Frequently Asked Questions: Waterford Bridge/Iron Bridge Replacement

Replacement of the Iron Bridge over the Cannon River has been discussed by Carleton College, the Waterford Township Board, and Dakota County for a number of years. We hope the answers to your questions about the bridge planning process and the final recommendations by the Arboretum Committee are included here. Please contact Nancy Braker, Arboretum Director, if you need more information.

Why does the Iron Bridge need replacement?
The single lane Iron Bridge is listed as number one on the State of Minnesota’s deficient bridge list. While currently safe, and frequently inspected, it can not be considered safe for much longer. Additionally, the current bridge is not rated for emergency vehicle use; ambulances and fire equipment are not allowed to use it due to height, width and weight restrictions.

What is the recommendation of the Arboretum Committee?
The Arboretum Committee recommends that the College Board of Trustees approve the donation of a transportation easement (of about 2 acres) and a temporary construction easement to the Township of Waterford for the purposes of bridge construction.

What type of bridge will be built?
The new bridge will allow for two lanes of traffic (one lane in each direction) and will be rated for emergency vehicles. The road surface area of the new bridge will be 32 feet wide, which should allow for room for pedestrians and bikes to share the road with vehicle traffic.

Where will the new bridge be built?
The new bridge will be built slightly upstream of the Iron Bridge on land owned by Carleton. A transportation easement will be donated to the Township of Waterford which will grant them permission to build and maintain the bridge. A construction easement will grant temporary use of additional land to facilitate the bridge building. It was not possible to find a bridge crossing site downstream of the present bridge that did not involve moving and rebuilding roads, among other issues.

What will happen to the Iron Bridge?
As long as it continues to pass safety inspections, the Iron Bridge would be left in place for the period of new bridge construction to allow for river crossing. After the new bridge is in place the Iron Bridge will be closed to public use pending future plans to
renovate and re-use for pedestrian and bicycle crossing. Because of the historical significance of the bridge the Township of Waterford hopes to be able to follow through on these plans but a funding source for the renovation and maintenance of the Iron Bridge has not been identified.

**What was the process used to determine the future bridge location?**
Members of the Arboretum Committee, as well as other college representatives, have discussed the bridge with the Township of Waterford for the past four years. A number of specific questions were asked regarding the ecological impacts of the new bridge. The bridge location plans and bridge design were re-worked three times to accommodate various concerns. Outside assistance was solicited from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

**Who was involved in the discussion regarding the Iron Bridge replacement?**
Members of the Arboretum Committee, the Dean of the College Office, the Vice-President and Treasurer, the External Relations Office, and College Legal Counsel all participated in the discussion.

**What impact will there be on the Carleton Arboretum?**
While the Arboretum Committee worked hard to minimize impact, some negative impacts are inevitable. There are three identified categories of impact: short term ecological, long term ecological, and aesthetic. In the short term we will see ecological impact to the floodplain forest in the area the new bridge will occupy and in the construction zone needed to build the bridge. Two groups of large cottonwood trees will be removed, and a number of smaller cottonwood, ash, and river birch will also be removed. We hope to provide the lumber from these trees to the Carleton Art Department for use in art and furniture projects. Long term we expect that there will be changes in the river and floodplain forest dynamics due to changes in water flow patterns and constraints to the river channel caused by the piers of the new bridge. We expect these to be minimized as much as possible by the changes we have requested in the bridge design and approach. Lastly, there is no doubt that the new bridge will look quite different than the existing Iron Bridge. The new bridge will be substantially larger and will be a more imposing presence to those exploring the Arboretum on foot or by boat.

The Waterford Town Board has assured Carleton that it is committed to maintaining the rural character of this area. There are no plans to pave Canada Avenue.

**How big an area of the Arboretum will be impacted?**
The Arboretum is 880 acres in size. The area impacted by building the new bridge is approximately 2 acres.

**What benefits will there be to the Carleton community?**
As part of the bridge construction, the Township of Waterford has agreed to develop a formal boat launch for canoe and kayak use. While boaters currently use the area just upstream of the Iron Bridge to launch, it is a difficult scramble up a steep bank and there is not adequate or safe parking. Additionally, the Town of Waterford is extremely
grateful that the College is willing to work with them to solve their bridge safety and access issues.

**When will the new bridge be built?**
Engineering work is expected to be completed by July. Depending on permitting and funding, construction will take place in the fall of 2008 or in 2009.

**Who should I contact if I still have questions?**
Contact Arboretum Director Nancy Braker, or any other member of the Arboretum Committee. Current Arboretum Committee members are Nancy Braker, Dennis Easley, Leon Lunder, Mark McKone, Éva Pósfay, Fred Rogers, Mary Savina, and Gary Wagenbach.