual segments and Build alignments that would prohibit the evaluation of a Build Alternative alignment in the DEIS. The following basic design criteria were identified by the PMT:

- The alignments intersect TH 23 at one of the three access points identified by Mn/DOT in the *TH 23/CSAH 75 Corridor Study* (Bel Claire Road, Julip Road, or 28th Avenue);
- Horizontal curves meet a 45 mph (or greater) design speed as identified in the Build Alternative design criteria (see Table 8);
- Roadway transitions between curves and before entering a roadway intersection or railroad crossing are consistent with current engineering standards;
- The alignments intersect railroads at 90 degree angles whenever possible to maintain visibility, consistent with current engineering standards (i.e., railroad crossing safety); and
- The alignments intersect CSAH 75 at an existing intersection whenever possible.

Basic design issues were identified with Segment 15. Segment 15 follows a utility easement between TH 23 at Bel Claire Road and CR 138. The original intent of this segment was to minimize right of way impacts of a future studied alternative by locating an alignment parallel to an existing utility right of way. Basic design issues of Segment 15 include: roadway configuration issues in the area at TH 23 and the BNSF Railway; spacing between TH 23 and the BNSF Railway (transitions between superelevation and normal crown); and angle of the railroad crossing north of TH 23. On this basis, Segment 15 was eliminated from further consideration.

4.3.3 Consolidation and Evaluation of Alignments

The next step in the evaluation process was to group alignments that share key characteristics, such as the TH 23 crossing location, the Sauk River crossing location, location within the study area, and location relative to known social, environmental, and economic resources and existing development. This consolidation step also considered known transportation and social, economic, and environmental constraints (e.g., Quarry Park and Nature Preserve, wetland complexes, granite outcroppings, etc.).

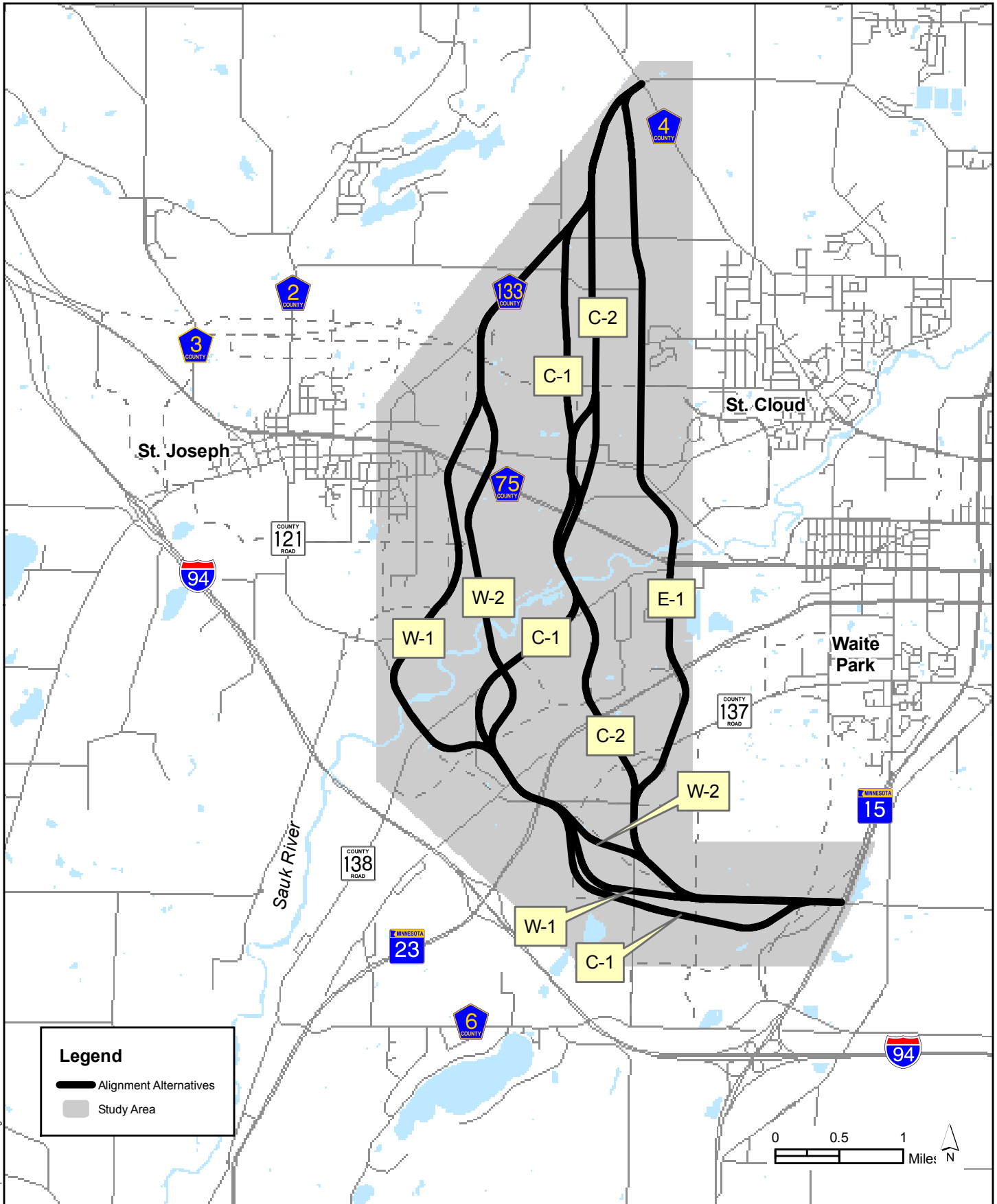
All alignments share common segments east of CR 137 and south of Quarry Park to TH 15. In general, and depending upon the Build Alignment, this east-west component could be comprised of either Segment 27 or Segment 30. Segments 27 and 30 affect mapped wetlands and known rock outcrop communities west of TH 15 and south of Quarry Park. Both Segment 27 and Segment 30 avoid Quarry Park, although the location of Segment 30 is along the south boundary of the park whereas Segment 27 is located further to the south. Because Segments 27 and 30 are similar in nature and impacts (based on a scoping level, qualitative analysis), they are recommended to be combined into a single common component of the Build Alternatives addressed in the EIS. This common segment will be refined in the EIS with each of the Build Alternatives.

Western Alignments

Based on their location within the western portion of the study area, Segments 1, 2, 6, 10, 18, 21, 22, 28, 29 and 30 were combined to form Alignment W1, and Segments 2, 11, 13, 18, 21, 22, 28, 29, and 30 were combined to form Alignment W2 (see Figure 17 and Figures A-1 and A-2 in Appendix A). As described above, Alignments W1 and W2 could alternatively utilize Segments 21 and 27 as a connection between TH 23 and TH 15. Alignment W1 and Alignment W2 share common segments both north and south of the Sauk River. Alignment W1 would utilize the existing Sauk River crossing at CR 121. Alignment W2 crosses the Sauk River approximately one mile northeast of the existing river crossing at CR 121.

Evaluation

- W1 and W2 meet the transportation purpose and need (Level I criteria);
- W1 and W2 bisect the proposed Feld development site, a planned mixed-use site in northeast St. Joseph;
- W1 and W2 are located to the west of a large National Wetland Inventory (NWI)-mapped wetland complex north of the Sauk River and adjacent to CSAH 75.
- W1 and W2 bisect the Rassier Farm, a property that was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) as part of Section 106 studies completed for the City of St. Joseph Field Street project;
- W2 bisects the Heid Herges development site, a planned residential development site along the Sauk River in Waite Park;
- W1 uses an existing crossing of the Sauk River (CR 121), whereas W2 would require a new crossing of the Sauk River northeast of CR 121;



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Scoping Build Alternatives

Southwest Beltway Scoping Document
 SP 73-684-03
 Stearns County

Figure 17

- W1 and W2 cross through an active gravel mining operation between CR 138 and TH 23;
- W1 and W2 intersect TH 23 at a common point at Bel Claire Road; and
- W1 and W2 have potential impacts on a mobile home court (i.e., potential environmental justice (low income/minority) populations). There is the potential that the mobile home court could expand to the south. Alignment W1 is located adjacent to this potential expansion area and Alignment W2 bisects this mobile home court expansion area.

Alignment W2 represents a new Sauk River crossing and is redundant when considered in light of the new river crossings represented by the Central and East Alignments (see Sections 4.4.3.2 and 4.4.3.3). Because Alignment W1 and Alignment W2 represent trade-offs of impacts similar in nature (based on a scoping level, qualitative analysis), and because the W2 river crossing is redundant given other new river crossings alternatives under consideration, Alignments W1 and W2 are recommended to be combined in a single West Corridor Alternative for refinement and evaluation in the EIS.

Central Alignments

Based on their location within the central portion of the study area, segments 3, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 18, 21, 22, 28, 29, and 30 were combined to form Alignment C1, and segments 4, 7, 8, 9, 12, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 29, and 30 were combined to form Alignment C2 (see Figure 17 and Figures A-3 and A-4 in Appendix A). As described in Section 4.4.3, Alignment C1 could alternatively utilize Segments 21 and 27 as a connection between TH 23 and TH 15. Alignment C1 and Alignment C2 share common segments north of the Sauk River and east of TH 23. Alignment C1 crosses TH 23 at Bel Claire Road and continues northeast utilizing the existing CR 138 corridor. Alignment C2 crosses TH 23 at Julip Road and continues north to CR 138 and the Sauk River. Alignment C1 utilizes a portion of the existing CR 137 roadway whereas Alignment C2 crosses CR 137 and continues to the west to CR 138.

Evaluation

- C1 and C2 meet the transportation purpose and need (Level I criteria);
- C1 and C2 avoid the Feld development site, a planned mixed-use site in northeast St. Joseph;
- C1 and C2 avoid the Rassier Farm, a NRHP-eligible property;
- C1 and C2 require new crossings of the Sauk River. This crossing is located approximately 0.7 miles southwest of the existing CSAH 75 crossing of the Sauk River;
- C1 uses the existing CR 138 alignment, but requires a back-to-back curve to utilize the existing roadway corridor;
- C1 and C2 are located along the east edge of an NWI-mapped wetland complex north of the Sauk River and adjacent to CSAH 75.
- C1 and C2 cross near a cemetery located adjacent to the Sauk River north of CR 138;

- C1 is located adjacent to the south side of the Heid Herges development site in Waite Park, whereas C2 avoids the Heid Herges development site;
- C1 crosses through an active gravel mining operation between CR 138 and TH 23;
- C1 intersects TH 23 at Bel Claire Road whereas C2 intersects TH 23 at Julip Road; and
- C1 and C2 have potential impacts on a mobile home court (i.e., potential environmental justice (low income/minority) populations). Alignment C1 is located east of the mobile home court along CR 137, whereas Alignment C2 is located south of the existing mobile home court. There is the potential that the mobile home court could expand to the south. Alignment C2 bisects this mobile home court expansion area.

Alignments C1 and C2 are similar enough in location, both require a new Sauk River crossing, and represent trade-offs in environmental impacts that can be avoided with Alignment C1. As such, Alignment C1 and Alignment C2 are recommended to be combined in a single Central Corridor Alternative for refinement and evaluation in the EIS.

Eastern Alignment

One eastern alignment location was identified during the scoping process. This eastern alignment combines segments 5, 23, and 29 to form Alignment E1 along the current Waite Park city limits (see Figure 17 and Figure A-5 in Appendix A). Alignment E1 ties into CSAH 133 at the CSAH 4/133 intersection and crosses the Sauk River to the northeast of the existing CSAH 75 Sauk River crossing. Alignment E1 utilizes the existing 28th Avenue corridor, and crosses TH 23 at a programmed extension of 28th Avenue.

Evaluation

- E1 meets the transportation purpose and need (Level I criteria);
- E1 avoids the Feld development site, a planned mixed-use site in northeast St. Joseph;
- E1 avoids the Rassier Farm, a NRHP-eligible property;
- E1 requires a new crossing of the Sauk River. This crossing is located approximately 0.2 miles northeast of the existing CSAH 75 crossing of the Sauk River.
- E1 avoids the Heid Herges development site, a planned residential development site in Waite Park;
- E1 utilizes the existing 28th Avenue corridor, and a programmed extension of the 28th Avenue corridor. Land adjacent to existing 28th Avenue is already developed (industrial and office/business land uses). Properties along 28th Avenue have direct access to the existing roadway.
- E1 intersects TH 23 at the programmed extension of 28th Avenue.
- E1 has potential impacts on a mobile home court (i.e., potential environmental justice (low income/minority) populations).

Alignment E1 is recommended for refinement and evaluation as an East Corridor Alternative in the EIS.

4.3.4 Identification of Build Alternative Facility Type

The *Mn/DOT Access Category System and Spacing Guidelines* (March 2002) describes the competing needs of arterials that extend through urban communities: the through trip driver who desires to travel through the community without undue speed reductions and signal delays (i.e., mobility), and the local trip driver who needs to cross or travel on a segment of the roadway to get to home, work, and services within the community (i.e., accessibility). Although the project area is currently largely undeveloped, land use changes are occurring and local land use plans for the project area identify a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and open space land uses. Past transportation studies for the project area have identified the Southwest Beltway as a minor arterial roadway. The *St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan* defines a minor arterial roadway as one that, among of characteristics, provides a lower level of mobility, carries internal-community travel, distributes travel to smaller community centers and sub-regions, and serves metropolitan trips of moderate length (two to six miles).

At public open house meetings in August 2007 and November 2007 (see Section 7.4), several comments were received from the public regarding the design, or facility type, for the Southwest Beltway project, and whether other facility-types such as a freeway or expressway design would be appropriate. In response to these comments, facility types were reviewed and compared (relative qualitative evaluation) to the transportation need, transportation goals and objectives, and with respect to potential social and environmental impacts.

Three roadway facility types, or designs that provide varying degrees of mobility and accessibility that were initially evaluated for the proposed Southwest Beltway project include:

- Grade-separated freeway design
- Expressway design
- Minor arterial urban mobility design

The roadway design characteristics associated with each type of facility are summarized in Table 9. The evaluation of facility types is described in the following sections.

4.3.4.1 Grade-Separated Freeway Design

Facility Description

The grade-separated freeway facility option would include design of the proposed Southwest Beltway as a high-speed grade-separated freeway from CSAH 4/133 south to TH 23 and east to TH 15. Interchanges would be constructed at the northern project terminus at CSAH 4/133, CSAH 75, TH 23, and would connect to the future interchange at TH 15. There would be no other access to the freeway facility between CSAH 4/133 and TH 15. Existing and other future roadways would be grade-separated from the freeway facility (e.g., an overpass or underpass would be constructed at CR 137 and CR 138 with no access to the freeway). The grade-separated freeway facility would provide a high-mobility facility with no direct access to adjacent lands.

Evaluation

A grade-separated freeway would serve forecast increases in travel demand within the project area and would provide adequate capacity based on planning-level ADT thresholds (see Table 9). However, in general, a principal arterial freeway facility is inconsistent with the transportation need of the project. The *St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan* describes a principal arterial as a facility that serves the majority of trips entering and leaving an urban area, carries a majority of through trips, serves the longest metropolitan trips, and serves major activity centers. The primary transportation need for the project is to serve future increases in travel demand within the project area (i.e., forecast trips generated in and destined for attractions in the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas). A grade-separated freeway facility is not consistent with the need to serve the forecast increases in this local trip desire.

A grade-separated freeway facility also does not address the Level II transportation goals and objectives criteria identified for the project (e.g., functional classification and system spacing, accessibility) as described below.

- A grade-separated freeway facility is inconsistent with St. Cloud APO system spacing guidelines. A grade-separated freeway facility would be classified as a principal arterial roadway. The east-west segment of the project area between TH 23 and TH 15 would be approximately one mile or less from I-94. St. Cloud APO spacing guidelines identify a two to five mile facility spacing distance for principal arterial freeway facilities in urbanizing areas (see Table 2).
- A grade-separated freeway facility would not serve the accessibility needs within the planned growth areas of the cities of Waite Park and St. Joseph. While a grade-separated freeway facility would provide a high-speed, high-mobility facility to move traffic through the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, freeway facilities have little to no direct land access. A grade-separated freeway facility would not provide the accessibility for local trips between future land uses (e.g., residences, businesses, and commercial services) planned within the study area.

Relative to the other facility types considered (expressway and urban mobility corridor), a grade-separated freeway facility would likely result in greater social and environmental impacts because of the greater right of way width necessary to accommodate the roadway and the right of way footprint necessary to accommodate interchange facilities (see Table 9).

Because a grade-separated freeway facility is not consistent with the transportation need and does not address Level II transportation goals and objectives, it is recommended to be eliminated from further consideration as a facility type for the proposed Southwest Beltway and not be evaluated in the DEIS.

**TABLE 9
SOUTHWEST BELTWAY FACILITY-TYPE EVALUATION: DESIGN DESCRIPTIONS**

Facility Type	Functional Class	Design Speed ⁽¹⁾	Average Daily Traffic (ADT) Threshold ⁽²⁾	Typical Section	Safety		Trails	Access (Interchange Spacing)	Access (At-grade intersections)	ROW
					Qualitative Comparison ^{(3) (4)}	Relative Crash Rates ⁽⁵⁾				
Freeway (Full Grade Separation)	Principal Arterial	70 mph	60,000	4-lane rural divided	Greatest safety-intersecting roadways are grade separated	1.1	No trail facilities	1-4 miles (Interchange access only at CSAH 75, TH 23, and TH 15)	N/A	300 feet
Expressway (High-Speed Multi-Lane Highway)	Principal Arterial	55-65 mph	40,000	4-lane rural divided	Conflicting movements at intersecting roadways. Fewer intersecting roadways compared to minor arterial.	2.0	Separated bike and pedestrian trail on one side	1-4 miles	1 mile (minimum) controlled intersection	220 feet
Urban mobility corridor	Minor Arterial	45-50 mph	20,000-35,000	4-lane rural divided or 4-lane urban parkway divided	Conflicting movements at intersecting roadways. Greatest density of intersecting roadways.	3.4	Separated bike and pedestrian trail on one side	N/A	½ mile (minimum) controlled intersection	220 feet or 150 feet

⁽¹⁾Design speed is the selected speed used to determine the various geometric design features of a roadway. (Mn/DOT Road Design Manual. Chapter 2. Section 2-5.06)
⁽²⁾Planning-level threshold volumes determined to provide acceptable (level of service D or better) traffic operations and capacity. Exhibit 5B. Chapter 5: Roadway Plan. St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan.
⁽³⁾American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. 2004. *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*.
⁽⁴⁾Relative safety comparison of facility types listed in Table 8. Comparison only considers intersection safety and does not consider other roadway safety considerations.
⁽⁵⁾Crash rate per million vehicle miles traveled (MVMT). Mn/DOT statewide crash rate data (2006) for Trunk Highway facilities in urban areas. Crash rates provided for comparison purposes only (freeway vs. expressway vs. urban minor arterial roadway) and do not represent predicted crash rates for the actual planned facility.

4.3.4.2 Expressway Design

Facility Description

This option would include design of the proposed Southwest Beltway as a high-speed expressway facility from CSAH 4/133 south to TH 23, and east to TH 15. Controlled intersection spacing would be a minimum of one-mile. No other access or intersecting roadways would be permitted between the controlled intersections. The expressway facility would provide a higher level of mobility with a minimal amount of direct access.

Evaluation

An expressway facility would serve forecast increases in travel demand within the project area and would provide adequate capacity based on planning-level ADT thresholds (see Table 9). However, similar to a grade-separated freeway facility, a principal arterial expressway facility is inconsistent with the transportation need of the project. The *St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan* describes a principal arterial facility as a facility that serves the majority of trips entering and leaving an urban area, carries a majority of through trips, serves the longest metropolitan trips, and serves major activity centers. The primary transportation need for the project is to serve future increases in travel demand within the project area (i.e., forecast trips generated in and destined for attractions in the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas). An expressway facility is not consistent with the need to serve the forecast increases in this trip desire within the project area.

An expressway facility also does not address the Level II transportation goals and objectives criteria identified for the project (e.g., functional classification and system spacing, accessibility) as described below.

- An expressway facility is inconsistent with St. Cloud APO system spacing guidelines. An expressway facility would be classified as a principal arterial roadway. The east-west segment of the project area between TH 23 and TH 15 would be approximately one mile or less from I-94. St. Cloud APO spacing guidelines identify a two to three mile spacing distance for principal arterials (non-freeway facilities) in urbanizing areas (see Table 2).
- An expressway facility would not serve the mobility and accessibility needs within the planned growth areas of the cities of Waite Park and St. Joseph. Similar to a freeway facility, an expressway would provide a high-mobility corridor to move traffic through the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. While a principal arterial expressway would provide greater accessibility compared to a grade-separated freeway facility, it would not provide the adequate level of accessibility to serve local community needs. As such, an expressway facility would not provide an adequate balance between mobility and accessibility to serve planned, future land uses (e.g., residences, businesses, and commercial services) within the study area.

Relative to a grade-separated freeway facility, an expressway would likely result in fewer potential social and environmental impacts because less right of way would be necessary to accommodate an expressway facility. An expressway facility would likely result in similar impacts relative to a minor arterial urban corridor where right of way widths are similar (see Table 9).

Because an expressway facility is not consistent with the transportation need and does not address Level II transportation goals and objectives, it is recommended to be eliminated from further consideration as a facility type for the proposed Southwest Beltway and not be evaluated in the DEIS.

4.3.4.3 Minor Arterial Urban Mobility Design

Facility Description

As previously noted, past studies and transportation plans have identified the proposed Southwest Beltway as a minor arterial roadway. Identification of the Southwest Beltway as a minor arterial facility dates back to the *St. Cloud APO 2010 Transportation Plan* (adopted January 1991). A minor arterial urban mobility facility would be a four-lane roadway with controlled intersections spaced at a minimum ½-mile distance.

Evaluation

The proposed Southwest Beltway as a minor arterial urban mobility facility is consistent with the transportation need for the project. As noted in Section 4.4.3, the *St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan* defines a minor arterial roadway as one that provides a lower level of mobility (relative to principal arterial roadways), carries internal-community travel, distributes travel to smaller community centers and sub-regions, and serves metropolitan trips of moderate length (two to six miles). As such, a minor arterial facility is consistent with the transportation need of the project to serve future increases in travel demand within the project area (i.e., forecast trips generated in and destined for attractions in the Waite Park and St. Joseph growth areas).

A minor arterial urban mobility facility is also consistent with other transportation goals and objectives as described below.

- A minor arterial urban mobility facility is consistent with St. Cloud APO transportation system spacing guidance.
- A minor arterial urban mobility corridor would permit controlled intersection access at ½-mile spacing intervals. A controlled intersection at CSAH 133, CSAH 75, TH 23, and TH 15 along a proposed Southwest Beltway is consistent with this access spacing criteria.
- A minor arterial corridor would provide greater accessibility compared to an expressway or freeway design, consistent with the project objective to serve future land uses (e.g., residences, businesses, and commercial services) and internal community travel within the study area. At the same time, the minor arterial controlled intersection spacing standards provides a greater degree of mobility compared to collector or local streets.

Because a minor arterial urban mobility facility addresses the transportation need and provides the desired balance between mobility and accessibility, it is recommended as the Build Alternative design to be considered in the DEIS.

The Project Management Team (PMT), along with input from the Advisory Committee (AC) (see Sections 7.1 and 7.2), identified design criteria to guide development of the Build Alternative alignments in the DEIS. These design criteria were based on St. Cloud APO access

management guidelines, *Stearns County Highway Department Access and Right-of-Way Width Guidelines* (2001), and basic engineering principles. The design criteria were sub-divided into the north-south segment between CSAH 4/133 and TH 23 and the east-west segment between TH 23 and TH 15. A parkway-like design was identified for the north-south segment between CSAH 4/133 and TH 23 because this is the primary growth area between the cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park. A rural section design for the east-west segment between TH 23 and TH 15 was identified by the PMT and will be evaluated in the DEIS.

The Build Alternative design between TH 23 and the Sauk River could include an area that transitions from an urban to rural typical section design. This typical section transition area will be evaluated with the Build Alternative design in the DEIS.

The design criteria that will guide Build Alternative design in the DEIS is identified in Table 10.

**TABLE 10
SOUTHWEST BELTWAY: BUILD ALTERNATIVE DESIGN CRITERIA**

Segment	Functional Classification	Design Speed	Typical Section	Trails	Access	ROW
North-South (CSAH 133 to TH 23)	Minor Arterial	45-50 mph	4-lane urban parkway divided	Separated bike and pedestrian trail on one side	½ mile (minimum) controlled intersection	150 feet
East-West (TH 23 to TH 15)	Minor Arterial	45-50 mph	4-lane rural divided	Separated bike and pedestrian trail on one side	½ mile (minimum) controlled intersection	220 feet or 150 feet

4.4 ALTERNATIVES TO BE ANALYZED IN EIS

4.4.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative includes regional transportation improvements identified in the St. Cloud APO fiscally constrained network. The No-Build Alternative does not meet the transportation needs of the project. The No-Build Alternative does not provide a connection between CSAH 133, CSAH 75, TH 23, and TH 15, and does not respond to the infrastructure needs in the planned growth area between St. Joseph and Waite Park (see Section 4.2.1).

As previously noted, the No-Build Alternative will be carried forward into the DEIS as per NEPA and MEPA procedures as a baseline comparison for the other DEIS alternatives.

4.4.2 Build Alternative Alignments

The alternatives described below correspond to the alignments shown in Figure 18. These alignments represent efforts to identify corridors with unique characteristics that connect CSAH 133, CSAH 75, TH 23 and TH 15, and attempt to avoid and minimize social, economic, environmental and transportation system impacts with respect to known constraints in the study area.

It should be noted that the Build Alternative alignments (West, Central and East) share a common segment between TH 23 and TH 15 south of Quarry Park. Just east of CR 137, the West Alternative alignment continues to the west, whereas the Central and East Alternative alignments curve to the northwest. The Central and East Alternative alignments also each utilize a segment of the existing CR 137 roadway in the City of Waite Park.

As previously noted in Section 4.2.2.3, the Build Alternative typical section design (i.e., urban versus rural section) identified by the PMT and AC include an urban, parkway-like section between CSAH 133 and TH 23, and a rural section design between TH 23 and TH 15. The Build Alternative design between the Sauk River and TH 23 could include an area that transitions from an urban to rural section design. These Build Alternative typical section design would be discussed at the start of the EIS process as part of design and traffic engineering studies.

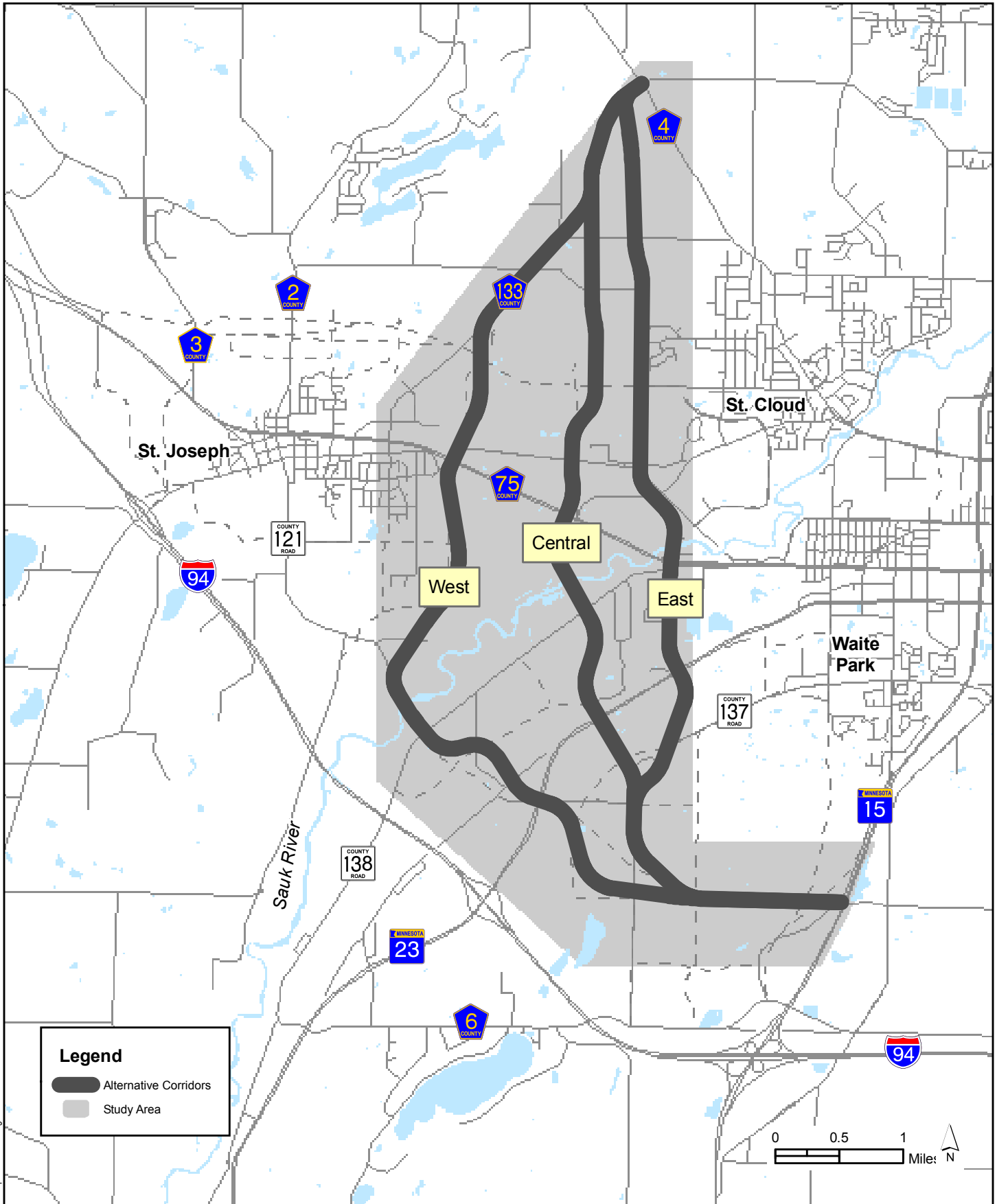
4.4.2.1 West Corridor Alternative

The West Corridor Alternative is located in the western portion of the study area closest to the City of St. Joseph. The north-south alignment of the West Corridor ties in to the existing CSAH 133 alignment in northeast St. Joseph. The West Corridor extends south of CSAH 133 parallel to the St. Joseph 20th Avenue corridor, and crosses CSAH 75 near the 88th Avenue/Ridgewood Road intersection. The north-south alignment of the West Corridor would utilize the existing CR 121 river crossing over the Sauk River.

The West Corridor east-west alignment between TH 23 and TH 15 would cross TH 23 at Bel Claire Road, approximately one mile northeast of I-94. The West Corridor would terminate at a future TH 15/33rd Street interchange.

Several design elements are under consideration for the West Corridor. These design elements would be discussed at the start of the EIS process as part of design and traffic engineering studies. These design elements include:

- Use of the existing CR 121 bridge over the Sauk River (i.e., no bridge reconstruction) versus reconstruction of this existing bridge with the West Corridor Alternative;
- Construction using the St. Joseph 20th Street corridor or a new roadway corridor alignment to the east of 20th Street (i.e., system spacing requirements);
- At-grade versus grade separated crossings of the BNSF Railway tracks north of CSAH 75 and the BNSF Railway tracks north of TH 23. Stearns County will work with BNSF Railway to determine the appropriate type of crossing at these locations;
- Intersection control (e.g., roundabout, at-grade signalized, interchange) at the Southwest Beltway/TH 23 intersection; and
- Design and reconstruction of the existing CSAH 133 corridor from the point where the West Corridor Alternative ties in to the CSAH 133 roadway and the CSAH 4/144 intersection.



J:\Maps\16050\mxd\figure 18.mxd

Build Alternatives to be Analyzed in DEIS

Figure 18

4.4.2.2 Central Corridor Alternative

The Central Corridor Alternative is located in the central portion of the study area between the City of St. Joseph and the City of Waite Park. The north-south alignment of the Central Corridor ties in to the existing CSAH 133 alignment in St. Wendel Township approximately one mile southwest of the CSAH 4/133 intersection, and approximately two miles northeast of the CSAH 75/133 intersection. The Central Corridor crosses CSAH 75 near the CSAH 134 intersection, and continues south to the Sauk River. The Central Corridor crossing of the Sauk River is located approximately 0.7 miles southwest of the existing CSAH 75 bridge over the Sauk River, and approximately 1.5 miles northeast of the existing CR 121 bridge over the Sauk River.

The Central Corridor intersection with TH 23 is located approximately 1.7 miles northeast of I-94 at Julip Road. South of TH 23, the Central Corridor utilizes the existing CR 137 alignment before turning east along the south boundary of Quarry Park. The Central Corridor would terminate at a future TH 15/33rd Street interchange.

Design elements are also under consideration for the Central Corridor. These design elements would be discussed at the start of the EIS process as part of design and traffic engineering studies. These design elements include:

- At-grade versus grade separated crossings of the BNSF Railway tracks north of CSAH 75 and the BNSF Railway tracks north of TH 23. Stearns County will work with BNSF Railway to determine the appropriate type of crossing at these locations;
- Intersection control (e.g., roundabout, at-grade signalized, interchange) at the Southwest Beltway/TH 23 intersection; and
- Design and reconstruction of the existing CSAH 133 corridor from the point where the Central Corridor Alternative ties in to the CSAH 133 roadway and the CSAH 4/144 intersection.

4.4.2.3 East Corridor Alternative

The East Corridor Alternative is located in the eastern portion of the study area closest to the City of Waite Park. The north-south alignment of the East Corridor ties in to the existing CSAH 133 alignment in St. Wendel and Le Sauk Townships adjacent to the CSAH 4/133 intersection. The East Corridor follows the City of St. Cloud/St. Joseph Township boundary to the Sauk River. The East Corridor crosses the Sauk River approximately 0.2 miles northeast of the existing CSAH 75 bridge over the Sauk River. The East Corridor crosses CSAH 75 near the CR 138 intersection, and continues south along the 28th Avenue corridor.

The East Corridor intersection with TH 23 is located approximately 2.4 miles northeast of I-94 at 28th Avenue. The East Corridor continues south of TH 23 along the proposed 28th Avenue extension to CR 137 (programmed for construction in 2008). The East Corridor utilizes the existing CR 137 alignment before turning east along the south boundary of Quarry Park. The East Corridor would terminate at a future TH 15/33rd Street interchange.

Several design elements are under consideration for the East Corridor. These design elements would be discussed at the start of the EIS process as part of design and traffic engineering studies. These design elements include:

- At-grade versus grade separated crossings of the BNSF Railway tracks north of CSAH 75 and the BNSF Railway tracks north of TH 23. Stearns County will work with BNSF Railway to determine the appropriate type of crossing at these locations;
- Access considerations along existing 28th Avenue. Industrial and commercial/office land uses are located along existing 28th Avenue in Waite Park. This segment of existing 28th Avenue includes multiple direct driveway access to/from 28th Avenue; and
- Intersection control (e.g., roundabout, at-grade signalized, interchange) at the Southwest Beltway/TH 23 intersection.

5.0 COST AND FUNDING SOURCE

Planning-level cost estimates for the Southwest Beltway project are described in the St. Cloud APO's 2030 Transportation Plan. These cost estimates assume construction costs of \$2 million per mile and right of way costs of \$1 million per mile. Engineering and construction administration cost estimates were assumed to be 20 percent of the project cost. This cost estimate does not include improvements associated with the crossing of the BNSF Railway lines near TH 23 and CSAH 75. Stearns County will work with BNSF Railway to determine the appropriate type of crossing (at-grade vs. grade-separated) during design and construction.

Planning-level cost estimates for the Southwest Beltway, as described in Exhibit 5I of the APO *2030 Transportation Plan*, are estimated at approximately \$24.5 million (2005 dollars).

The DEIS will include more detailed preliminary construction cost estimates for the alternatives to be evaluated in the DEIS (see Section 6.3).

Total project cost (construction; right of way; engineering) for the Southwest Beltway Project was estimated for future year of construction. These estimates were based on planning-level total project cost estimates developed as part of the St. Cloud APO *2030 Financial Plan Amendment*. An inflation factor of 2.05 was assumed when estimating future costs. The Southwest Beltway was divided into three segments for purposes of identifying future project costs as described below:

1. TH 15 to CR 137. This segment is identified as a fiscally-constrained project for the year 2024-2030 planning period. Total project cost for year 2027 construction (mid-year of planning period) is estimated at \$12.3 million (2027 dollars).
2. CR 137 to TH 23: This segment is identified as an illustrative project in the financial plan amendment (beyond 2030). Total project cost for construction beyond year 2030 is estimated at \$8.7 million (2030 dollars).
3. TH 23 to CSAH 133: This segment is also identified as an illustrative project in the APO financial plan amendment (beyond 2030). Total project cost for construction beyond year 2030 is estimated at \$29.3 million (2030 dollars).

Funding for the Southwest Beltway Project has not been identified. Future funding for the project is anticipated from a combination of federal, state, and local funds. The specific contribution amount from each of these three funding sources has not been identified.

6.0 SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

6.1 ISSUES IDENTIFICATION PROCESS

A comprehensive review of a wide range of social, economic, and environmental (SEE) issues are required by federal and state legislation as part of the environmental review process. A detailed analysis of SEE impacts is not required for scoping; however a preliminary assessment has been made to identify the types of SEE impacts that will be discussed in the DEIS and FEIS (collectively referred to as the EIS). Figure 19 illustrates known natural and cultural resources identified within the project area.¹⁵

The types of SEE impacts have been divided into four categories: issues requiring a special study (Section 6.2), issues of major concern requiring detailed analysis in the EIS (Section 6.3), issues of moderate concern requiring less detailed analysis in the EIS (Section 6.4), and issues not addressed in the EIS (Section 6.5). The topics to be addressed in each category are listed in the following sections with a brief description of how each topic will be studied in the EIS.

6.2 ISSUES REQUIRING A SPECIAL STUDY IN THE EIS

The following areas of environmental concern will require a special study (separate report) in the EIS.

Cultural Resources (Historic Properties and Archaeology): Section 106 and Section 4(f) Evaluations

Known historic properties in the project area include the Rassier Farmstead, the Great Northern Railroad Collegeville Segment, and the Atwood, Empire, Hole Brothers, and Melrose Granite Company quarries. The Rassier Farmstead is located within the western portion of the study area near the City of St. Joseph. The Great Northern Railroad Collegeville Segment bisects the study area north of CSAH 75; a portion of this corridor is actively used by a railroad that provides service to industrial land uses in northeast St. Joseph. The Atwood, Empire, Hole Brothers, and Melrose Granite Company quarries are located north of Quarry Park. These historic properties have been identified as eligible for or listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Preliminary coordination with Mn/DOT Cultural Resources Unit has indicated that there is the potential for a larger quarry district that could encompass Quarry Park and adjacent properties.

¹⁵ Figure 19 illustrates boundaries for Quarry Park and Nature Preserve (including the Quarry Park State Natural Area) as well as potential park expansion areas. Portions of areas identified as “potential park expansion” have since been acquired and incorporated into Quarry Park.

An unevaluated cemetery is located along the Sauk River southwest of Miller's Landing (canoe landing on Sauk River) (see Figure 19). Known archaeological sites (lithic scatters) have also been identified along the Sauk River.

The alternatives currently proposed for the Southwest Beltway would have either direct or indirect effects on these resources. As part of cultural resources studies to be completed for the DEIS, an Area of Potential Effect (APE) will be defined, based on the alternatives identified in the SDD. It is anticipated that the DEIS will include a preliminary findings of effect as determined under 36 CFR Part 800 and the ability to mitigate the identified adverse effects will be described. If necessary, a Memorandum of Agreement regarding effects and mitigation measures will be provided in the FEIS.

A separate study (Section 4(f) Evaluation) of the historic resources protected by Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, if affected by the studied alternatives, will be completed as necessary.

The project will require review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 USC 470 et seq.) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR Part 800). It is anticipated that the EIS will also serve as the required documentation for the Section 106 review as well as the NEPA and MEPA review.

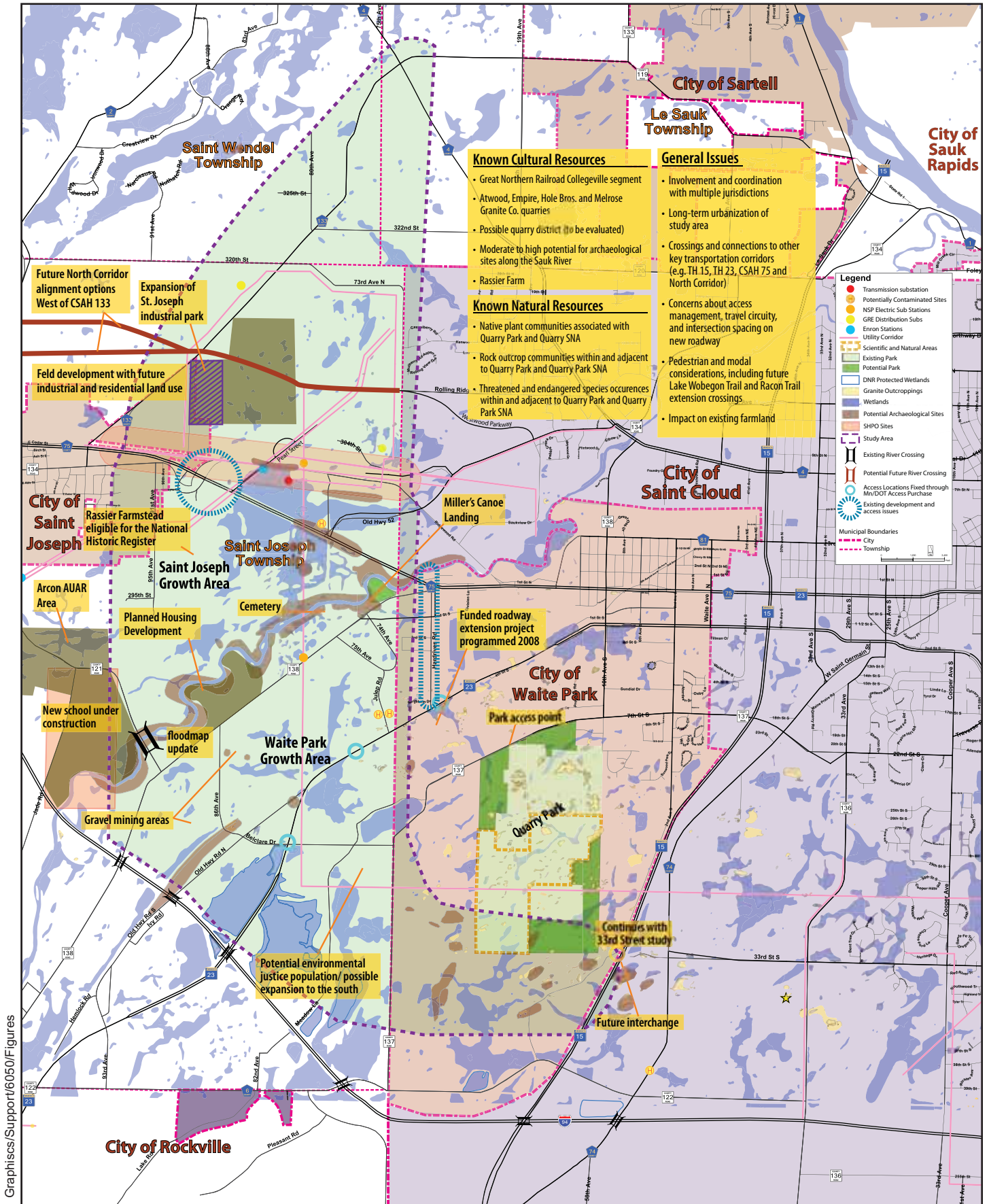
Parks and Recreational Areas: Section 4(f) Evaluations and Section 6(f) Involvement

Section 4(f) Evaluation

Quarry Park and Nature Preserve (Quarry Park) is a 643-acre Stearns County Park that provides opportunities for a variety of recreational activities. The southern 323 acres of the Park includes the Quarry Park State Natural Area (SNA), which was acquired by the DNR State Natural Areas program as a conservation easement. Other parks and recreation areas in the project area include a canoe landing (Miller's Landing; see Figure 19) on the Sauk River and land near CSAH 75 and the Sauk River that may receive parkland status in the near future.

In addition to the recreation areas identified above, the Lake Wobegon Regional Trail currently terminates in the City of St. Joseph west of the project area. The Rocori Trail is a proposed trail that will extend from Cold Spring to St. Joseph Township. Stearns County completed a feasibility study in spring 2007 to examine the potential to extend the Lake Wobegon Regional Trail from St. Joseph to the Mississippi River in St. Cloud, and the potential to extend the proposed Rocori Trail from southwest St. Joseph Township to St. Cloud. Both trail extensions examined in the 2007 feasibility study would bisect the Southwest Beltway project area.

Feasible and prudent avoidance alternatives will be analyzed, and potential impacts of the project on each of these facilities will be described in the EIS. In addition, separate Section 4(f) evaluations will be completed for each of the public recreational resources affected by the alternatives, if applicable.



Study Area Key Features

Southwest Beltway Scoping Document
 SP 73-684-03
 Stearns County

Figure 19

Section 6(f) Involvement

The project was reviewed for potential Section 6(f) involvement. Quarry Park received a grant through the State of Minnesota Local Grants Program. The DNR administers the Local Grants Program. Funds from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) were used to develop Quarry Park SNA. The project area is located south of Quarry Park and Quarry Park SNA; however, if any of the alternatives results in the conversion of land from Quarry Park and Quarry Park SNA, Stearns County will comply with all steps and requirements of the National Park Service (NPS) (Section 6(f) involvement) and the DNR to approve the conversion.

Traffic Forecasts and Operations Analysis

Traffic forecasts for year 2030 average daily traffic (ADT) were completed as part of the St. Cloud 2030 Transportation Plan. The forecasted ADT for a Southwest Beltway varies from approximately 26,000 vehicles/day near TH 15 to approximately 13,000 vehicles/day near the northern project terminus at CSAH 133. The forecast ADT from the St. Cloud APO 2030 Transportation Plan was based on a generic alignment for illustrative purposes. The DEIS will update 2030 forecasts and local comprehensive land use plan forecasts to reflect specific DEIS alternative alignments. The DEIS will also evaluate the future operational level of service (LOS) of the No-Build and Build alternatives.

Other traffic-related issues that may need to be addressed include potential roadway jurisdiction changes that may result from any of the proposed alternatives. In addition, the need for access control to maintain efficient traffic flow on any of the Southwest Beltway alternatives will be addressed in the EIS. The design criteria for the Southwest Beltway identified during the scoping process (see Section 4.2.2.3) established a goal of controlled intersections (e.g., interchange; traffic signal; stop control; roundabout) no closer than every ½ mile.

The Mn/DOT TH 23 Corridor Study (March 2007) noted that additional study is needed to determine the appropriate form of intersection control at the future TH 23/Southwest Beltway intersection. The Mn/DOT TH 23 Corridor Study states:

It is recommended to further study the intersection operations on TH 23 when an alignment is set for the future 33rd Street connection/Southwest Beltway. Other forms of intersection control (i.e., roundabout or interchange) may be necessary in order to mitigate the traffic impacts on TH 23. It is recommended that a six-lane section on TH 23 only be considered if other intersection options are determined unfeasible.

As such, the DEIS will assess the type of intersection control of the Build Alternative alignments at TH 23 based on the Mn/DOT Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) process. The DEIS will also consider the implications of potential additional Sauk River crossings within the study area as it affects alternative selection for the Southwest Beltway project.

6.3 ISSUES REQUIRING DETAILED ANALYSIS IN THE EIS

The following issues are of concern for the project. The EIS will provide a detailed analysis of impacts for each of these social, economic, or environmental concerns, but no separate reports will be generated. Coordination of these issues with the appropriate regulatory agency will occur during preparation of the EIS.

Project Cost and Funding

The cost of the alternatives and funding sources will be documented in the EIS. Construction cost estimates will be based on planning-level cost-per-mile values. Right of way estimates will be based on St. Cloud APO and Stearns County guidelines. Costs for special elements such as a Sauk River bridge crossing, or potentially grade-separated railroad crossings, will be estimated and included in the construction cost estimate. Any jurisdictional changes that result from any of the alternatives will be documented in the EIS.

A benefit-cost analysis, using the methodology approved by the Mn/DOT Office of Investment Management, will be completed for each alternative evaluated in the EIS.

Joint Development Measures

The EIS will identify and discuss joint development measures that will preserve or enhance the local communities' social, economic, environmental, and visual values. This discussion will identify the benefits to be derived and the benefiting groups (e.g., local community, social groups). The evaluation of joint development measures will also consider pedestrian and bicycle facilities. The discussion of joint development measures will be included in the evaluation of social impacts, and if appropriate, land use impacts.

Transportation Impacts

Intermodal Transportation

Considerations Relating to Bicycles and Pedestrians/Handicapped Accessibility

As previously described, trail feasibility studies have been completed by Stearns County to examine opportunities to extend the Lake Wobegon Trail and Rocori Trail to the City of St. Cloud. The Lake Wobegon Trail extension would bisect the study area north of CSAH 75. The Rocori Trail extension would bisect the study area north of TH 23.

The EIS will evaluate potential impacts of the project alternatives on current trail plans and evaluate opportunities to benefit planned trail facilities within the project area (see Joint Development Measures below).

As described in Section 4.2.2.3, the design criteria for the Build Alternatives include a provision for a pedestrian/bicycle facility on one side of the roadway alignment. The EIS will also identify if any special considerations are needed for handicapped accessibility in conjunction with project design.

Rail

There are two rail corridors owned by BNSF Railway and operated by Northern Lines Railway located within the project area. These rail corridors are spur lines that service the communities of St. Joseph and Rockville. According to the Mn/DOT Minnesota Train Volumes and Speeds Map (January 2006), and from information gathered during public involvement activities, these rail corridors currently carry on average one train per week at low speeds (e.g., 10 mph). One rail corridor parallels the north side of TH 23 through the City of Waite Park and St. Joseph Township, bisecting the southern portion of the study area. The other rail corridor is located north of CSAH 75 through St. Joseph Township, bisecting the northern portion of the study area. All Build Alternatives will cross both of these rail corridors. The EIS will address potential impacts to rail operations and identify accommodation for crossings (e.g., at-grade versus grade-separated) for each alternative.

Transit

As discussed in Section 2.5.2, transit services in the project area are limited to St. Cloud Metro Bus fixed route services and dial-a-ride services, and Tri-Cap Transit Connection dial-a-ride services for communities not served by the Metro Bus. St. Cloud APO regional transit plans do not include a substantial increase in transit service in the future.

The EIS will identify the relative impacts of each of the alternatives on existing and planned transit services in the project area based on transit plans in effect during completion of the EIS.

Access Impacts

The EIS will compare alternatives with respect to changes in access to existing roadways as well as changes in access to private driveways, if applicable. The EIS will define access management goals and include an access management plan as part of the design process.

Social and Economic Impacts

Social Impacts (Neighborhood and Community Facilities and Community Cohesion)

The EIS will compare alternatives with respect to impacts on community facilities, access to (including changes in accessibility) residential areas and community facilities and services, neighborhood and community cohesiveness, provision of emergency services, and general social groups specially benefited or harmed by the proposed project based on existing land uses.

Land Use Impacts

Existing land use within the Southwest Beltway study area includes agricultural lands, open space, undeveloped lands, rural residential properties, single-family development, and commercial and industrial land uses. The study area encompasses portions of the City of St. Joseph, the City of Waite Park, St. Joseph Township, Le Sauk Township and St. Wendel Township. These areas, as discussed in Section 2.4.3, are experiencing development pressure as the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area continues to grow to the southwest.

Additional development (residential, commercial, industrial) is planned within the study area as described in Section 2.4.3. Specific development sites have been identified for several locations within the study area. Development of alternatives during this scoping study attempted to minimize impacts to existing and proposed development sites to the extent feasible.

The EIS will examine the compatibility of the project alternatives with the existing land uses in the study area and with future land use plans for affected properties. The EIS will compare the direct land use impacts due to right of way acquisition and access changes.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 requires that the evaluation of environmental impacts resulting from a proposed project include assessment of the extent of these impacts on minority and low-income populations. One location within the study area has been identified as having potential sensitivity to environmental justice issues. The EIS will identify any minority or low-income populations within the study area (based on existing conditions) and assess the impact of the project alternatives on the identified populations. The EIS environmental justice evaluation will follow the *Mn/DOT's Environmental Justice Draft Guidance*, dated August 5, 1998.

Economic Impacts

The EIS will compare alternatives with respect to economic impacts on the regional and local economy (e.g., effects on development, tax revenues and public expenditures, employment opportunities, accessibility, retail sales), impacts on existing highway-related businesses, and impacts on established business districts. The assessment of economic impacts will include a qualitative evaluation and comparison of alternatives.

Physical Environmental Impacts

Air Quality

In 1993, the City of St. Cloud was designated as a maintenance area for carbon monoxide (CO). The Southwest Beltway study area is located outside of and to the southwest of the City of St. Cloud maintenance area. The project is not located in an area in which conformity requirements apply. The EIS will discuss relative traffic operations projections among alternatives in relation to potential air quality issues for the No-Build and Build alternatives, and will include a qualitative assessment of air quality impacts.

The EIS will also provide a qualitative discussion of air toxics, consistent with guidance provided by the FHWA.

Traffic Noise

Construction noise impacts are of limited concern because of their short-term duration relative to the long-term operational noise of a roadway. Therefore, the EIS process will focus on traffic noise impacts. The project will be subject to Federal traffic noise regulations as described

in 23 CFR 772. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has adopted noise standards for daytime and nighttime hours. The State Noise Standards do not apply to certain roadways under local government jurisdiction outside the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The exemption criteria are found in Minnesota Statutes 2000, Section 116.07 Subdivision 2a, and are listed below:

Subd. 2a. **Exemptions from standards.** No standards adopted by any state agency for limiting levels of noise in terms of sound pressure which may occur in the outdoor atmosphere shall apply to (1) segments of trunk highways constructed with federal interstate substitution money, provided that all reasonably available noise mitigation measures are employed to abate noise, (2) an existing or newly constructed segment of a highway, provided that all reasonably available noise mitigation measures, as approved by the commissioners of the Department of Transportation and Pollution Control Agency, are employed to abate noise, (3) except for the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, an existing or newly constructed segment of a road, street, or highway under the jurisdiction of a road authority of a town, statutory or home rule charter city, or county, except for roadways for which full control of access has been acquired, (4) skeet, trap or shooting sports clubs, or (5) motor vehicle race events conducted at a facility specifically designed for that purpose that was in operation on or before July 1, 1983. Nothing herein shall prohibit a local unit of government or a public corporation with the power to make rules for the government of its real property from regulating the location and operation of skeet, trap or shooting sports clubs, or motor vehicle race events conducted at a facility specifically designed for that purpose that was in operation on or before July 1, 1983.

Because the proposed Southwest Beltway project will be a County-owned highway without full control of access, it may be exempt from Minnesota Noise Standards, per Minnesota Statutes, Section 116.07 Subd. 2a. Potential traffic noise impacts of this project will be evaluated using Federal noise criteria as described in 23 CFR 772.

Most of the receptors within the study area include rural residential uses or commercial and industrial uses. Impacts on school and park locations will be considered, if applicable. Monitoring of existing noise levels at various locations within the study area will be completed. The DEIS will discuss the relative noise impacts of each alternative, including existing, future No Build, and future Build traffic volumes and estimated A-weighted decibel (dBA) levels approaching or exceeding Federal noise abatement criteria. Modeling of existing and future traffic noise levels will be completed using the noise model adopted by Mn/DOT and approved by MPCA for use in Minnesota at the time the traffic noise analysis is prepared for the DEIS.

The DEIS will provide a qualitative discussion of potential mitigation measures for each alternative. The FEIS will address noise impacts and proposed mitigation for the preferred alternative in conformance with regulatory requirements, based on existing land uses and any developments platted and approved prior to completion of the FEIS.

Farmland Impacts

The Federal Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) ensures that impacts on farmlands are integrated into the environmental decision-making process and that Federal programs minimize the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Roadway construction projects processed through the Federal Highway Administration are subject to the FPPA.¹⁶

The majority of existing land uses within the project area is agricultural land uses. These lands may be affected by the Southwest Beltway build alignments and access changes. Preservation of a future roadway corridor would not prohibit agricultural uses. The conversion of farmland to roadway use will depend upon the location of the Build Alternatives and the timing of roadway construction. The DEIS will calculate conversion of total farmland acres, prime and unique farmland acres, and farmland of statewide or local importance for the Build Alternatives, assuming existing land uses. The DEIS will also examine impacts on existing farm operations, including access to farmland and impacts resulting from severed or triangulated farmland. Form AD-1006 will be completed and submitted to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) during completion of the DEIS.

Hazardous Materials and Contaminated Sites

Preliminary research of known and potential sources of soil and groundwater contamination identified two properties within the study area.¹⁷ One location is a permitted solid waste site south of CR 138 and southeast of Waite Park. The second location is an inactive voluntary investigation and cleanup (VIC) site in northeast St. Joseph. However, several land uses were identified as potential sources of contamination. Land uses in the study area include agricultural uses that pose the possibility of contamination due to pesticide or petroleum spills or dump sites, although no specific sites of contamination have been identified. Aggregate supply operations are located in St. Joseph Township and in Waite Park.

As part of the DEIS, a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) will be conducted to determine if any potential contamination source impacts can be avoided or minimized. The EIS will also describe the appropriate approach for properly handling and treating contaminated soil and/or groundwater during construction.

Visual Quality/Visual Impacts

The existing visual character of the study area includes the natural and built environment. The EIS will identify the relative visual impacts of each Build Alternative on views from communities within the study area, as well as measures to avoid, minimize, or reduce adverse visual impacts. The evaluation of visual quality and visual impacts will follow the Mn/DOT visual impact assessment (VIA) process.

¹⁶ USDA NRCS. 2007. The USDA NRCS Web Site (online). Farmland Protection Policy Act accessed 11-17-2007 at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/fppa/>.

¹⁷ Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. 2007. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Web Site (online). What's In My Neighborhood accessed 11-02-2007 at <http://www.pca.state.mn.us/backyard/neighborhood.html#eda>.

Natural Environmental Impacts

Vegetation

The primary types of vegetative cover within the study area include cultivated and pastured farm fields, woodlands and forested areas, brushland and grasslands, as well as wetland vegetation. Portions of the study area have been disturbed by urban/suburban development, and agricultural land uses are found throughout the study area. However, the DNR has identified several native plant communities within and adjacent to the Quarry Park and Nature Preserve. According to information collected by the DNR as part of the Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS), rock outcrop communities are concentrated along the Sauk River corridor southwest of St. Cloud.

The DEIS will compare anticipated impacts of the project alternatives on vegetation and natural communities. The FEIS will include additional discussion of impacts and mitigation for the preferred alternative.

Threatened and Endangered Species and Natural Communities

Species present within one mile of the study area that are listed as threatened or endangered under the Minnesota Endangered Species Act as recorded by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) include the Blanding's turtle (threatened) and tubercled rein-orchid (endangered). Other species noted as species of special concern include two mussel species (black sandshell and creek heelsplitter), red-shouldered hawk, and acadian flycatcher. As recorded by the DNR and identified on the Minnesota County Biological Survey (MCBS) map for Stearns County, the study area includes several native plant communities (oak forests and oak woodlands) and rare natural features. Many of these features are located within the Quarry Park and Natural Area. The study area also includes rock outcrop communities, primarily located near Quarry Park and TH 15.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Federally-Listed Threatened, Endangered, Proposed, and Candidate Species County Distribution List for the State of Minnesota (September 2007 version), there are no federally-listed threatened, endangered, proposed, or candidate species or critical habitat within Stearns County.

A new review of the DNR Natural Heritage database will be performed with the DEIS to identify any state endangered, threatened, or species of concern or other natural features or native plant communities. The EIS will coordinate with the DNR to assess the impacts of the alternatives on state-listed species and native plant communities. A review of federally threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate species, or listed critical habitat will be performed in coordination with Mn/DOT Office of Environmental Services (OES) if necessary.

Fish and Wildlife Impacts

Land within the study area, including lands within Quarry Park and Natural Area and lands adjacent to the Sauk River, provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Natural habitats within the study area include, but are not limited to, oak forests and oak woodlands associated

with Quarry Park and Natural Area, wetland areas and adjacent upland habitat, and floodplain areas associated with the Sauk River. Natural habitats within the project area also function as wildlife travel corridors. The Sauk River provides habitat for a variety of aquatic species.

The project could remove some kinds of habitat and displace wildlife in some areas. The project could also fragment wildlife corridors and impact habitat connectivity. The EIS will compare the impact of alternatives on vegetation and water quality as it relates to habitat for fish and wildlife. The EIS will also identify potential mitigation strategies for identified impacts.

Geology

In general, according to the *Geologic Atlas of Stearns County* (1998), the depth to bedrock ranges from 0 to 50 feet throughout most of the study area south of CSAH 75, and up to 150 feet north of CSAH 75. The portion of the study area in Waite Park east of the Sauk River is also characterized by rock outcrop communities. The general location of granite outcroppings is shown on Figure 19. Because of this geology, Stearns County provides the opportunity for aggregate and granite mining. Portions of the study area in Waite Park and St. Joseph Township south of CR 138 are characterized by several active gravel and granite mining operations. Impacts on geologic features, including mining operations, will be examined in the EIS.

Water Resources

Surface Water/Water Quantity and Quality/Stormwater Management

Water resources within and in the vicinity of the study area includes the Sauk River and identified DNR Public Water bodies and wetlands. The reach of the Sauk River within the study area is listed on the MPCA 2006 Impaired Waters requiring a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for polychlorinated biphenols (PCBs), mercury, and fecal coliform. The reach of the Sauk River is listed on draft 2008 Impaired Waters requiring a TMDL for PCBs, turbidity, and fecal coliform. According to the MPCA, TMDLs for the Sauk River are currently underway and being prepared by the MPCA, the Sauk River Watershed District, and other local government partners.

Impacts on surface water quantity and quality will be evaluated in the EIS. The primary potential for surface water impacts is related to surface and stormwater runoff generated by new impervious surface area of the alternatives. Stormwater best management practices (including potential types and locations) will be described and evaluated in the EIS.

Floodplain Impacts

Impacts on the floodplain of the Sauk River will be examined in accordance with Executive Order 11988 and Minnesota Statute 104.01. It is anticipated that Flood Insurance Rate Maps for the project area will be used to establish floodplain elevations. It is understood that studies may be undertaken within the timeframe of the Southwest Beltway EIS to re-evaluate flood elevations along the Sauk River. If available, the outcomes of this study will be incorporated into the EIS.

Impacts to be examined include: potential longitudinal and transverse encroachments; potential for interruption of the proposed transportation facility; impact on natural and beneficial floodplain values; risk of increased flooding; and if the proposed project will support and/or result in incompatible floodplain development. Minimization measures, restoration measures, and preservation measures will also be discussed in the EIS. The findings of this analysis will be documented in a floodplain assessment, to be included in the EIS. The EIS will include an “only practicable alternative finding” if it is determined that the project will result in a substantial floodplain encroachment, and that there is no practicable way to avoid the encroachment.

Groundwater Impacts

The depth to groundwater within the study area ranges from 0 to 20 feet, with the potential to encountering the water table close to the ground surface adjacent to wetlands. According to the *Geologic Atlas of Stearns County* (1998), the general movement of groundwater through the project area is to the east towards the City of St. Cloud and the Mississippi River. Impacts on groundwater will be examined in the EIS, including potential impacts from infiltration of stormwater runoff from new impervious surfaces, impacts on existing wells, and potential impacts resulting from any excavation to the depth of the existing water table. Resources to be consulted include, but are not limited to, the Geologic Survey of Stearns County and the Soil Survey of Stearns County.

Communities in the project area obtain their drinking water from groundwater (i.e., aquifer) sources. The City of Waite Park has completed a wellhead protection plan; the project area is located within the western half of the Waite Park drinking water supply management area (DWSMA). A wellhead protection plan for the City of St. Joseph is anticipated in the near future. The East and Central Corridor Alternatives are located within the boundaries of the Waite Park DWSMA. The West Corridor Alternative is located to the west of the Waite Park DWSMA. An area of high vulnerability is also located within the Waite Park DWSMA, adjacent to the west of the East and Central Corridor Alternatives. Vulnerability is defined as the likelihood for a potential contaminant source within the DWSMA to contaminate a public water supply.¹⁸ Drinking Water Management Supply Areas and wellhead protection areas (WHPA) will be identified and potential impacts to drinking water supplies will be evaluated in the EIS.

Wetland Impacts

Potential wetland impacts related to the proposed project are regulated by Federal (Clean Water Act) and State (Wetland Conservation Act) wetland protection laws. Current wetland regulations require sequencing: avoidance of, minimization of, and compensation for impacts resulting from a proposed project. Federal and State wetland regulatory agencies have been identified as cooperating and participating agencies (see Section 7.3). These agencies will provide input on the proposed project, wetland identification and wetland impacts throughout the EIS process.

¹⁸ Minnesota Department of Health. 2008. The Minnesota Department of Health Website (online). Guidance Pertaining to Wellhead Protection Requirements for Public Water Supply Wells accessed 2008-10-17 at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/water/swp/whp/guidance/>

Scoping-level information on wetlands within the study area was obtained from the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) mapping, DNR Public Waters Inventory, and a review of aerial photography. Numerous wetlands are located throughout the Southwest Beltway study area (see Figure 19). Several DNR protected waters are located in the southern portion of the study area near I-94 and in the northern portion of the study area between CSAH 133 and CSAH 4.

Evaluation of wetlands within the study area will include identification of wetland boundaries within each of the alternative corridors. Wetland locations and extent will be determined following the criteria set forth in the *Corps of Engineers Wetlands Delineation Manual* (1987). The determination will include field review of the boundaries of all wetlands within the alternative corridors, but will not involve a formal delineation. Identified wetlands will be classified according to *Wetland Plants and Plant Communities of Minnesota & Wisconsin - Second Edition* (USCOE Publication; Eggers and Reed, 1997) and *Wetlands of the United States* (USFWS Circular 39, Shaw and Fredine, 1971).

The evaluation of wetlands within the study area will also include further review of soils data (NCSS Web Soil Survey of Stearns County and the Hydric Soils List for Stearns County), NWI mapping, USGS 7.5-minute quadrangle mapping, as well as recent and, if needed, historic aerial photography. Finally, the current version of the Minnesota Routine Assessment Methodology for Evaluating Wetland Functions (MnRAM) will be used to develop representative analyses or to assess specific wetlands that are believed to provide a high level of function and values in one or more areas.

The DEIS will provide a preliminary estimate of wetland impacts of the proposed Build Alternatives. Initial avoidance and minimization efforts for the Build Alternatives will be described in the DEIS. A formal wetland delineation will be completed for the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS. The FEIS will include preliminary details of proposed compensation for wetland impacts resulting from the project, including consideration of on-site wetland mitigation opportunities.

Water Body Modification

Water bodies within the project area include the Sauk River and several smaller streams, public ditches, and drainages that flow toward the Sauk River. Mud Lake is located within the south portion of the study area adjacent to the I-94/TH 23 interchange. Potential impacts on water bodies will be addressed through the examination of impacts on surface water quality and quantity, floodplains, and wetlands.

Right of Way Acquisition and Relocation

All Build Alternatives will require a substantial amount of land acquisition within the study area for right of way. Acquisitions may require relocation of residents or businesses. The EIS will include an estimate of the number of residents or businesses to be relocated by alternative. Preliminary right of way limits will be identified based on Build Alternative preliminary design. The EIS will evaluate relative right of way acquisition impacts of each alternative based on total land area to be acquired, and subdivided into categories based on existing land use (e.g., residential, commercial/industrial, public, open space, farmlands). The number of parcels to be impacted by permanent right of way will be identified.

Indirect Effects Analysis

Indirect effects are defined as effects that “are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.” (40 CFR 1508.8). The EIS will evaluate indirect effects in terms of location of development and potential acceleration of planned development due to improved access to the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area.

The indirect effects analysis in the EIS will follow FHWA guidance. The indirect effects analysis in the EIS will include an assessment of indirect effects using qualitative and quantitative methodologies following the eight steps that comprise the community of practice for the analysis of indirect effects.¹⁹ These eight steps are identified below.

1. Initial scoping for indirect effects analysis.
2. Identification of study area goals and objectives.
3. Inventory of notable social, environmental, and cultural resource features.
4. Identification of impact-causing activities of the proposed action and alternatives.
5. Identification of potentially significant indirect effects for analysis.
6. Analysis of indirect effects.
7. Evaluation of analysis results.
8. Assessment of the consequences and development of appropriate mitigation and enhancement strategies.

Cumulative Effects Analysis

Cumulative impacts are defined as “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time” (40 CFR 1508.7).

Cumulative impacts are not causally linked in their entirety to the project, but are the total effects of actions with similar impacts in a broader geographic area. The purpose of a cumulative impacts analysis is to look for impacts that may be minimal and therefore neither significant nor adverse when examined within the context of the proposed action, but that may accumulate and become significant and adverse over a large number of actions.

¹⁹ Louis Berger Group, Inc. (2002) *National Highway Cooperative Research Program Report 466 Desk Reference for Estimating the Indirect Effects of Proposed Transportation Projects*. Project B25-10(02) FY '96 Transportation Research Board, National Research Council Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 109 pp.

The cumulative effects analysis will follow the analysis process as developed by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (Considering Cumulative Effects Under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality, January 1997). The assessment of cumulative effects will include a qualitative evaluation as described in the CEQ guidance.

A “cumulative impacts sub-group” will meet during the DEIS to discuss the methodology for the analysis of cumulative impacts. Cooperating and participating agency members of the cumulative impacts sub-group will be identified at the initiation of DEIS studies. The purpose of the sub-group will be to identify the geographic area to be considered, the timeline for consideration of cumulative impacts, identification of past actions and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and to discuss possible impacts on affected resources.

6.4 ISSUES REQUIRING LESS DETAILED ANALYSIS IN THE EIS

The following issues are of less concern (relative to the issues identified in Section 6.3) for the proposed project. The EIS will identify impacts, including analysis in accordance with Federal and State requirements where appropriate. However, major impacts are not anticipated with each of these areas.

Construction Impacts

Impacts on the physical and natural environment can be expected during the construction phase of the proposed project. These include potential impacts related to air quality, vibration, noise, water quality, erosion and erosion control, and traffic impacts due to detours and construction operations. The EIS will provide a general discussion of the relative impacts on air quality, vibration, noise, water quality, erosion, and traffic anticipated during the construction phase for the alternatives. Construction impacts are anticipated to have limited influence on the identification of a preferred alternative.

Excess Materials

Construction of any alternative, with the exception of the No Build Alternative, could require the disposal of excess material outside the immediate project construction limits. Excess materials would be predominately soil materials, which, if not contaminated, pose little environmental hazard. The disposal of excess material could also include the demolition of existing highway pavement and/or building materials.

All demolition and construction material removed from the project area will be recycled and/or disposed of in compliance with Federal and State solid waste management regulations. The EIS will provide a general discussion of appropriate handling of excess materials, if appropriate. The handling of excess materials is anticipated to have limited influence on the identification of a preferred alternative.

Soils

Soils information from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), along with information from the Geologic Atlas of Stearns County, will be used to identify soils or areas of concern. Soils information is anticipated to have limited influence on the identification of a preferred alternative.

Utility Locations

Known utilities, including electric power transmission lines, electric substations, natural gas lines, sewer lines, and water lines, were identified as part of this scoping study. Utilities within Minnesota and the surrounding region are planning expansion of the electric transmission line system (i.e., CapX 2020 projects) to address growth in electricity demand. One of the CapX 2020 projects is a 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line between Fargo, North Dakota and Monticello, Minnesota, including a new electric substation on the west side of St. Cloud (CapX Twin Cities – Fargo 345 kV Project). The Southwest Beltway study area is located within the proposed project study corridor for the Twin Cities – Fargo 345 kV Project.

The EIS will address utility locations within the project area and discuss any differences among alternatives that could affect identification of a preferred alternative. The location of existing and planned utilities within the project area is anticipated to have limited influence on the identification of a preferred alternative.

Relationship of Local Short-Term Uses Versus Long-Term Productivity

The EIS will address the short-term adverse impacts of the project, use of resources, and their relationship to the long-term gains in productivity resulting from each alternative being considered in the EIS.

Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitment of Resources

For each alternative considered, the EIS will discuss the commitment of resources, including natural, human, physical, and financial resources, were applicable, that would be permanently dedicated to public use, and not able to be reversed or retrieved.

6.5 ISSUES NOT ADDRESSED IN THE EIS

The following issues will not be addressed in the EIS because they are not relevant to the proposed project.

Coastal Zone Impacts and Coastal Barriers

No coastal zones or coastal barriers exist within the project area. Therefore, this issue will not be addressed in the EIS.

Federal and/or State-Designated Critical Areas (i.e., legislatively-defined areas)

No Federal and/or State-designated (legislatively defined) critical areas are located within the project area. Therefore, this issue will not be addressed in the EIS.

Wild and Scenic Rivers

No wild and scenic rivers are located within the project area. Therefore, this issue will not be addressed in the EIS.

7.0 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Stearns County, as project proposers, along with members of the PMT, will engage community organizations, area property owners, residents, business owners, and local, county, regional, state and federal agencies in the development of the proposed project. Public and agency involvement is described below. The Agency and Public Coordination Plan is included in Appendix B.

7.1 PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Project Management Team (PMT) consists of staff from Mn/DOT District 3, St. Cloud APO, Stearns County, the City of St. Joseph, and the City of Waite Park. The role of the PMT is to provide the direction to advance the proposed project through this scoping study and the environmental review process. In addition, the PMT provides recommendations for consideration to the Advisory Committee.

7.2 ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee (AC) includes elected or appointed officials from local government agencies as well as PMT members. The AC meets at key points in the environmental review process to review study information and provide recommendations. Advisory Committee agencies include:

- Mn/DOT District 3
- St. Cloud APO
- Stearns County
- City of St. Joseph
- City of Waite Park
- City of St. Cloud
- City of Sartell
- St. Joseph Township

The roles of the AC agencies are identified in the Scoping Public Involvement Plan in the Agency and Public Involvement Plan in Appendix B.

7.3 COOPERATING AND PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) establishes a new environmental review process for transportation projects developed as environmental impact statements. These requirements are intended to promote efficient project management by lead agencies and enhanced opportunities for coordination with the public and with other Federal, State, local, and tribal government agencies during the project development process. To enhance interagency coordination and ensure that issues of concern are identified, SAFETEA-LU creates a new category of involvement in the environmental review process termed “participating agency.” The intent of the new category is to encourage governmental agencies at any level (federal, state, and local) with an interest in the proposed project to be active participants in the NEPA evaluation.²⁰

The following Federal agencies were invited by FHWA to serve as cooperating agencies²¹ for the project.

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

The following Federal, State, and local agencies were invited by FHWA to serve as participating agencies for the project.

Federal Agencies

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP)

State Agencies

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources (BWSR)
- Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Minnesota Department of Transportation (Trunk Highway)

²⁰ U.S. Department of Transportation. Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. November 2006. *SAFETEA-LU Environmental Review Process Final Guidance*.

²¹ According to the US DOT *SAFETEA-LU Environmental Review Process Final Guidance* (2006), Federal agencies that serve as cooperating agencies are, by definition, also considered participating agencies.

Local Agencies

- Sauk River Watershed District
- Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Stearns County Environmental Services
- City of St. Joseph
- City of Waite Park
- City of Sartell
- City of St. Cloud
- City of Rockville
- St. Joseph Township
- St. Wendel Township
- Le Sauk Township

The role of Cooperating and Participating Agencies as part of the Southwest Beltway environmental review and project development process is documented in the Agency and Public Involvement Plan in Appendix A.

7.4 PUBLIC MEETINGS

An open house meeting was held August 8, 2007 at the Waite Park City Hall to provide information on the project and to collect comments and feedback from the public. Other objectives of the August open house were to highlight initial findings regarding project purpose and need, highlight potential environmental issues identified within the study area, describe the alternatives development process (including alternatives identified in past studies), and present corridor design criteria concepts.

A second open house meeting was held November 14, 2007 at the Waite Park City Hall to provide updated information on the project, provide updated findings regarding project purpose and need, highlight the alternatives screening and development process to date, and to collect comments and feedback from the public.

Focus group meetings were also conducted in August and November 2007, concurrent with public open house meetings. Focus group meeting attendees included local planning commission members, economic development authority (EDA) members, railroad and electric utility staff, as well as local businesses. The purpose of the focus group meetings was to provide information on the project and collect background information on the study area.

A public scoping meeting will be held during the 30-day public comment period for the SD. The public scoping meeting will present the findings of the SD and the draft SDD. Comments received at the scoping meeting will be considered in the final SDD.

Open house meetings and public hearings will also be held during the DEIS phase of the environmental review process.

7.5 PROJECT WEB SITE

A web site has been established at <http://www.co.stearns.mn.us/5834.htm> as a means to distribute project-related information and to announce upcoming public meetings and AC meetings. This web site is hosted by Stearns County. The web site will be periodically updated through the project to reflect current project information.

8.0 PERMITS AND APPROVALS

8.1 PERMITS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED

A list of applicable permits and approvals anticipated for the proposed Southwest Beltway project is provided in Table 11.

**TABLE 11
ANTICIPATED PERMITS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED**

AGENCY	PERMIT/APPROVAL
Federal	
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act – Memorandum of Agreement (if needed)
Federal Highway Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIS Approval (draft and final) • EIS Record of Decision (ROD) • Section 4(f) Evaluations (draft and final) (if needed) • Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act – Memorandum of Agreement (if needed)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 404 of the Clean Water Act – Permit (fill in waters of the U.S.) • Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act – Permit (if needed for construction of bridge over Sauk River) • Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act – Memorandum of Agreement (if needed)
State	
Minnesota Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIS Approval (draft and final) • Plan Review
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected Waters Permit • Mussel Relocation Permit (if needed for construction of bridge over Sauk River)

TABLE 11 – continued
ANTICIPATED PERMITS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED

AGENCY	PERMIT/APPROVAL
State – continued	
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 401 Water Quality Certification • NPDES Permit
Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act – Memorandum of Agreement (if needed)
Local	
Stearns County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping Decision Document • EIS Approval (draft and final) • EIS Adequacy Determination • Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)
Sauk River Watershed District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of Grading and Drainage Plans • Watershed District Permit
Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of Grading and Drainage Plans
Other	
Stearns County and BNSF Railway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Railroad Agreement and/or Permit (if needed for crossings of BNSF Railway tracks near TH 23 and CSAH 75)

8.2 LEVEL OF ACTION

The proposed Southwest Beltway Project is considered a Federal Class I action as defined in 23 CFR 771.115(a). As previously noted, FHWA is the lead federal agency for this project. The proposed Southwest Beltway Project also meets the mandatory EIS threshold under Minnesota Rules 4410.4400, subp. 16 (construction of a road on a new location which is four or more lanes in width and two or more miles in length). Stearns County is the RGU for this project.

APPENDIX A

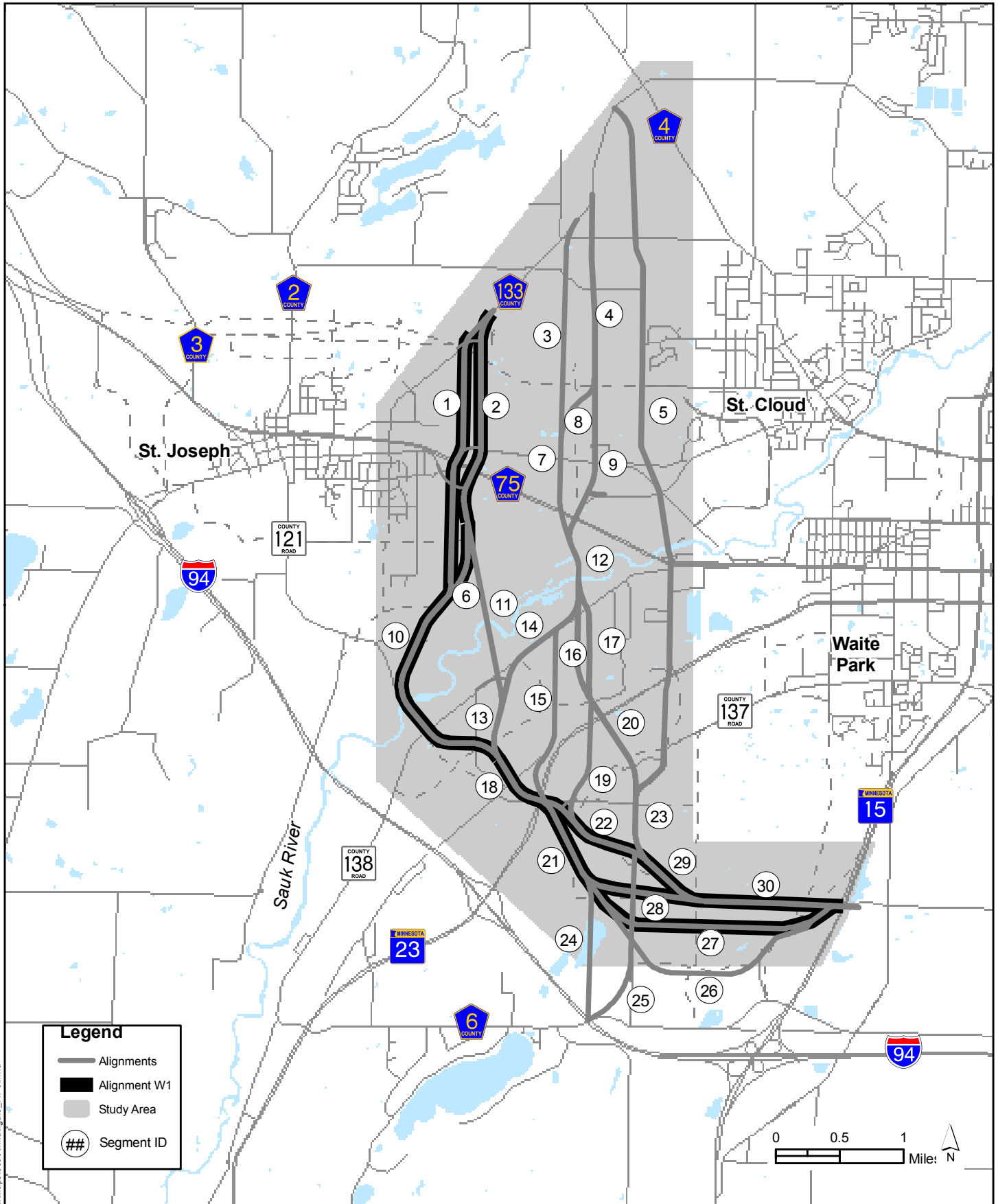
SCOPING BUILD ALTERNATIVES

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC AND AGENCY COORDINATION PLAN

APPENDIX C

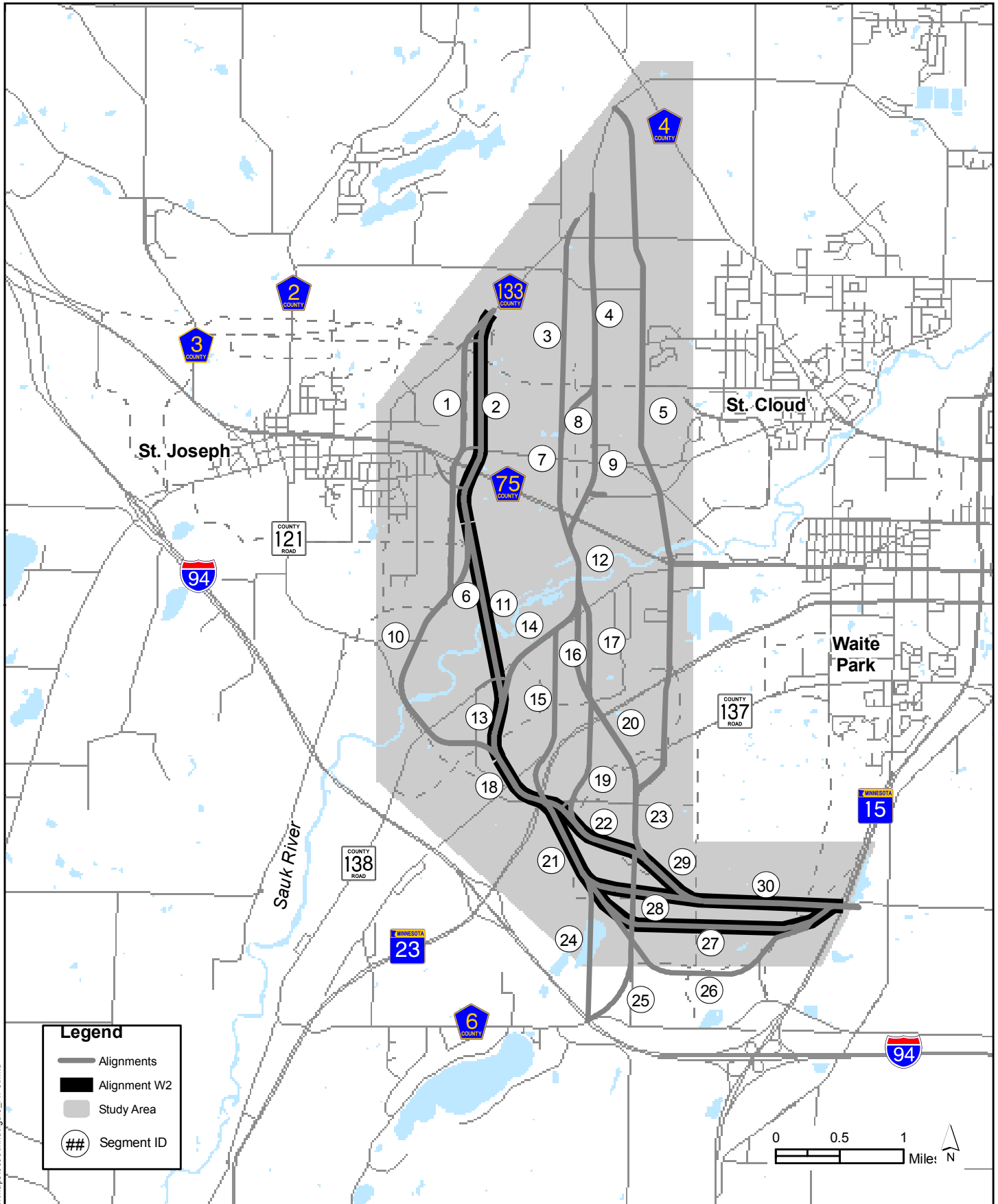
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Scoping Build Alternative - Alignment W1

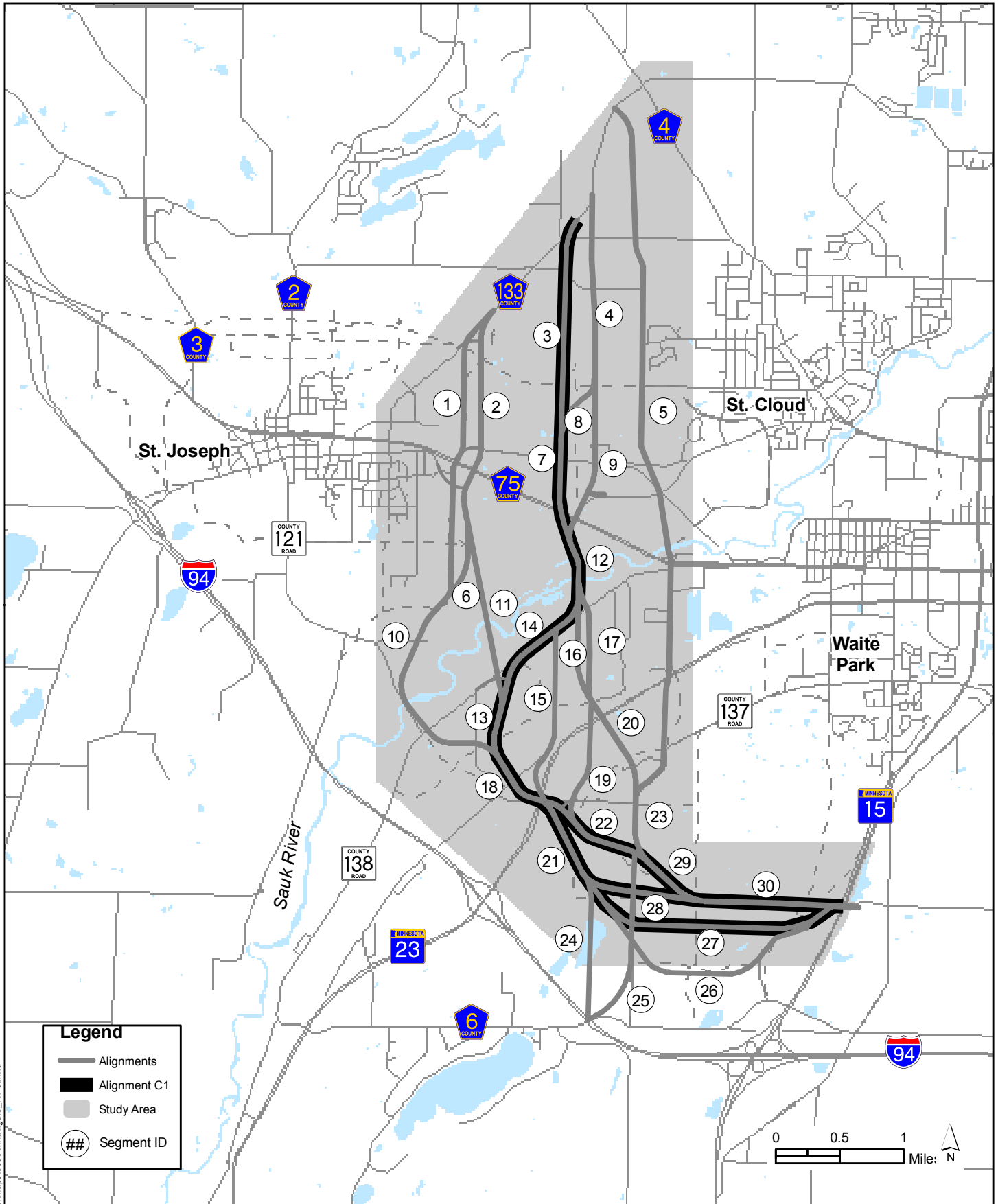
Figure A-1



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Scoping Build Alternative - Alignment W2

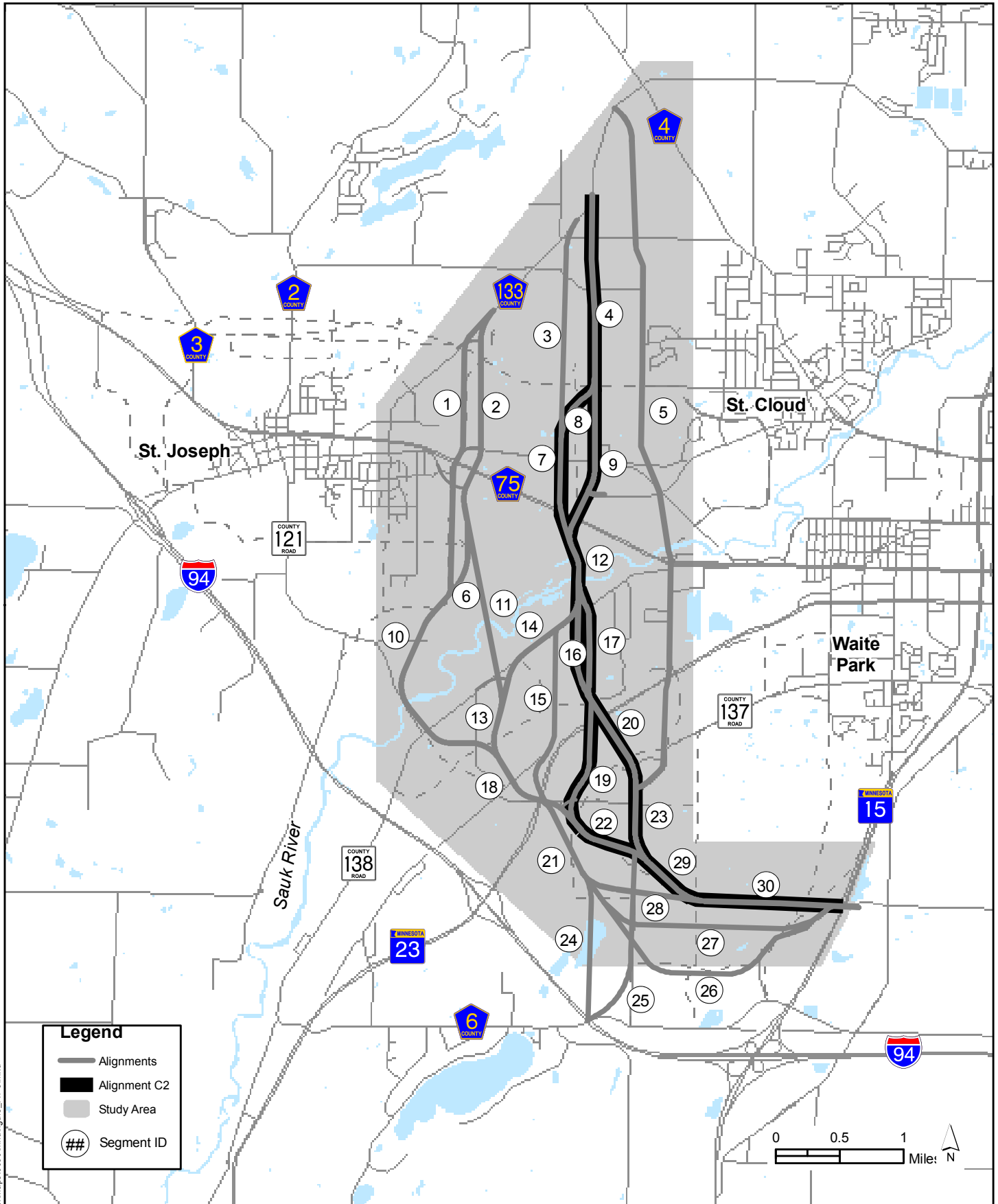
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Scoping Build Alternative - Alignment C1

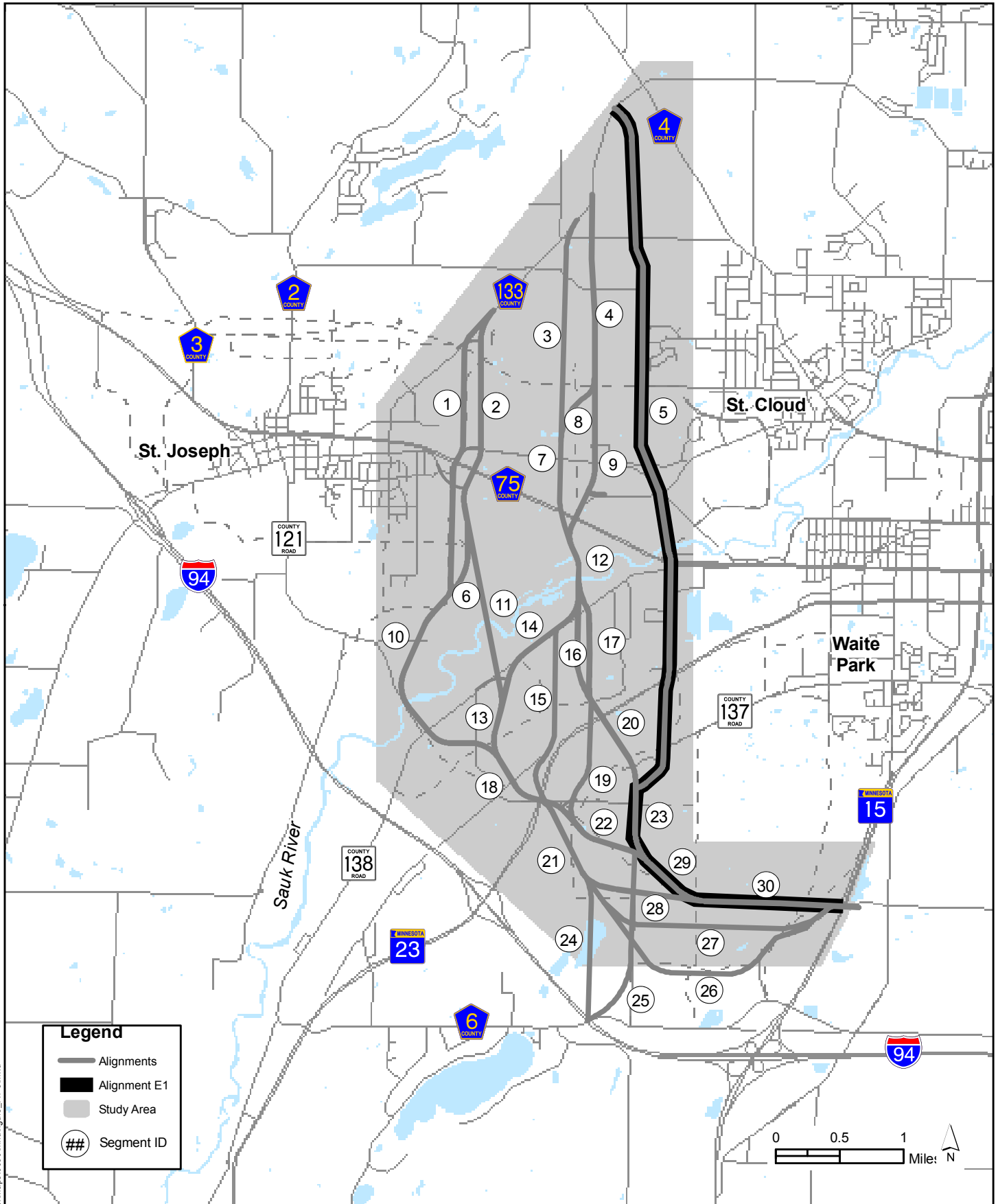
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Scoping Build Alternative - Alignment C2

Figure A-4



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Scoping Build Alternative - Alignment E1

Figure A-5

Southwest Beltway (Future CSAH 84) Project
Stearns County, MN
Agency and Public Coordination Plan
(October 2007)

The purpose of the Southwest Beltway Project (future County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 84) Agency and Public Coordination Plan is to facilitate and document the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA), Mn/DOT's, and Stearns County's structured interaction with local governmental units, regulatory agencies, and the public. The plan is also intended to inform these agencies and the public of how project coordination will be accomplished throughout the project development process. The Agency and Public Coordination Plan will be updated periodically to reflect any changes to the project schedule, or to update other items as necessary during the project development and environmental review process.

The FHWA is the lead Federal agency for the proposed project. Mn/DOT, as the direct recipient of Federal funds for the proposed project, is the joint lead agency. Stearns County, as project sponsor responsible for design and construction of the proposed project, and sub-recipient of Federal funds, will also serve as a joint lead agency.

The Stearns County Southwest Beltway Project has identified several key coordination points. These coordination points are listed and described below:

- Notice of intent publication and scoping activities – A notice of intent will be published in the Federal Register by FHWA. It is currently anticipated that the notice of intent will be published in the Federal Register in October 2007. Review copies of the Scoping Document/Draft Scoping Decision Document (SD/DSDD) will be distributed to the Participating Agency group (made up of staff from federal, state, and local agencies). Review copies of the SD/DSDD are anticipated to be available for Participating Agency review in February 2008. Members of the Participating Agency group will be provided a 30-day review and comment period to provide feedback. A Participating Agency workshop will be held following the 30-day Participating Agency review to discuss the draft SD/DSDD and other scoping activities (date to be determined). Agency feedback will be requested (anticipated for March 2008), prior to the publication of the document for public/agency review and comment.

A March 2008 publication date is anticipated for the SD/DSDD, which will also initiate the official 30-day scoping review and comment period. The SD/DSDD Notice of Availability will be published in the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) *Monitor*. A public scoping meeting will be held during the 30-day comment period to afford an opportunity for the public and agencies to learn more about the proposed project, ask questions, and submit comments.

- Development of purpose and need – The purpose and need for the Southwest Beltway project will be included in the SD/DSDD. FHWA, Mn/DOT and Stearns County will be requesting specific input on the purpose and need from the Participating Agency group at the Participating Agency workshop.
- Identification of the range of scoping alternatives – The full range of alternatives to be considered will be identified in the SD/DSDD. FHWA, Mn/DOT and Stearns County will be requesting specific input on the range of alternatives from the Participating Agency group at the Participating Agency workshop.
- Collaboration on impact assessment methodologies – The impact assessment methodologies will be documented in the SD/DSDD. FHWA, Mn/DOT and Stearns County will be requesting specific input on these methodologies from the Participating Agency group at the Participating Agency workshop.
- Completion of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) – Review copies of the DEIS will be distributed to the members of the Participating Agency group with a 30-day review and comment period to provide feedback. The DEIS will then be revised and published for public/agency review and comment.

The schedule for requesting agency review and feedback on the DEIS will be determined at a later date. A public hearing will be held during the official 30-day (45 days if Section 4(f) involvement) comment period on the DEIS to afford an opportunity for the public and agencies to ask questions and submit formal comments.

- Identification of the preferred alternative and the level of design detail – A second Participating Agency workshop is planned following the official comment period on the DEIS. The schedule for this Participating Agency workshop will be determined at a later date. Comments received on the DEIS will be shared with the Participating Agencies. FHWA, Mn/DOT and Stearns County will be requesting specific input from the Participating Agency group on the identification of a preferred alternative.
- Completion of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) – Review copies of the FEIS will be distributed to the members of the Participating Agency group with a 30-day review and comment period. The FEIS will then be revised and published for public/agency review. The schedule for requesting agency review and feedback will be determined at a later date.
- Completion of the Record of Decision (ROD) – The ROD will be distributed to all members of the Participating Agency group. The schedule for distribution of the ROD to the Participating Agency group will be determined at a later date.
- Completion of permits, licenses, or approvals after the ROD – Numerous permits and/or approvals will need to be obtained from several Participating Agencies. These permits/approvals will be requested following the final design phase and when funding for construction becomes available.

A Southwest Beltway Project public involvement plan has been prepared in addition to this Agency Coordination Plan. A draft matrix presenting the various opportunities for public/agency involvement scheduled during the Southwest Beltway project scoping process is attached on the following pages. This matrix will be periodically updated throughout later stages of the project development and environmental review process as appropriate.

**Stearns County Southwest Beltway
Scoping Public Involvement Plan ⁽¹⁾**

	Groups/Parties Involved	Purpose / Goals	Meeting Frequency ⁽²⁾	Products
Stearns County Board and St. Joseph/Waite Park City Councils	All Council Members and Commissioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide policy direction ▪ Adopt study provisions ▪ Approve scoping documents (Stearns County – RGU) 	7 meetings (2 Council and Board updates during scoping process)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ City Council presentations ▪ County Board presentations
Project Management Team (PMT)	Representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stearns County Public Works ▪ St. Cloud APO ▪ St. Joseph Public Works ▪ Waite Park Public Works ▪ Mn/DOT District 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide technical review of work tasks and alternatives (layouts, evaluations) ▪ Project management ▪ Issue/conflict resolution 	10 meetings (approximately monthly as needed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agendas ▪ Summary of meetings ▪ Project decisions and direction
Advisory Committee (AC)	Elected and Senior Technical Staff of Decision-Making Bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stearns County Public Works ▪ St. Cloud APO ▪ Stearns County Board ▪ Waite Park (Public Works and City Council) ▪ St. Joseph (Administrator and City Council) ▪ St. Cloud ▪ Sartell ▪ St. Joseph Township ▪ Mn/DOT District 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Guide overall scoping study process ▪ Digest input, participate in technical analysis ▪ Make scoping study recommendations to County Board and City Councils 	4 meetings (approximately bi-monthly as needed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agendas ▪ Summary of meetings ▪ Project feedback and comments
Focus Groups	Public/Private Stakeholders from Study Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ St. Joseph and Waite Park Planning Commission ▪ St. Joseph and Waite Park EDA Staff ▪ St. Joseph and Waite Park Chamber of Commerce ▪ Local Landowners ▪ Interest Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide input on scoping study issues/background information and opportunities 	2 meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Agendas ▪ Summary of meetings ▪ Project feedback and comments

NOTES:

⁽¹⁾ Public involvement plan to be updated prior to the initiation of EIS studies.

⁽²⁾ Meeting frequency defined for the scoping process only. Future meetings during completion of DEIS and FEIS are to be determined.

**Stearns County Southwest Beltway
Scoping Public Involvement Plan ⁽¹⁾**

	Groups/Parties Involved	Purpose / Goals	Meeting Frequency ⁽²⁾	Products
Open House Workshop and Public Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PMT ▪ Local residents ▪ Federal, state, local agencies ▪ Regulatory agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide input on study issues/background information and opportunities ▪ Provide opportunity for public review and comment 	Up to 3 meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Up to 2 project open house workshops ▪ Scoping open house 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Open house displays ▪ Open house handouts and comment forms ▪ Comment summary
Agency Contacts and Meetings (Participating Agencies)	Participating Federal, State, and Local Agencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ FHWA ▪ Mn/DOT State Aid ▪ PMT (Stearns County, St. Cloud APO, St. Joseph Public Works, Waite Park Public Works, Mn/DOT District 3) ▪ Federal Agencies (Corps of Engineers, EPA, USFWS, NRCS) ▪ State Agencies (DNR, PCA, PUC, Dept. of Agriculture, BWSR, Mn/DOT Trunk Highway) ▪ Local Gov't (Sauk River WD, Stearns Co. SWCD, Stearns Co. Env. Services, Cities of Sartell, St. Cloud, St. Joseph, Waite Park and Rockville, St. Joseph Township, St. Wendel Township, Le Sauk Township) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify project-related environmental issues. ▪ Provide input for range of reasonable alternatives, purpose and need, and evaluation methodologies ▪ Resolve impact avoidance, minimization, and mitigation ▪ Build consensus on preferred alternative 	2 meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scoping Participating Agency workshop (date to be determined) ▪ EIS Participating Agency workshop (date to be determined) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Scoping Document comments and feedback ▪ EIS comments and feedback
Project Communications (press releases, website)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stearns County Public Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide an ongoing communication medium 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Press releases with project milestones ▪ Web site updates with project milestones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stearns County-hosted website

NOTES:

⁽¹⁾ Public involvement plan to be updated prior to the initiation of EIS studies.

⁽²⁾ Meeting frequency defined for the scoping process only. Future meetings during completion of DEIS and FEIS are to be determined.

Southwest Beltway (Future CSAH 84) Project
Stearns County, MN
Agency and Public Coordination Plan
(October 2007)

The Agency and Public Coordination Plan will be updated periodically to reflect any changes to the project schedule, or to update other items as necessary during the project development and environmental review process. The following matrix identifies changes to the Agency and Public Coordination Plan, and the date at which these changes occurred.

	Date	Description of Change
1.	2008-01-16	Included City of St. Cloud, City of Sartell, and Le Sauk Township as participating agencies
2.	2008-03-17	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) removed as participating agency. ACHP to participate if necessary. Public Utilities Commission (PUC) included as participating agency.
3.	2008-03-17	State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) involved as a participating agency only with Section 106 involvement as necessary.
4.	2008-03-26	Included City of Rockville and Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District as participating agencies.
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		

DRAFT SCOPING DECISION DOCUMENT

SOUTHWEST BELTWAY PROJECT

**Future County State Aid Highway 84
Stearns County, Minnesota**

**Stearns County
Minnesota Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration**

November 2008

SRF No. 0076050

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Draft Scoping Decision Document (DSDD) has been prepared as part of the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and state environmental review processes (Minnesota Environmental Policy Act, (MEPA) to fulfill requirements of 42 USC 4321 et. seq., 23 USC § 139, and Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.2000. The DSDD is distributed to federal, state and local agencies and the public to provide an opportunity for review and comment prior to the preparation of a Scoping Document Decision (SDD). A 30-day comment period will begin when the availability notice for the DSDD is published in the Minnesota Environmental Quality Board (EQB) *Monitor*. A Scoping Meeting will be held during the 30-day comment period (as required by Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.2100 Subpart 3), which will provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the DSDD.

A final scoping decision will be made by Stearns County, in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) after the public scoping meeting and at the end of the 30-day comment period. Following completion of the scoping process, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared in accordance with the findings of the SDD.

This DSDD describes the purpose of and need for the proposed action; the process followed in the development and evaluation of alignment alternatives; the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts and discussion of the methodology that will be used to address each issue in the EIS.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed action is the construction of a new minor arterial roadway connecting County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 4/CSAH 133 to Trunk Highway (TH) 15 within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area¹ in Stearns County, Minnesota (Southwest Beltway Project). The study area is bordered by CSAH 4 and CSAH 133 on the north, I-94 on the south, TH 15 on the east, and CR 121 and the existing City of St. Joseph municipal limits on the west.

The primary purpose of the Southwest Beltway Project is to identify a safe and efficient minor arterial transportation corridor within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area that can be preserved for future use in an area of planned growth that:

- Enhances mobility by providing a north-south arterial connection between CSAH 4/CSAH 133 and TH 23, and an east-west arterial connection between TH 23 and TH 15.
- Enhances connectivity to existing regional corridors (CSAH 133, CSAH 75, TH 23 and TH 15) within the west and southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area.
- Supports the economic and social needs for the growing west and southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area by providing infrastructure support and accessibility for the planned growth areas of the communities of St. Joseph and Waite Park.

¹ The St. Cloud Metropolitan Area consists of the cities of Sartell, Sauk Rapids, St. Cloud, St. Joseph, and Waite Park, as well as Haven, Le Sauk, Minden, St. Augusta, St. Joseph, St. Wendel, and Sauk Rapids townships (*St. Cloud Area Joint Planning District Plan*, May 2000). The southwest portion of the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is defined as the cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park, and portions of St. Joseph Township northeast of I-94. See Section 3.0.

The objectives described above establish the basic transportation purpose of and need for the proposed project. The proposed project would also address other transportation objectives including providing adequate capacity to meet future transportation demand, accommodating other travel modes, and consistency with adopted plans.

The need to provide an arterial roadway within the southwest St. Cloud Metropolitan Area has been recognized since the 1980s. A corridor study completed in 2001 further examined the role of and need for an arterial roadway to serve future transportation demand within the southwest greater St. Cloud Metropolitan Area.

3.0 PROJECT COST, FUNDING SOURCE, AND SCHEDULE

Planning-level cost estimates for the Southwest Beltway project are described in the St. Cloud APO's 2030 Transportation Plan. These cost estimates assume construction costs of \$2 million per mile and right of way costs of \$1 million per mile. Engineering and construction administration cost estimates were assumed to be 20 percent of the project cost. This cost estimate does not include improvements associated with the crossing of the BNSF Railway lines near TH 23 and CSAH 75. Stearns County will work with BNSF Railway to determine the appropriate type of crossing (at-grade vs. grade-separated) during design and construction.

Planning-level cost estimates for the Southwest Beltway, as described in Exhibit 5I of the APO *2030 Transportation Plan*, are estimated at approximately \$24.5 million (2005 dollars).

The DEIS will include more detailed preliminary construction cost estimates for the alternatives to be evaluated in the DEIS (see Section 6.3).

Total project cost (construction; right of way; engineering) for the Southwest Beltway Project was estimated for future year of construction. These estimates were based on planning-level total project cost estimates developed as part of the St. Cloud APO *2030 Financial Plan Amendment*. An inflation factor of 2.05 was assumed when estimating future costs. The Southwest Beltway was divided into three segments for purposes of identifying future project costs as described below:

1. TH 15 to CR 137. This segment is identified as a fiscally-constrained project for the year 2024-2030 planning period. Total project cost for year 2027 construction (mid-year of planning period) is estimated at \$12.3 million (2027 dollars).
2. CR 137 to TH 23: This segment is identified as an illustrative project in the financial plan amendment (beyond 2030). Total project cost for construction beyond year 2030 is estimated at \$8.7 million (2030 dollars).
3. TH 23 to CSAH 133: This segment is also identified as an illustrative project in the APO financial plan amendment (beyond 2030). Total project cost for construction beyond year 2030 is estimated at \$29.3 million (2030 dollars).

No specific funding source has been identified for the Southwest Beltway Project at this time. Future funding for the project is anticipated from a combination of federal, state, and local funds. The specific contribution amount from each of these three funding sources has not been identified.

The following lists the anticipated schedule for completion of project activities:

Federal Notice of Intent	Fall 2007
Draft Scoping Decision Document	Fall 2008
Public Scoping Meetings	Winter 2009
Scoping Decision Document	Spring 2009
Draft EIS	2009 – 2010
Draft EIS Public Hearing	2010
Identification of Preferred Alternative	2010
Final EIS	2011
Stearns County Adequacy Determination	2012
FHWA Record of Decision (ROD)	2012
Corridor preservation	2012 – ongoing
Final Design and Construction	Dependent upon funding availability

4.0 RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENTAL UNIT AND PROJECT MANAGER

The FHWA is the lead Federal agency under NEPA. Mn/DOT, as the direct recipient of Federal funds for the project, is a joint lead agency under NEPA. Stearns County, as project sponsor ultimately responsible for design and construction of the proposed project, and as the sub-recipient of Federal funds, is also a joint lead agency under NEPA.

Stearns County is the project proposer and Responsible Governmental Unit (RGU) under Minnesota Rules Chapter 4410.0500 for the purposes of this DSDD, and for the EIS, with respect to State environmental review requirements.

The contact persons for FHWA and Stearns County are listed below.

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5.0 ALTERNATIVES TO BE STUDIED IN THE DEIS

In addition to the No-Build Alternative, three Build alternative alignments are proposed to be studied in the DEIS. A final decision regarding the number of alternatives will be made based on input received from the public and agencies during the scoping period, and any additional studies to be completed on the impacts of the alternatives, if necessary. The alternatives currently proposed to be studied in the DEIS are described in the following sections and illustrated in Figure 1.

5.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative includes regional transportation improvements identified in the St. Cloud APO fiscally constrained network. The No-Build Alternative does not meet the transportation needs of the project. The No-Build Alternative does not provide a connection between CSAH 75, TH 23, and TH 15, and does not respond to the infrastructure needs in the planned growth area between St. Joseph and Waite Park. The No-Build Alternative will be carried forward into the DEIS as per NEPA and MEPA procedures as a baseline comparison for the other DEIS alternatives.

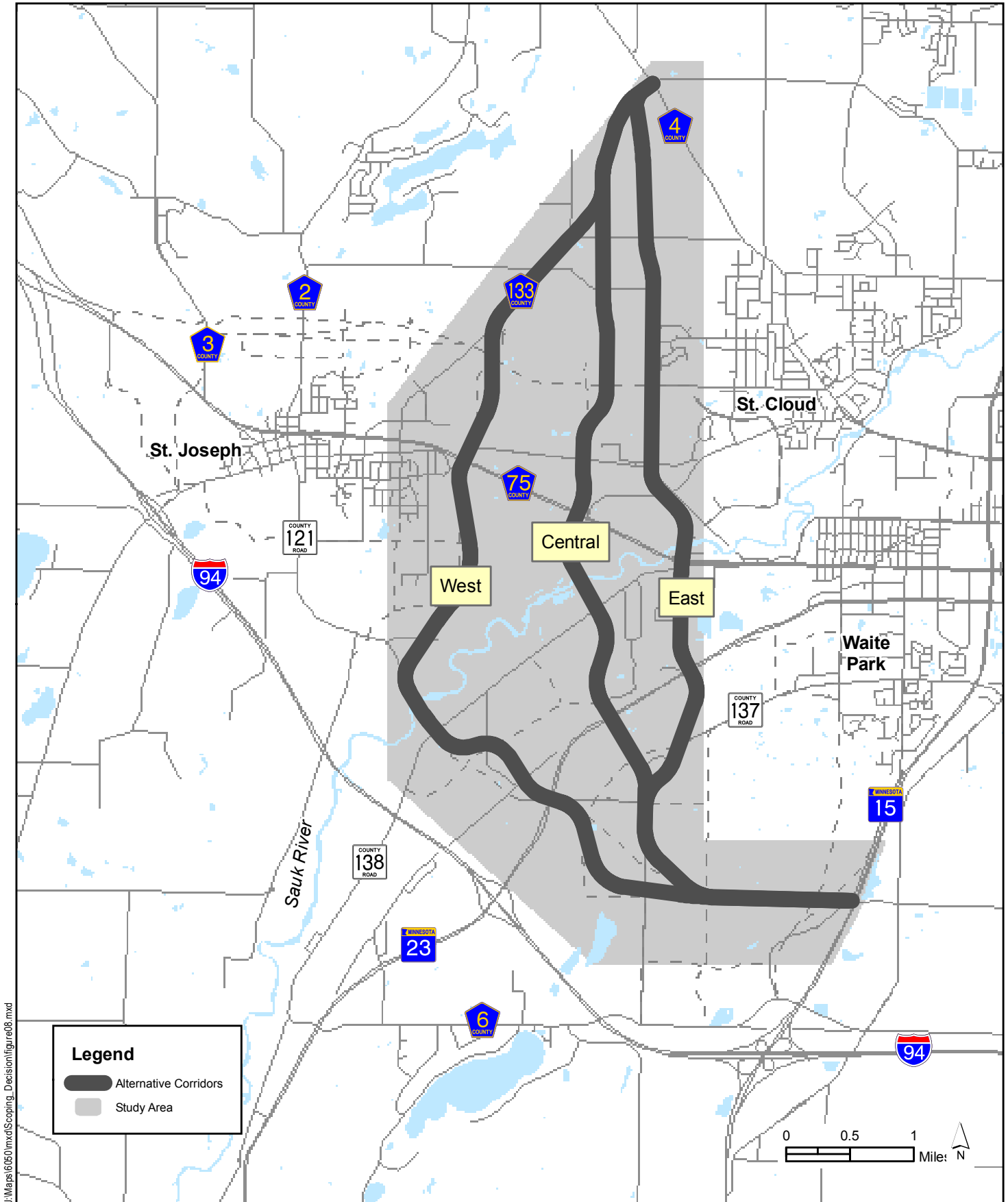
5.2 Build Alternative Alignments

The alternatives described below correspond to the alignments shown in Figure 1. These alignments represent efforts to identify corridors with unique characteristics that connect CSAH 75, TH 23 and TH 15, and attempt to avoid and minimize social, economic, environmental, and transportation system impacts with respect to known constraints in the study area.

It should be noted that the Build Alternative alignments (West, Central, and East Corridors) share a common segment between TH 23 and TH 15 south of Quarry Park. Just east of CR 137, the West Alternative continues to the west, whereas the Central and East Alternatives curve to the northwest. The Central and East Build Alternatives each utilize a segment of the existing CR 137 roadway in the City of Waite Park.

5.2.1 West Corridor Alternative

The West Corridor Alternative is located in the western portion of the study area closest to the City of St. Joseph. The north-south alignment of the West Corridor Alternative ties in to the existing CSAH 133 alignment in northeast St. Joseph. The West Corridor extends south of CSAH 133 parallel to the St. Joseph 20th Avenue corridor, and crosses CSAH 75 near the 88th Avenue/Ridgewood Road intersection. The north-south alignment of West Corridor Alternative would utilize the existing CR 121 river crossing over the Sauk River.



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Build Alternatives to be Analyzed in DEIS

Southwest Beltway Draft Scoping Decision Document
 SP 73-684-03
 Stearns County

Figure 1

The West Corridor Alternative east-west alignment between TH 23 and TH 15 would cross TH 23 at Bel Claire Road, approximately one mile northeast of I-94. The West Corridor Alternative would terminate at a future TH 15/33rd Street South interchange.

Several design elements are under consideration for West Corridor Alternative. These design elements would be discussed at the start of the EIS process as part of design and traffic engineering studies. These design elements include:

- Use of the existing CR 121 bridge over the Sauk River (i.e., no bridge reconstruction) versus reconstruction of this existing bridge with the West Corridor Alternative;
- Construction using the St. Joseph 20th Street corridor or a new roadway corridor alignment to the east of 20th Street (i.e., system spacing requirements);
- At-grade versus grade separated crossings of the BNSF Railway tracks north of CSAH 75 and the BNSF Railway tracks north of TH 23. Stearns County will coordinate with BNSF Railway to determine the appropriate type of crossing at these locations;
- Intersection control (e.g., roundabout, at-grade signalized, interchange) at the Southwest Beltway/TH 23 intersection; and
- Design and reconstruction of the existing CSAH 133 corridor from the point where the West Corridor Alternative ties in to the CSAH 133 roadway and the CSAH 4/144 intersection.

5.2.2 Central Corridor Alternative

The Central Corridor Alternative is located in the middle portion of the study area between the City of St. Joseph and the City of Waite Park. The north-south alignment of the Central Corridor Alternative ties in to the existing CSAH 133 alignment in St. Wendel Township approximately one mile southwest of the CSAH 4/133 intersection, and approximately two miles northeast of the CSAH 75/133 intersection. The Central Corridor Alternative crosses CSAH 75 near the CSAH 134 intersection, and continues south to the Sauk River. The Central Corridor Alternative crossing of the Sauk River is approximately 0.7 miles southwest of the existing CSAH 75 bridge over the Sauk River, and approximately 1.5 miles northeast of the existing CR 121 bridge over the Sauk River.

The Central Corridor Alternative intersection with TH 23 is located approximately 1.7 miles northeast of I-94 at Julip Road. South of TH 23, the Central Corridor Alternative utilizes the existing CR 137 alignment before turning east along the south boundary of Quarry Park. The Central Corridor Alternative would terminate at a future TH 15/33rd Street South interchange.

Design elements are also under consideration for Central Corridor Alternative. These design elements would be discussed at the start of the EIS process as part of design and traffic engineering studies. These design elements include:

- At-grade versus grade separated crossings of the BNSF Railway tracks north of CSAH 75 and the BNSF Railway tracks north of TH 23. Stearns County will coordinate with BNSF Railway to determine the appropriate type of crossing at these locations; and

- Intersection control (e.g., roundabout, at-grade signalized, interchange) at the Southwest Beltway/TH 23 intersection.
- Design and reconstruction of the existing CSAH 133 corridor from the point where the Central Corridor Alternative ties in to the CSAH 133 roadway and the CSAH 4/144 intersection.

5.2.3 East Corridor Alternative

The East Corridor Alternative is located in the eastern portion of the study area closest to the City of Waite Park. The north-south alignment of East Corridor Alternative ties in to the existing CSAH 133 alignment in St. Wendel and Le Sauk Townships adjacent to the CSAH 4/133 intersection. The East Corridor Alternative follows the City of St. Cloud/St. Joseph Township boundary to the Sauk River. The East Corridor Alternative crosses the Sauk River approximately 0.2 miles northeast of the existing CSAH 75 bridge over the Sauk River. The East Corridor Alternative crosses CSAH 75 near the CR 138 intersection, and continues south along the 28th Avenue corridor.

The East Corridor Alternative intersection with TH 23 is located approximately 2.4 miles northeast of I-94 at 28th Avenue. The East Corridor Alternative continues south of TH 23 along the proposed 28th Avenue extension to CR 137 (programmed for construction in 2008). The East Corridor Alternative utilizes the existing CR 137 alignment before turning east along the south boundary of Quarry Park. The East Corridor Alternative would terminate at a future TH 15/33rd Street South interchange.

Several design elements are under consideration for East Corridor Alternative. These design elements would be discussed at the start of the EIS process as part of design and traffic engineering studies. These design elements include:

- At-grade versus grade separated crossings of the BNSF railroad tracks north of CSAH 75 and the BNSF railroad tracks north of TH 23. Stearns County will coordinate with BNSF Railway to determine the appropriate type of crossing at these locations;
- Access considerations along existing 28th Avenue. Industrial and commercial/office land uses are located along existing 28th Avenue in Waite Park. This segment of existing 28th Avenue includes multiple direct driveway access to/from 28th Avenue; and
- Intersection control (e.g., roundabout, at-grade signalized, interchange) at the Southwest Beltway/TH 23 intersection.

5.3 Build Alternative Design Criteria

The Project Management Team (PMT), along with input from the Advisory Committee (AC) (see Section 7.0), identified design criteria to guide development of the Build Alternative alignments in the DEIS. These design criteria were based on St. Cloud APO access management guidelines, *Stearns County Highway Department Access and Right-of-Way Width Guidelines* (2001), and basic engineering principles. The design criteria were sub-divided into the north-south segment between CSAH 4/133 and TH 23 and the east-west segment between TH 23 and TH 15. A parkway-like design was identified for the north-south segment between CSAH 4/133 and TH 23 because this is the primary growth area between the cities of St. Joseph and Waite Park. A rural section design for the east-west segment between TH 23 and TH 15 was identified by the PMT and will be evaluated in the DEIS.

The Build Alternative design between TH 23 and the Sauk River could include an area that transitions from an urban to rural typical section design. This typical section transition area will be evaluated with the Build Alternative design in the DEIS.

The design criteria that will guide Build Alternative design in the DEIS is identified in Table 1.

**TABLE 1
SOUTHWEST BELTWAY: BUILD ALTERNATIVE DESIGN CRITERIA**

Segment	Functional Classification	Design Speed	Typical Section	Trails	Access	ROW
North-South (CSAH 133 to TH 23)	Minor Arterial	45-50 mph	4-lane urban parkway divided	Separated bike and pedestrian trail on one side	½ mile (minimum) controlled intersection	150 feet
East-West (TH 23 to TH 15)	Minor Arterial	45-50 mph	4-lane rural divided	Separated bike and pedestrian trail on one side	½ mile (minimum) controlled intersection	220 feet or 150 feet

6.0 ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN THE DEIS

Based on information received during the scoping study, the following areas of environmental concern will require special studies (separate reports) in the EIS to better determine the extent of impacts related to the proposed alternatives:

- Cultural Resources
- Parks and Recreational Areas
 - Section 4(f) Evaluation and Section 6(f) Involvement (if necessary)
- Traffic Forecasts and Operations Analysis

The following issues are of concern for the project. The EIS will provide a detailed analysis of impacts for each of these social, economic, or environmental concerns, but no separate reports will be generated. Coordination of these issues with the appropriate regulatory agency will occur during preparation of the EIS.

- Project Cost and Funding
- Joint Development Measures
- Transportation Impacts
 - Intermodal Transportation
 - Access Impacts
- Social and Economic Impacts
 - Social Impacts (Neighborhood and Community Facilities and Community Cohesion)
 - Land Use Impacts
 - Environmental Justice
 - Economic Impacts

- Physical Environmental Impacts
 - Air Quality
 - Traffic Noise
 - Farmland Impacts
 - Hazardous Materials and Contaminated Sites
 - Visual Quality/Visual Impacts
- Natural Environmental Impacts
 - Vegetation
 - Threatened and Endangered Species and Natural Communities
 - Fish and Wildlife Impacts
 - Geology
- Water Resources
 - Surface Water/Water Quantity and Quality/Stormwater Management
 - Floodplain Impacts
 - Groundwater Impacts
 - Wetland Impacts
 - Water Body Modification
- Right of Way Acquisition and Relocation
- Indirect Effects Analysis
- Cumulative Effects Analysis

The following issues are of less concern (relative to the issues identified in Section 6.2) for the proposed project. The EIS will identify impacts, including analysis in accordance with Federal and State requirements where appropriate. However, major impacts are not anticipated with each of these areas.

- Construction Impacts
- Excess Materials
- Soils
- Utility Locations
- Relationship of Local Short-Term Uses Versus Long-Term Productivity
- Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

The following issues will not be addressed in the EIS because they are not relevant to the proposed project.

- Coastal Zone Impacts and Coastal Barriers
- Federal and/or State-Designated Critical Areas
- Wild and Scenic Rivers

7.0 PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Stearns County, as project proposers, along with members of the Project Management Team (PMT), will engage community organizations, area property owners, residents, business owners, and local, county, regional, state and federal agencies in the development of the proposed project. Public and agency involvement is described below. The Agency and Public Coordination Plan is included in Appendix A of the Scoping Document (SD).

7.1 Project Management Team

The PMT consists of staff from Mn/DOT District 3, St. Cloud APO, Stearns County, the City of St. Joseph, and the City of Waite Park. The role of the PMT is to provide the direction to advance the proposed project through this scoping study and the environmental review process. In addition, the PMT provides recommendations for consideration to the Advisory Committee.

7.2 Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee (AC) includes elected or appointed officials from local government agencies and PMT members. The AC meets at key points in the environmental review process to review study information and provide recommendations. Advisory Committee agencies include:

- Minnesota Department of Transportation District 3
- St. Cloud APO
- Stearns County
- City of St. Joseph
- City of Waite Park
- City of St. Cloud
- City of Sartell
- St. Joseph Township

The roles of the Advisory Committee agencies are identified in the Scoping Public Involvement Plan in the Agency and Public Involvement Plan in Appendix A.

7.3 Cooperating and Participating Agencies

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) establishes a new environmental review process for transportation projects developed as environmental impact statements. These requirements are intended to promote efficient project management by lead agencies and enhanced opportunities for coordination with the public and with other Federal, State, local, and tribal government agencies during the project development process. To enhance interagency coordination and ensure that issues of concern are identified, SAFETEA-LU creates a new category of involvement in the environmental review process termed “participating agency.” The intent of the new category is to encourage governmental agencies at any level with an interest in the proposed project to be active participants in the NEPA evaluation.²

² U.S. Department of Transportation. Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. November 2006. *SAFETEA-LU Environmental Review Process Final Guidance*.

The following Federal agencies were invited by FHWA to serve as cooperating agencies³ for the project.

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

The following Federal, State, and local agencies were invited by FHWA to serve as participating agencies for the project.

Federal Agencies

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

State Agencies

- Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources
- Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office
- Minnesota Department of Transportation (Trunk Highway)

Local Agencies

- Sauk River Watershed District
- Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Stearns County Environmental Services
- City of St. Joseph
- City of Waite Park
- City of Sartell
- City of St. Cloud
- City of Rockville
- St. Joseph Township
- St. Wendel Township
- Le Sauk Township

The role of Cooperating and Participating Agencies as part of the Southwest Beltway environmental review and project development process is documented in the Agency and Public Involvement Plan in Appendix A of the scoping document.

³ According to the US DOT *SAFETEA-LU Environmental Review Process Final Guidance* (2006), Federal agencies that serve as cooperating agencies are, by definition, also considered participating agencies.

7.4 Public Meetings

An open house meeting was held August 8, 2007 in at the Waite Park City Hall to provide information on the project, highlight initial findings regarding project purpose and need, highlight potential environmental issues identified within the study area, describe the alternatives development process, including alternatives identified in past studies, and to collect comments and feedback from the public.

A second open house meeting was held November 14, 2007 at the Waite Park City Hall to provide updated information on the project, provide updated findings regarding project purpose and need, highlight the alternatives screening and development process to date, and to collect comments and feedback from the public.

Focus group meetings were also conducted in August and November 2007, concurrent with public open house meetings. Focus group meeting attendees included local planning commission members, economic development authority (EDA) members, railroad and electric utility staff, as well as local businesses. The purpose of the focus group meetings was to provide information on the project and collect background information on the study area.

A public scoping meeting will be held during the 30-day public comment period for the SD. The public scoping meeting will present the findings of the SD and the draft SDD. Comments received at the scoping meeting will be considered in the final SDD.

Open house meetings and public hearings will also be held during the DEIS phase of the environmental review process.

7.5 Project Website

A web site has been established at <http://www.co.stearns.mn.us/5834.htm> as a means to distribute project-related information and to announce upcoming public meetings and Advisory Committee meetings. This web site is hosted by Stearns County. The web site will be periodically updated through the project to reflect current project information.

8.0 PERMITS AND APPROVALS

A list of applicable permits and approvals anticipated for the proposed Southwest Beltway project is provided in Table 2.

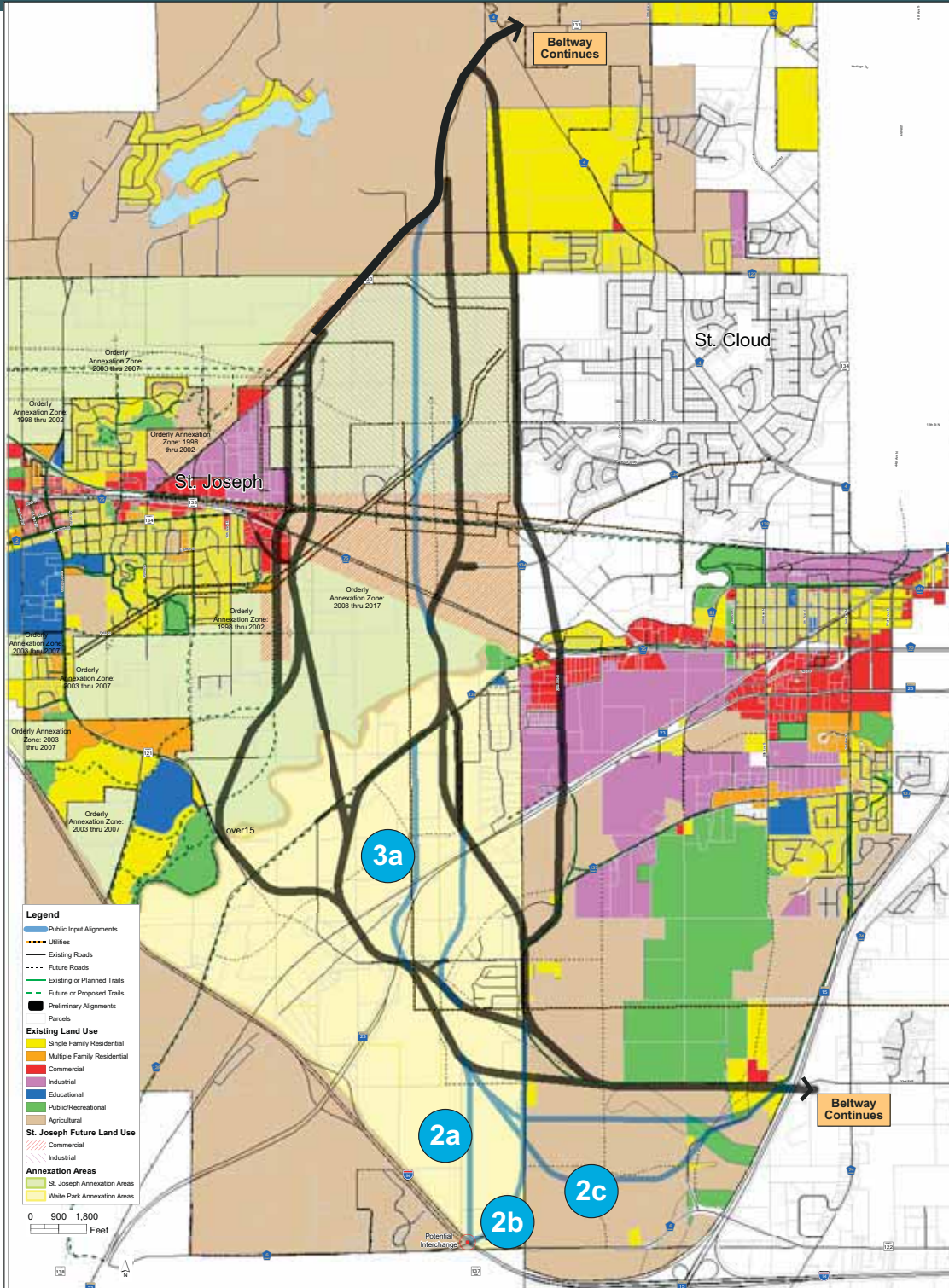
8.1 Level of Action

The proposed Southwest Beltway Project is considered a Federal Class I action as defined in 23 CFR 771.115(a). As previously noted, FHWA is the lead federal agency for this project. The proposed Southwest Beltway Project also meets the mandatory EIS threshold under Minnesota Rules 4410.4400, subp. 16 (construction of a road on a new location which is four or more lanes in width and two or more miles in length). Stearns County is the RGU for this project.

**TABLE 2
ANTICIPATED PERMITS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED**

AGENCY	PERMIT/APPROVAL
Federal	
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act – Memorandum of Agreement (if needed)
Federal Highway Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIS Approval (draft and final) • EIS Record of Decision (ROD) • Section 4(f) Evaluations (draft and final) (if needed) • Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act – Memorandum of Agreement (if needed)
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 404 of the Clean Water Act – Permit (fill in waters of the U.S.) • Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act – Permit (if needed for construction of bridge over Sauk River) • Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act – Memorandum of Agreement (if needed)
State	
Minnesota Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EIS Approval (draft and final) • Plan Review
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected Waters Permit • Mussel Relocation Permit (if needed for construction of bridge over Sauk River)
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 401 Water Quality Certification • NPDES Permit
Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act – Memorandum of Agreement (if needed)
Local	
Stearns County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping Decision Document • EIS Approval (draft and final) • EIS Adequacy Determination • Wetland Conservation Act (WCA)
Sauk River Watershed District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of Grading and Drainage Plans • Watershed District Permit
Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of Grading and Drainage Plans
Other	
Stearns County and BNSF Railway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Railroad Agreement and/or Permit (if needed for crossings of BNSF Railway tracks near TH 23 and CSAH 75)

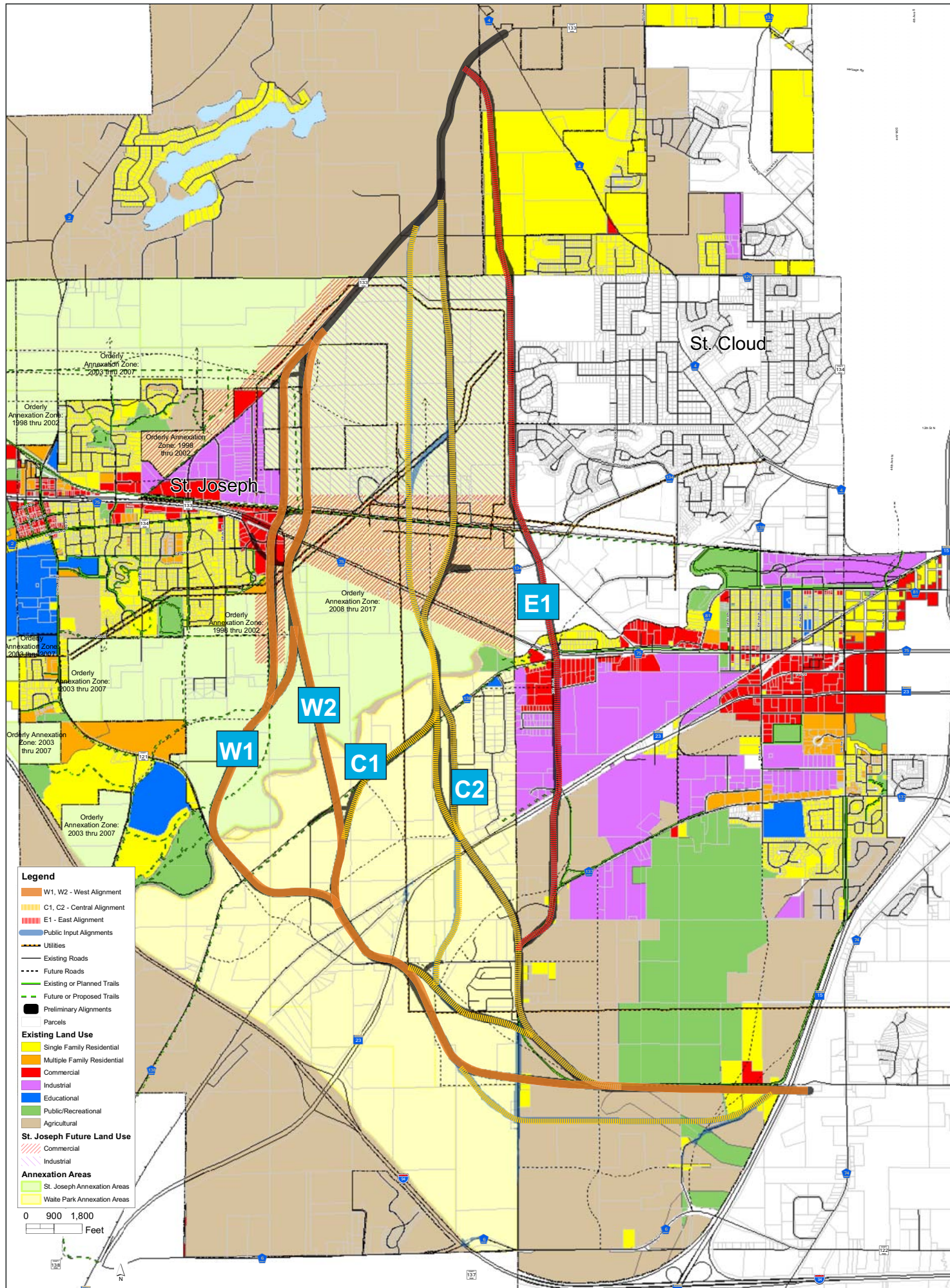
What alternatives have been considered?



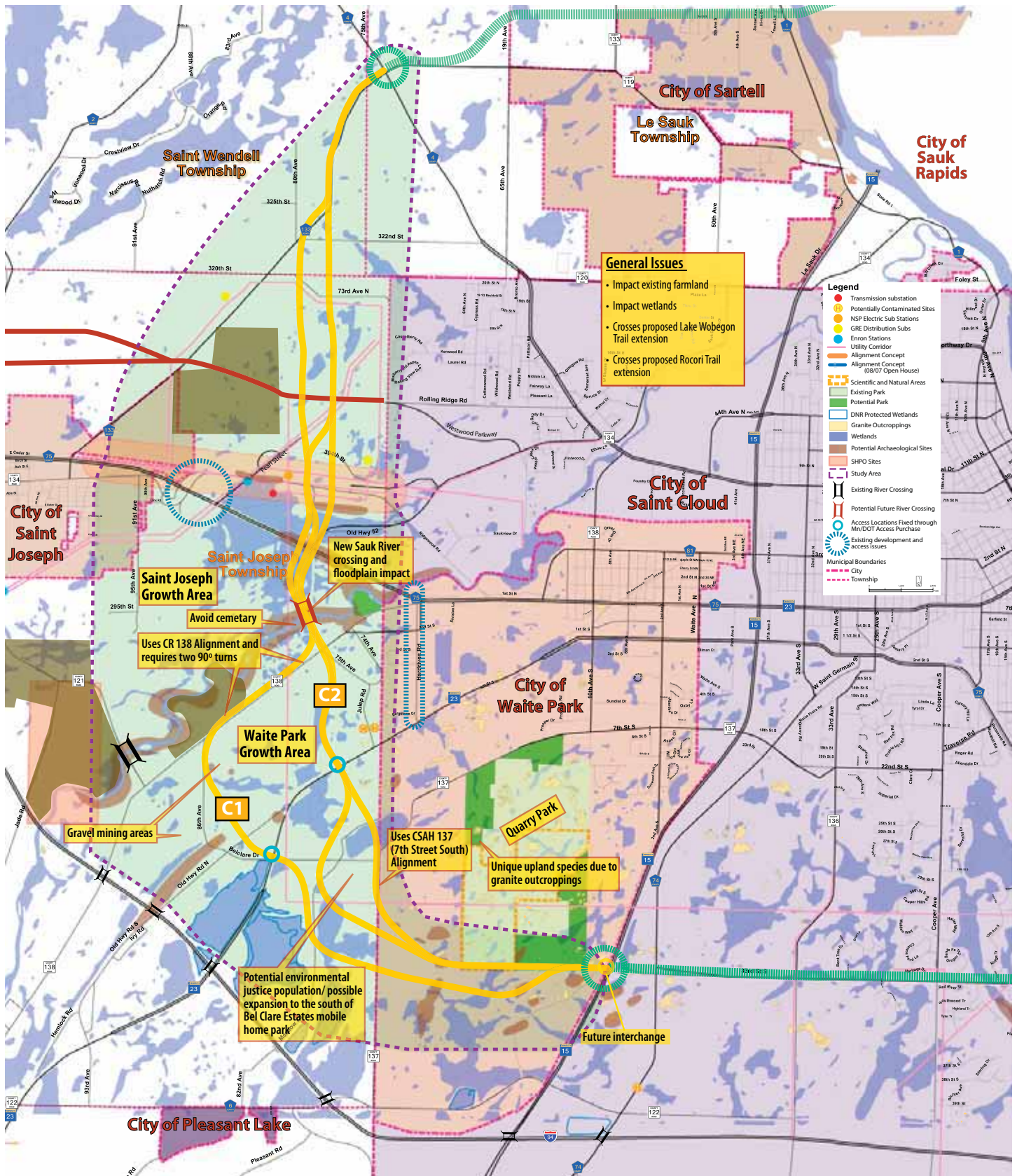
Which alternatives were eliminated from further consideration and why?

- **2a and 2b**—eliminated because they require an I-94 interchange, which is not consistent with the MnDOT I-94 Corridor Management Plan. Without an I-94 interchange, these alternatives do not make a connection between TH 15 and TH 23.
- **2c**—eliminated because it does not meet St. Cloud APO facility spacing guidelines. This alternative would be 0.5 miles from CSAH 6, a future minor arterial. APO Guidelines call for 2/3- (0.67) to 1.5-mile spacing of minor arterials.
- **3a**—eliminated due to basic engineering principles.

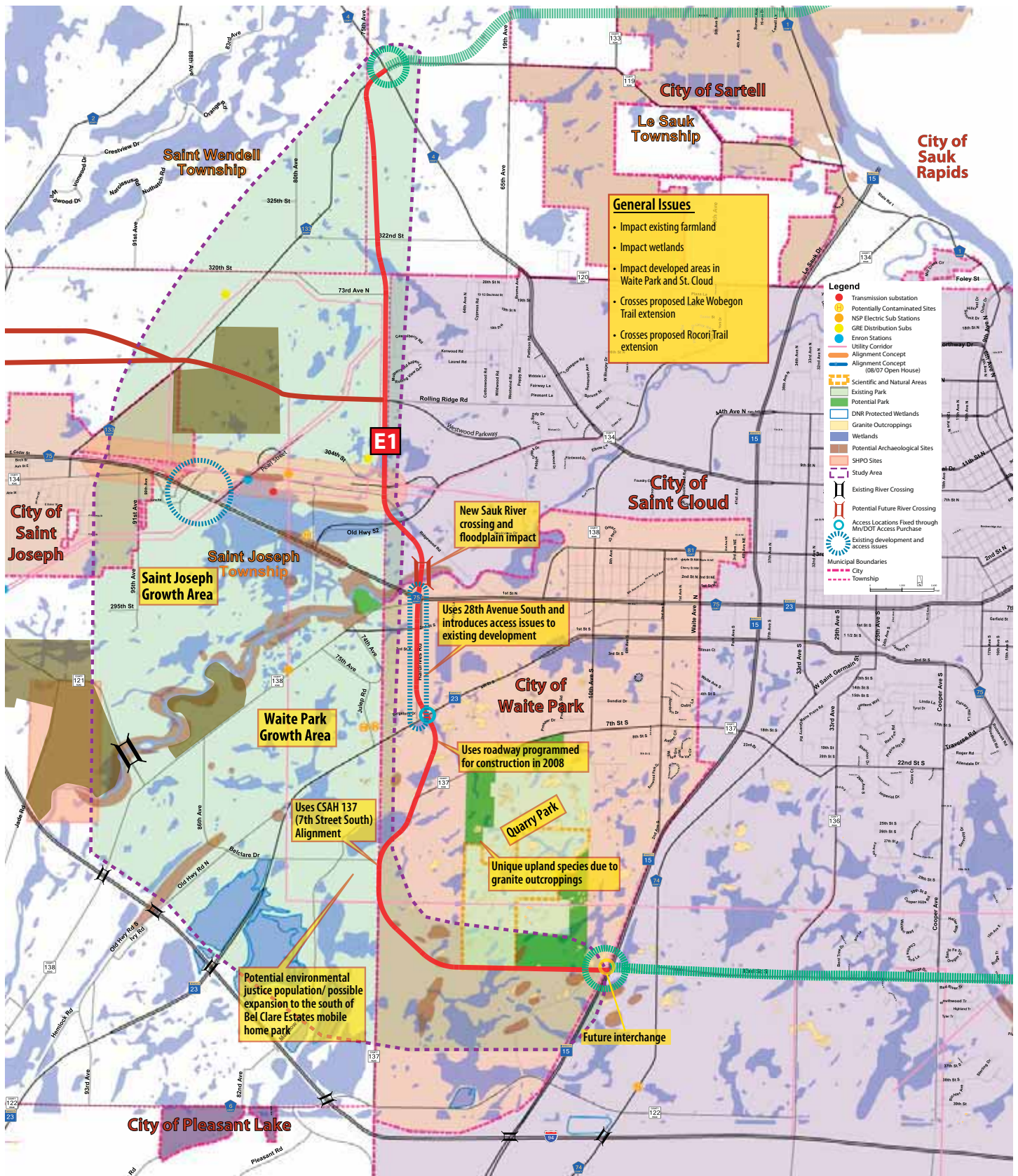
What alternatives may be studied further?



What are the potential impacts of the Central corridor?



What are the potential impacts of the East corridor?



What are the potential impacts of the West corridor?

