BRIDGE 02/22/17 L. ERICKSON

 If you travel between Wisconsin and Minnesota, your commute may get much easier this summer. The St. Croix Crossing project replaces the old lift bridge at Stillwater and is expected to open in early August—two months ahead of schedule. Lisa Erickson reports.

MP3 RUNS 1:27 O/C: …I’m Lisa Erickson.

LISA ERICKSON: THE BRIDGE PROJECT IS A JOINT EFFORT BY BOTH THE WISCONSIN D-O-T AND THE MINNESOTA D-O-T. MANY PEOPLE CAN HARDLY WAIT UNTIL THE NEW BRIDGE OPENS. TOM MAGNIFICI IS A BUSINESS OWNER WHO LIVES IN WISCONSIN BUT WORKS IN MINNESOTA. HE SAYS THE BRIDGE HAS BEEN IN THE MAKING FOR A VERY LONG TIME. I CAUGHT UP WITH HIM AT A LOCAL RESTAURANT. HE SAYS THE BRIDGE HAS BEEN A BIG PROBLEM WHEN IT WAS CLOSED OR BECAUSE OF THE HIGH VOLUME OF TRAFFIC.

TOM MAGNIFICI: SO YOU ADD THREE HOURS A DAY. AND IF YOU'VE GOT FIVE TO SIX PEOPLE ON A CREW THAT’S 15 HOURS OF LABOR THAT YOUR ADDING TO THE PROJECT THAT YOU NEVER FIGURED IN THERE, JUST BECAUSE THEY DECIDED WERE GOING TO CLOSE THE BRIDGE AND TO DO SOMETHING WITH IT FOR 10 TO 15 DAYS. SO IT ENDS UP COSTING YOU A LOT MORE MONEY. SO IT COST YOU MORE MONEY.

LISA ERICKSON: THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, KEVIN GUTKNECHT, SAYS THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN IN THE MAKING FOR TWO-TO-THREE DECADES AND TALKS BEGAN LONG AGO ABOUT HOW THE CURRENT STILLWATER LIFT BRIDGE WOULD BE REPLACED.

TOM MAGNIFICI: AND THE BRIDGE THEY PUT IN AESTHETICALLY IS VERY PLEASING. WHEN YOU SIT UP ON THE BLUFF AND LOOK AT THE NEW ONE, IT’S NOT THIS OBNOXIOUS THING OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, I MEAN, IT LOOKS LIKE SOMETHING FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT OR CALDER OR PICASSO OR SOMEBODY WOULD HAVE DESIGNED.

LISA ERICKSON: GUTKNECHT ALSO SAYS THIS PROJECT TOOK A VERY LONG TIME–IT LITERALLY TOOK AND ACT OF CONGRESS TO MOVE THIS PROJECT FORWARD. WHEN ASKED ABOUT A RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY GUTKNECHT SAID, THERE WILL DEFINITELY BE AN EVENT AND THEY WILL BE WORKING WITH THE CITY OF STILLWATER. FOR THE FALCON NEWS SERVICE, I’M LISA ERICKSON.

 The bridge project is estimated to cost more than $600 million.

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