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**Contact:** Yvonne Klinnert, Public Information Manager  
**Phone:** 651-430-6026, after hours 952-807-3723  
**E-mail:** yvonne.klinnert@co.washington.mn.us

### **Washington County celebrates partnerships, accessibility with pedestrian bridge**

Washington County officials, along with their local, state, and federal partners, celebrated the construction of a new pedestrian bridge over Interstate 94 Oct. 8, connecting Oakdale and Woodbury and providing a pedestrian and biking path for a free flow of people between the two cities.

The former crossing was narrow, about eight feet wide, and did not meet current standards for a bikeway, including standards for accessibility under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The project removed the existing pedestrian and bicycle path on the former bridge, and converted that to a third southbound lane in the roadway. Then a new pedestrian bridge was built adjacent to the existing roadway bridge. The project adds capacity and improves safety on Radio Drive/Inwood Avenue, and improves accessibility and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists in the area. The bridge is wide enough to accommodate two-way bike and pedestrian traffic, and is accessible. It also has a pedestrian plaza on either end to offer a more welcoming experience and connect the two cities.

Washington County commissioners Stan Karwoski, District 2, and Lisa Weik, District 5, were part of the celebration, along with representatives from the community.

Commissioner Weik noted the need for continuously growing recreational pedestrian trails, linking communities and providing accessibility, especially in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, when people are seeking additional outdoor recreation. She also noted that the pedestrian bridge crosses a major interstate freeway, which so often can be a barrier to pedestrian traffic or those who use non-motorized vehicles.

Commissioner Karwoski praised the governmental partnerships that made the project possible, saying that the project came together through the collaboration of the county with the Minnesota Department

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of Transportation, the cities of Woodbury and Oakdale, federal partners, including recognition of U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, whose work made it possible to bring \$2.7 million in federal funds to the project, and the Metropolitan Council, all contributing to make the project possible.



A ribbon-cutting celebrates the opening of the pedestrian bridge over Interstate 94, between Oakdale and Woodbury Oct. 8. Among those celebrating the new pedestrian bridge were state Sen. Susan Kent, Oakdale Mayor Paul Reinke, U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum, Fourth District, Woodbury Mayor Anne Burt, and Washington County commissioners Stan Karwoski, District 2, Lisa Weik, District 5, and Fran Miron, District 1.