



Saint Louis County

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NEWS RELEASE

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Highland Street – final flood-related project – to be finished this week

The reconstruction of Highland Street in West Duluth will be finished later this week. Its completion marks the end of flood repairs for St. Louis County Public Works. A media event to mark the occasion will be held Thursday, July 16, at 11 a.m. at the intersection of Highland Street and Skyline Parkway.

“Anyone who has suffered in the aftermath of the flood knows what a long three years this has been,” said Commissioner Chris Dahlberg, whose district was particularly hard hit by the flood. “We know there are many people who are still trying to recover, but this is a significant accomplishment and reflects the County’s commitment to rebuild and improve since 2012.”

“The St. Louis County Public Works Department has shown a concerted effort to respond to the effects of the flood on County roads. Our program to rebuild and improve our roads has been at record levels each year since,” said Kevin Gray, County Administrator. “This is a great opportunity to thank our staff and contractors for their hard work and perseverance that brought us to this day.”

The “Highland Street project” involved the rebuilding of 1.5 miles of County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 89, an L-shaped stretch that includes 57th Avenue West and Highland Street. It also included the reconfiguration of the five-leg intersection where Highland, Vinland Street, Getchell Road and Skyline Parkway met into a standard four-leg intersection; and the re-paving of nearly two miles of Getchell Road. Highland Street was reconstructed between 57th Avenue West and Skyline Parkway, with the road widened to allow for safer parking, plus a sidewalk was added. A 183-foot bridge now spans Keene Creek, replacing a culvert that was damaged by the flood.

Accommodations for the Superior Hiking Trail were added beneath the bridge and a new trail access parking lot was added at the Skyline intersection. Additionally, 57th Avenue West was reconstructed between Cody and Highland Streets. Sanitary sewer, water lines, and the sidewalk were replaced. In all, 2,000 cubic yards of rock were excavated and 21,000 tons of bituminous pavement was laid.

The \$12 million project is the second largest ever for the County and was funded in large part with flood bonding dollars. It's rebuilding was purposely delayed until Haines Road could be complete to minimize detour inconveniences. The majority of the work on Highland Street was completed last year, and the road has been open since November. However, landscaping, lane striping and other finishing details were just completed this week.

For the Highland Street project, Northland Constructors served as the primary contractor on the project. Other key partners include Schroeder Construction, Inc., Northwoods Sodding Co., LHB, Inc. and the City of Duluth.

In all, the cost of repairs and rebuilding St. Louis County roads and bridges has totaled \$50 million over the last three years. Most of that money has come from state flood bonds and federal assistance. Other key details associated with the flood recovery efforts of the last three years include:

- 843 damage sites repaired that involved approximately 1,400 miles of the County's 3,000 mile road system.
- 20 bridges replaced, 54 bridges repaired, 312 others inspected to ensure safety.
- Improved accommodations and access points for the Superior Hiking Trail at both Haines Road and Highland Street.
- The new bridge across Keene Creek, at 183 feet, is the longest bridge of its kind (single span, pre-stressed) in Minnesota.
- The rebuilding of Haines Road won project of the year honors from both the Minnesota County Engineers Association and the American Public Works Association

"As we celebrate this milestone, we absolutely must thank the responsive and supportive actions of our state legislators," said Commissioner Keith Nelson, who chaired the County Board at the time of the flood. "Without their timely support, and recognition of the flood's impacts to residents of the region, we would not have been able to accomplish so much, so quickly."

"I am extremely proud of the work we've been able to accomplish over the last three years, but more importantly, people should know what we've learned and what we are doing moving forward to minimize the chance of such devastation in the future," said Jim Foldesi, Director of Public Works for St. Louis County. "We are partnering with FEMA, HUD, NOAA, the U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and other local agencies to collect and analyze hydraulic information, identify weaknesses in our infrastructure and set us up to be eligible for future flood resiliency funding efforts.”

The completion of flood-related projects does not mean the Public Works Department will now be slowing down. This year and next will actually be even busier construction seasons than the years following the flood as the County embarks on a two-year plan to invest \$119 million in road and bridge repairs using a combination of traditional funding sources as well as the newly implemented Transportation Sales Tax. To sign up for email updates on any St. Louis County Public Works project, visit stlouiscountymn.gov/construction

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