



I-94 Modernization Project E-Update

May/June/July 2021

Welcome to the I-94 e-Update!
Here are the latest happenings on the project.



The Mt. Elliott Street bridge over I-94 is open and receiving its finishing touches. (Photo Description: An angled shot of a new freeway bridge with an arched support wall or pier and slanted ornamental fence and streetlights.)

Three New Bridges Open to Traffic

Good news! The **East Grand Boulevard** and **Mt. Elliott Street bridges** over I-94 and the **Milwaukee Avenue bridge** over I-75 are open to traffic and the contractor is completing miscellaneous work including cleanup.

That brings the total number of bridges rebuilt along Detroit's I-94 corridor as part of the advanced bridges program to 13.

Ongoing Bridge Work

At the **Frontenac Street bridge**: Low density cellular concrete is being

used to backfill the north abutment and the I-94 concrete barrier wall is being backfilled with sand. The south abutment is backfilled, the storm sewer is installed, and the contractor is adjusting drainage structures and rough grading, or creating the basic profile of, the roadway base.

At the **Burns Street and Cadillac Avenue bridges**: The north abutments of the old bridges have been demolished, and excavation for the new ones has been completed. The pile (the long steel posts driven into the ground to support the new bridge) for the Cadillac Avenue north abutment has been installed. Now, the new abutment footings will be formed and poured. In the next few weeks, the concrete barrier walls on eastbound and westbound I-94 will be poured.

**For questions or concerns during bridge work,
please contact:**

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SBE Spotlight

One of MDOT's goals for the I-94 project is to create opportunities for small and minority-owned businesses. The Small Business Enterprise (SBE) program is a mentoring program for small and minority-owned businesses, providing them a unique environment to work alongside the main contractor on the project. It helps them gain experience, grow their technical capabilities, and meet the financial requirements for working on future MDOT projects.

Amy Trahey, P.E., is founder of Great Lakes Engineering Group (GLEG) and has been a participant in the SBE program since 2019.



Amy Trahey, founder of Great Lakes Engineering Group. (Photo Description: A close headshot of a woman smiling. She has light skin and blonde hair. There is a model of a bridge visible in the background.)

I-94 Team: Hi, Amy. Tell us about your company.

Amy Trahey: Our passion is for bridges. That's the reason the company was founded back in 2000. We offer bridge design, bridge construction, and we provide bridge safety inspections to make sure that a bridge is safe for the public, both above and below water.

I-94 Team: So, what kind of work do you do on the I-94 modernization project?

Amy Trahey: We have two different I-94 contracts and we're providing construction inspection services for both. Since 2019, we've been a sub-consultant to HNTB, the owner's representative* for the I-94 project. We've been augmenting their construction inspection staff on bridge replacement construction with some of our more seasoned construction inspectors.

The second contract is more recent. It's part of the SBE program where we are a prime contractor directly with MDOT. We work with Andrea Wilcox at the MDOT Detroit Transportation Service Center. We're providing an entry-level construction inspector, who previously served as a material tester for our firm and wants to continue to develop to become a construction inspector. So, we've had our inspector on a project for the last year, and HNTB has been providing mentoring and instructional courses.

We also performed bridge scoping for MDOT (which is determining the best repair alternative that will be performed on a bridge or series of bridges) along the I-94 corridor.

I-94 Team: When did you join the I-94 project?

Amy Trahey: In 2015. As I mentioned, we performed preliminary bridge scoping services for MDOT. That early work helped MDOT put together the advanced bridges project to rebuild the bridges along the corridor that were in the poorest condition in advance of rebuilding the freeway itself.

I-94 Team: Which advanced bridges has your firm worked on?

Amy Trahey: So far, we've worked on seven of the bridges over I-94: East Grand Boulevard, Mt. Elliott Street, Frontenac Street, Burns Street, Cadillac Avenue, Concord Avenue, and French Road, plus Milwaukee Avenue over I-75.

I-94 Team: How has working on the I-94 project affected your business?

Amy Trahey: Having a multi-year project like I-94 is such a gift. Knowing that in the next two years we're going to have a project that we can hire and support staff will create continuity for us and the confidence to invest in staff hires.

Also, as a small company, we do as much internal training as we possibly can but working with MDOT and HNTB has been an amazing way to train and mentor staff.

I-94 Team: What made you want to become an engineer?

Amy Trahey: I was fascinated with structures and bridges when I was growing up. My family didn't travel extensively, but whenever we did, we'd go up to the Mackinac Island area and see the Mackinac Bridge. Or we'd go to Chicago; I'd see all the bascule bridges,



Members of the GLEG team inspect the Concord Street bridge when it was rebuilt in 2019. (Photo Description: A work site scene. Seven people in high-visibility vests and hardhats work around an abutment wall. The bridge has its support walls built but no span on top yet.)

the movable bridges that open along the Chicago River. They're just amazing structures that made me ask lots of questions. I saw that bridges really connected people, and I loved that aspect. So, that's really what inspired me to become an engineer; I just thought it'd be a great way to leave my fingerprint on the world, one bridge at a time.

*An owner's representative is a company assigned by the owner of a construction project to plan and manage that project.

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