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■ A Closer Look

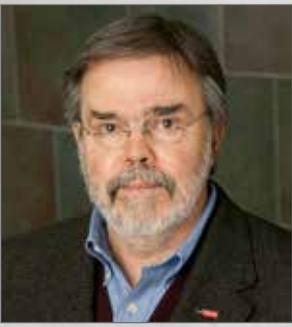
Hydrema US, Inc. specializes in compact equipment for confined and soft areas

■ A Family Tradition

An Interview with Carrie Roider, CEO of Erb Equipment

■ Emerging Leader

Matt Cooper follows in family footsteps



Are You Aware Of The Issues With Aging Infrastructure?

MN2050 dives into the issues with Minnesota's infrastructure.

If we don't invest in our infrastructure more wisely, in a more timely way, our economy will suffer, quality of life will degrade and basic public safety will deteriorate.

The growing Minnesota problem: Much like people, pipes and pavements get old and creaky. Unlike people, however, pipes and pavements are not given the preventive care and remedies that can extend useful life and keep them "healthy" as they age. Minnesota has an aging infrastructure problem—probably very much like that of the 49 other states.

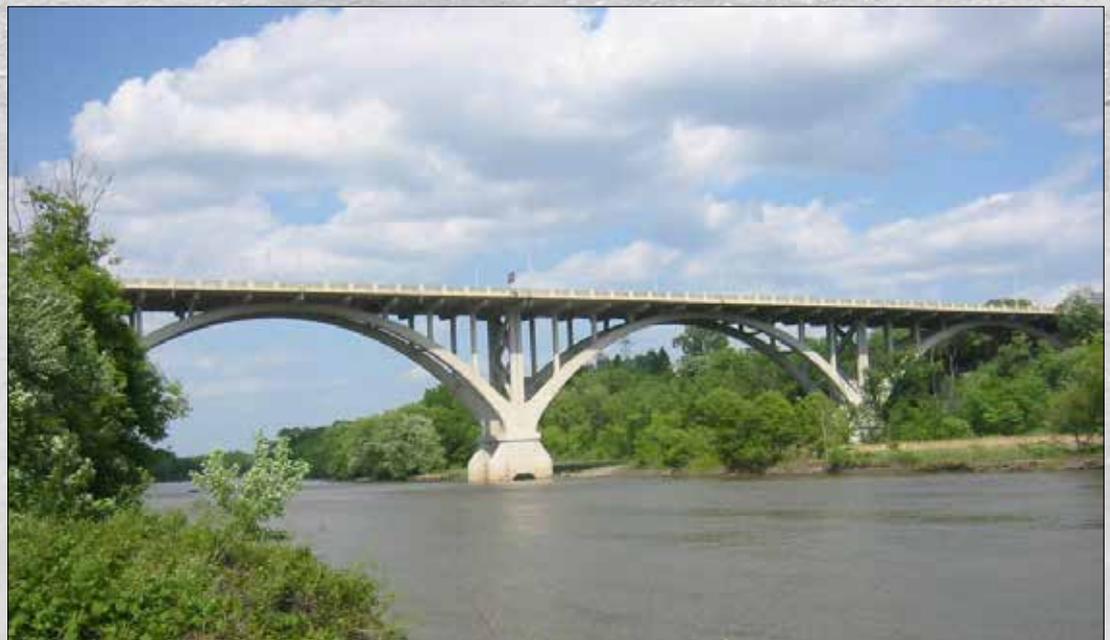
Utility pipes are buried. Most of our street structure is also beneath the surface, hidden. It's all easy to ignore. A typical citizen is not interested as long as it works. And when pavement fails, short-term fixes like pothole patching seem adequate . . . for a bit. The public is unaware and therefore seems unconcerned about this neglect. Many elected officials do know better, but they aren't being pestered by their constituents about infrastructure like they are about other big problems and perceived priorities.

This neglect, if uncorrected, will have strong negative ramifications for Minnesota. If we don't invest in our infrastructure more wisely, in a more timely way, our economy will suffer, quality of life will degrade and basic public

safety will deteriorate. What can be done? We probably can't afford to do all that is needed to "fix" infrastructure in the short run. But if we don't address this growing problem now, we will have bigger problems and an even higher bill later. Or our kids will.

Minnesota's attempt at solution: In 2008, Larry Frevert, the national president of the American Public Works Association, visited the Minnesota chapter (APWA-MN). He challenged the group to take on infrastructure investment neglect. He suggested creating a state program along the lines of America 2050, a national organization focused on improving economic development and quality of life. That year, Dan Gage, vice president of McQueen Equipment, was president of the Minnesota chapter. Dan and APWA-MN accepted the challenge and initiated MN2050. Dan led MN2050 as chair, organizing the group and expanding it. He continues in the lead role.

Other professional associations were invited to become active partners, and 17 groups involved in public works and infrastructure joined. This included the Minnesota and the



The Mendota Bridge, spanning the Mississippi River near the Twin Cities, is undergoing deck and pavement repair through November.



Duluth sections of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), the City Engineers Association of Minnesota (CEAM) and the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) (See figure 1).

MN2050 emphasizes public education: make citizens aware of the investment neglect and the consequences if not changed. Hopefully, informed citizens will demand action from their elected officials.

The initiative highlights five types of common public infrastructure: roads and bridges; water, wastewater and storm-water; aviation; ports and waterways; and freight and passenger rail. A three-piece approach was planned: Phase 1. Problems and the risks involved are documented; Phase 2. The concerns are communicated via understandable media messages; and Phase 3. Professional members of the partner organizations will engage the public to get the message across.

Progress: Volunteers from the partner groups were organized into committees documenting what might happen if the five infrastructure areas remain neglected. That information is available on a website

created with the support of local consultants: mn2050.org.

Consultant and vendor sponsors donated over \$125,000 to fund a series of videos created for MN2050 by Twin Cities public television (TPT). TPT also led MN2050 into involvement with the Minnesota STEM program to encourage children's interest in engineering and infrastructure.

Last year MN2050, with support from MnDOT's Office of State Aid and Wilder Research, conducted the first-ever statewide survey of asset management practices in Minnesota cities, counties and state agencies. So far, this has resulted in shared knowledge about tools and systems available and may next lead to adoption of consistent best practices. The ultimate goal is the minimization of life cycle costs.

Minnesota 2050 is also a key supporter of a cooperative research initiative of the State Auditor's Office and the University of Minnesota that will create interactive service life maps for city infrastructure in Minnesota. This project is presently in its early stage.

Currently, Minnesota 2050 and APWA-MN is considering a bold initiative to get partners' members involved in directly engaging the public in various venues, including local political caucuses. As proposed, it would start this year and continue for the next several years. This would be a huge challenge because of its expense and because of the difficulty of getting professionals to "mix it up" publicly in order to influence policy making at the grassroots level.

Virtually all of the efforts have been accomplished by volunteers. Now that the foundational work has been done, what remains is the difficult outreach and engagement.

Bottom line: Will Minnesota fix its infrastructure? That is the question. MN2050 volunteers are convinced the answer must be "yes." Through MN2050, the state's professionals have taken a unique approach. The new political involvement initiative may work, but it is uncharted territory for public works professionals. If successful, MN2050 could provide a guiding template for other states.