



AGENDA ITEM REPORT

Meeting Date: June 14, 2021

Staff Contact: Margie Gape, Administrative Assistant

Department: Administration

Subject: Solicit bids for Bridge Engineer

Recommendation(s):

Motion that Grosse Ile Township Board solicit competitive bids to retain a structural engineer with expertise in bridges.

History, Purpose & Explanation:

The contractor will assist the Township Board and Management to develop an independent understanding of the Wayne County Parkway Bridge which includes:

- The impact that Wayne County's immediate plans for major maintenance will have on the estimate service life of the span before additional major maintenance or replacement is required;
- Examination of the adequacy of performed annual or subsequent major maintenance to sustain the bridge's operation consistent with maximum feasible service life as initially estimated by Wayne County;
- Evaluation of ongoing inspections reports to determine if additional actions are required to achieve the maximum feasible service life estimated by Wayne County.

And to:

- To advise the Township Board and Management to position us so we can act based on our expert's opinion in the best long-term interest of the Township if it is determined, while the current contractors are still on site, that major maintenance on the remaining five support piers using the same contractors could significantly prolong the bridge's service life at a much lower cost than starting over with a separate and new initiative;
- To advise the Township Board and Management to position us to act in the best long-term interest of the Township if following the completion of the planned major maintenance of the bridge that its service life was extended significantly less based on our expert's opinion than the documented 20 to 30 years projected by Wayne County officials. This will position us to lobby the Michigan Legislature and Congressional Delegation based on expert opinion that bridge's replacement should be considered of the highest PRIORITY/EMERGENCY. This is especially relevant given the strong possibility of Congress approving a major new Federal government infrastructure funding bill later this year?

The value of the contract to retain the best qualified contractor shall not exceed \$25,000 over a time period [starting on July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022](#). If desired, the Township Board shall have the option to extend the contract with the same terms (e.g. same hourly rate) for an additional 12 months through June 2023.

The selection of the contractor shall be consistent with Grosse Ile Township's Policies and Procedures for the awarding of professional services contracts. In addition, a well-qualified engineer shall not have a perceived conflict of interest created by the ongoing, or anticipated, performance of work for Wayne County."

Opened to the public in 1931, the Wayne County Bridge on Parkway will turn 90 years old in September of 2021. Although many components of the bridge have been replaced or upgraded over the years, some critically important parts of the bridge are original.

In fact, the foundations of six of the eleven support piers for the bridge actually date back to the railroad bridge that was built at this location in 1873 and operated until it was removed to enable the construction of the current vehicle bridge. Underwater inspections of these 148-year-old foundations as well as the 90-year-old support piers indicate that major refurbishing is needed in order for the bridge to safely accommodate the maximum weight limit for vehicles traveling on a Class A Road in Michigan.

Similarly, inspections of the steel substructure and superstructure of the bridge show that major maintenance is required. Some amount of necessary maintenance was accomplished during the planned closure of the bridge which started in May of 2020 and has temporarily stopped to accommodate Wayne County's new effort to provide an accelerated long-term fix.

This is not the first time Wayne County has committed / attempted a long-term fix of the bridge with-out success. In 2007, Wayne County officials closed the bridge to vehicle traffic for eight months in order to facilitate major repairs to the steel substructure and superstructure of the span.

This long-term closure of the bridge caused a significant financial hardship for Grosse Ile residents who were forced to use the Grosse Ile Toll Bridge during this time period. Wayne County officials told Township officials and Grosse Ile citizens that their financial sacrifices would be rewarded by the projected uninterrupted use of the bridge for at least the next 30 years. Attached is a slide from a PowerPoint presentation that Wayne County officials made for the Township Board in 2006 which makes this assertion.

As it turned out, the bridge only remained in full operation for another 10 years before it had to be closed again to vehicle traffic for a long period of time to enable major maintenance. Islanders once again find themselves highly inconvenienced and financially burdened (approximately \$6 million annually/\$16,000 daily) by being forced to use the Toll Bridge during a closure period that is now in its 14th month which Wayne County officials have said could extend throughout most of 2021.

While I am encouraged that Wayne County officials have developed a plan with their contractor that they say will enable the reopening of the bridge at the maximum weight limit for vehicles traveling on a Class A Road in Michigan, I am concerned that this repair work only includes repairing six of the eleven support piers that Wayne County's consulting engineer identified as needing major maintenance in a report issued in June of 2020. I want the bridge reopened as soon as possible, but I also believe it serves the best long-term interests of Islanders for the Township Board to advocate for Wayne County to develop a second plan (i.e., phase two) to repair the additional five support piers in a way that will not slow down the ongoing progress, the reopening or cause it to be closed for any extended period after the reopening.

We need to best position Grosse Ile Township to understand the condition of the bridge at all times to ensure we can take all practical measures to avoid another surprise closure or take full advantage of opportunities to increase its longevity or replace it while still in operation. Retaining an engineer that specializes in bridges is a necessary and reasonable step to achieve these goals and to avoid any unpleasant surprises.

Financial Impact:

No (\$25,000) General Fund

Attachments:

[Wayne County Bridge](#)