

**Department of Community Planning and Economic Development**

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**MEMORANDUM**

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DATE: September 10, 2013  
TO: Heritage Preservation Commission members  
FROM: Hilary Dvorak, Principal City Planner   
SUBJECT: Cappelen Memorial (Franklin Avenue) Bridge Rehabilitation

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Connecting south and southeast Minneapolis, the Cappelen Memorial Bridge was constructed between 1919 and 1923. Two prominent Norwegian engineers, Frederick William Cappelen and Kristoffer Olsen Oustad were commissioned to plan, design, and construct a bridge that would cross the Mississippi River, a distance of over 1,000 feet. In order to convey a sense of permanence and beauty in the scenic surroundings, the engineers chose a steel reinforced arched concrete bridge. The Franklin Avenue Bridge gained notoriety at the time of its construction for including the longest concrete arch in the world. The total length of the bridge is 1054 feet with a vertical clearance of 88 feet. In 1970, the bridge was closed and reconditioned. When it reopened it included four lanes of traffic and pedestrian walkways. Engineer Frederick William Cappelen died during the construction of the bridge, and as a memorial to his life and career, the bridge still bears his name. The bridge was listed on the National Register in 1978 and was locally designated in 1985.

Hennepin County owns and maintains the Cappelen Memorial Bridge. The bridge is in need of repair. As part of the project the bridge deck would be replaced, new pedestrian and bicycle paths would be constructed, the railings would be completely rebuilt, historically appropriate lights would be installed, the river piers and arches would be repaired and the east end of the bridge would be widened by ten feet.

The purpose of scheduling this project as an informational item at the HPC meeting on September 10, 2013, is to acquire feedback from the commission on the proposed scope of the rehabilitation.