

## Highway 23 Gaps Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### What are the Highway 23 Gaps Projects?

The segment of Highway 23 between Willmar and Interstate 94 is a distance of approximately 53 miles. Of these 53 miles, all but approximately 16 miles have been constructed as a four lane roadway. The approximately 16 miles of existing two-lane roadway are known as the Highway 23 Gaps. The ultimate vision for Highway 23 between Willmar and Interstate 94 is a continuous four-lane rural highway.

The first segment of two-lane is between New London and Paynesville and is referred to as the South Gap. The second segment is between Paynesville and Richmond. It is referred to as the North Gap.

### What is the Corridors of Commerce program?

In 2013, the Minnesota Legislature created the Corridors of Commerce program to provide additional highway capacity on segments where there are bottlenecks in the system and to improve the movement of freight and reduce barriers to commerce. Projects must meet the eligibility requirements identified within the law. Projects, including the Highway 23 Gaps, were selected in Greater Minnesota and the metro area based on their Corridor of Commerce scores. For more information on the Corridors of Commerce program visit [www.mndot.gov/corridorsofcommerce](http://www.mndot.gov/corridorsofcommerce).

### How are the projects being funded?

Corridors of Commerce projects (selected in 2018), seven in all, are paid for using bonds. Bonds are borrowed money, and there is a limit on the amount of money that MnDOT can borrow in any given year. Because of this, all seven projects cannot be constructed at the same time.

### Who will be the project lead?

MnDOT District 8 will be the lead on both gaps.

### What is the project cost?

\$94.5 million

## **What does it take to develop large projects like the Hwy 23 Gaps?**

It takes several years to develop and deliver large projects (such as the Hwy 23 South and North Gaps).

Prior to construction, generally speaking, there are two main phases in project development:

1. Highway layout development and environmental review (social, environmental and economic impacts)
2. Purchasing property (right-of-way), design and obtaining permits

By taking advantage of earlier funding through Corridors of Commerce, District 8 was able to complete the environmental review and study layout (approximately 2 years of work completed) for both the North and South Gaps. Detailed design, permitting, utility coordination and right of way acquisition are the next steps for both projects. It will take approximately 3 years to complete the remaining work before the project is ready to be constructed.

## **When will construction start?**

Construction of the North Gap will begin in 2022. Construction of the South Gap will begin in 2023. The projects will be bid separately and will overlap, in terms of construction, by one year. Each project will take 2 years to construct.

## **When will MnDOT start purchasing property (right-of-way)?**

Purchasing property for each project will start 2-3 years prior to construction. MnDOT will work with affected homeowners and landowners throughout the process. MnDOT anticipates acquiring property for the North Gap project starting in 2019. MnDOT anticipates acquiring property for the South Gap project starting in 2020.

## **Will the project require a detour?**

Yes, both projects will require a detour. MnDOT will explore what portions of construction can be done under traffic.