

Portage Canal Background and Project Summary
Columbia County
June 2013

- The Portage Canal is the only canal in Wisconsin, and it is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It was completed in 1851 and open to navigation until 1959. In 1960 the State of Wisconsin took ownership from the federal government. The Portage Historical Society, Portage Canal Society, City of Portage, Portage Area Chamber of Commerce and interested citizens have been working together for many years to come up with plans to rehabilitate the canal.
- In 2001 the City of Portage received federal Transportation & Community & Systems Preservation program funding to rehabilitate the historic Portage Canal and to establish an adjacent pedestrian/bicycle trail. In addition the City of Portage received state funds from the Recreational Boating Facilities Program through the Department of Natural Resources for the renovation and repair of the canal. It is unique that improvements to a state owned (Department of Natural Resources) facility are being proposed and administered by a local municipality (City of Portage).
- In 2002 design began for the project under Project ID 6996-05-06, which was approximately 2.5 miles in length. It included:
 - Environmental documentation for entire corridor from the Wisconsin River to the Fox River
 - Segment 1 (Orange on the map): Wisconsin River to Adams Street
 - Segment 2 (Green on the map): Adams Street to the Canadian Pacific Railway
 - Segment 3 (Purple on the map): Canadian Pacific Railway to STH 33
 - Segment 4 (Blue on the map): STH 33 to the Fox River
 - Preliminary engineering and design concept plans and report for entire corridor
 - Final engineering and the P.S.&E. for the portion between the Wisconsin River to Adams Street
- Environmental documentation in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act and the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act, as defined in Wisconsin Administrative Code TRANS 400 was critical. Specific issues included:
 - Section 106 of the National Historical Preservation Act
 - Section 4(f) Evaluation
 - Hazardous Materials Investigations
 - Wetland Investigations
 - Agency Coordination
- Section 106 and Section 4(f): One of the key issues was the coordination efforts to insure compliance with Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act. The Federal Highway Administration and the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office agreed that while the proposed project was very worthwhile, it was considered an Adverse Effect under the Secretary of Interior's guidelines. Additionally, Section 4(f) also applied since it was an Adverse Effect.
 - In April 2004, a Memorandum of Agreement between the Federal Highway Administration, Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office, Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service - Ice Age National Scenic Trail, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Transportation, and the City of Portage was approved. It had a sunset provision of May 2009.

- Hazardous Materials Investigations: The canal is located in an older and industrial part of the City of Portage, so there were a number of known environmental liabilities. A Phase 1 Hazardous Materials Assessment was prepared in 2003 recommending additional investigation at eight sites for various contaminants. Phase 2 Environmental Subsurface Investigations were then conducted. Additionally, sediment sampling was done along the canal and results indicated that there are high levels of metals north of Wisconsin Street. DNR acknowledged that they were the responsible party as the owner of the canal and would work on securing funding to determine the extent of the metals contamination and then, the cleanup.
 - Dredged materials between the Wisconsin River lock and Wisconsin Street were disposed of at the Columbia County Fairgrounds. The only excavation between Wisconsin Street and Adams Street that was allowed was that needed to construct the revetment walls.
 - In ~ 2009, the DNR bid a project to remove the contamination between Wisconsin Street and Adams Street; however, as the bids were cost-prohibitive they did not proceed.
 - DNR is now actively working with the City of Portage to address the contamination of the entire canal, with an emphasis on the portion between Wisconsin Street and the Canadian Pacific Railway.

- Wetlands Investigations and Agency Coordination: Coordination was conducted with the natural environmental review agencies, most particularly the Department of Natural Resources and the Army Corps of Engineers. One of the City of Portage's goals was to improve the water quality. When the Wisconsin River levee was constructed in the 1990's, the water flow between the canal and the river was effectively blocked. Since the Wisconsin River and the Fox River flow through different watersheds, there was little interest from the agencies in allowing any flow from the Wisconsin River to the canal. The only water quality improvement per se that was implemented in the first phase of construction was dredging. The canal, its banks and several adjacent areas were designated as jurisdictional wetlands. Mitigation for the first phase was done via a statewide wetland mitigation bank.

- An Environmental Report and 4(f) Final Evaluation Document were completed and approved by the Federal Highway Administration on August 31, 2004.

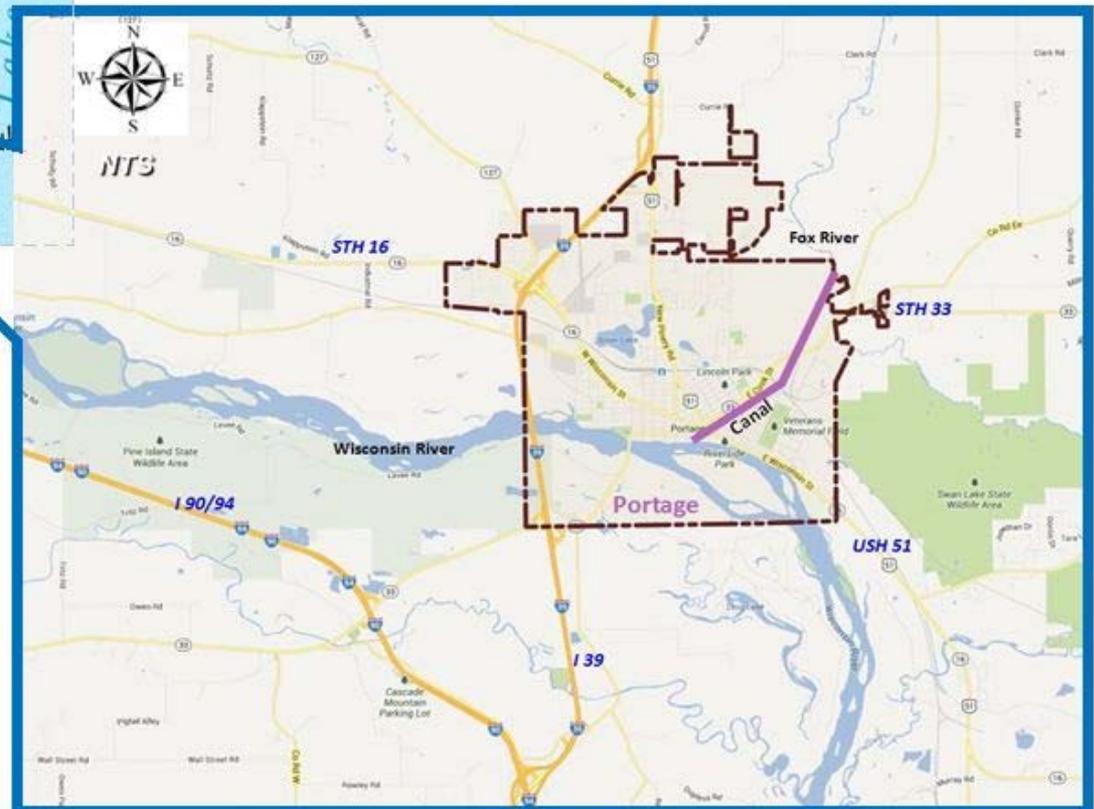
- In 2004 the City of Portage received Transportation Enhancement Program funding for the rehabilitation of the Wisconsin River lock.

- During final design there were several modifications made prior to completion of the P.S.&E.
 - The trail was initially planned to be provided on both sides of the canal between the Wisconsin River lock and Adams Street. With numerous constraints including buildings and mature trees and increasing costs, it was decided that providing a trail on both sides was not appropriate. The trail was constructed on the north side between the lock and Wisconsin Street and on the south side from Wisconsin Street to Adams Street.
 - The canal width was initially planned to be a nominal 60' width from the Wisconsin River lock to the Canadian Pacific Railway bridge, with a reduction to 49' from Wisconsin Street to Adams Street and a reduction to 55' at several other locations because of constraints; and between 75-80' between the Canadian Pacific Railway bridge and the Fox River, matching the existing width. With the constraints as noted above, it was decided that the

canal width needed to be reduced as well. The canal width was reduced to a nominal 40' width from the lock to Adams Street.

- In 2005, real estate acquisition began for the project. This also included agreement with the Department of Natural Resources regarding use of the canal property.
- In 2005 the City of Portage received High Priority Project Program funding for the project. It was to be available over a five year period, ending in 2009.
- In 2006, construction began for the project under ID 6996-05-07 and ID 6996-05-12. Project ID 6996-05-07 improvements between the Wisconsin River lock and Adams Street were 2,000 feet. Project ID 6996-05-12 improvements were for rehabilitation of the Wisconsin River lock. Construction of these projects was completed in 2007.
 - In 2006 after construction began, the City of Portage decided to use the first two yearly allocations of the five yearly allocations of the High Priority Project Program funding towards the project.
- In 2008 the City of Portage received Transportation Enhancement and Bicycle and Pedestrian Program funding for the construction of two bridges, one at Hamilton Street and one at the Riverwood Apartments, over the canal, and for the construction of the trail adjacent to the canal between Adams Street and the Canadian Pacific Railway.
- Between 2007 and 2012 the City of Portage continued discussions with the interested parties in the area and the Department of Natural Resources regarding the next phase of canal improvements.
- In 2013 the City of Portage expects to move forward with the design of the second phase of canal improvements under Project ID 6996-05-27. It is expected to include the following:
 - Review and revisions to the previously completed preliminary engineering and design concept plans and report between Adams Street and the Fox River
 - Review and revisions to the previously completed environmental documentation between Adams Street to the Fox River
 - Incorporation of storm water management measures for the structures which drain into the canal
 - Contaminated sediment removal by the Department of Natural Resources
 - Final engineering and the P.S.&E. for the portion between Adams Street and the Canadian Pacific Railway bridge and construction of the two bridges as noted above

PORTAGE CANAL VICINITY MAP



CITY OF PORTAGE

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'Where the North Begins'

