

Finding Aid to the Jon Lindgren Papers

Lindgren, Jon

Jon Lindgren Papers on the Fargo 12th Avenue North Bridge, 1978-1991

1.4 linear ft

Collection number: Mss 203

[Biography](#)

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OVERVIEW

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BIOGRAPHY

Jon Lindgren is currently an Associate Professor of Economics and Chair of the Economics Department at North Dakota State University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Missouri in 1968. Lindgren served as mayor of Fargo from 1978-1994. During his time as mayor Lindgren saw the city grow and dealt with many problems facing a growing city. He often disagreed with other city officials on projected plans for the Fargo area. Lindgren was staunchly opposed to the 12th Avenue bridge before he was elected mayor of Fargo. He did not agree with the findings of the Bridge Company and other organizations. Lindgren did not feel a bridge was necessary at the 12th Avenue North location and opposed it on these grounds. Lindgren was defeated by Bruce Furness in the 1994 mayoral election.

BACKGROUND

When Lindgren became mayor in 1978 the debate over the proposed 12th-15th Avenue bridge connecting the cities of Fargo, North Dakota and Moorhead, Minnesota was seventeen years old. There were numerous arguments for and against the bridge and many Fargo and Moorhead city officials became personally involved in the debate. Much of the controversy focused on the impact the bridge would have on residential neighborhoods, the environment, the structure of the bridge, who would pay for its construction, and how feasible the bridge would be economically. These issue demanded much attention from the City of Fargo. The Bridge Company, the company proposing the toll bridge, sent plans and applications to the Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) without having them approved by the City of Fargo, the lead agency. Moore Engineering, the company designing the bridge, also sent in plans without the City's approval. Since Fargo was the lead agency all material needed to be approved by the City. What ensued was a bureaucratic and political mess. The Corps and FEMA sent letters to Fargo officials notifying them of the material, who in turn replied asking the agencies stop all permit applications. The city officials then sent letters to the Bridge Company and Moore Engineering reminding them to send all plans to the City Commission first.

The economic studies done by the Bridge Company sparked much of the debate. Lindgren, members of Citizens Organized for Residential Protection (CORP) and other parties doubted the Company's study of cars crossing and construction costs. The Bridge Company continually revised the car crossing numbers and the income figures. The Company even proposed raising the toll from twenty-five cents to thirty five cents to cover the costs. They tried to cut costs by taking out a different insurance policy. Lindgren doubted the Bridge Company's findings and conducted his own study which revealed a totally different set of data. Residents of the 12th Avenue neighborhood counted the number of cars passing through the neighborhood in a twenty-four hour period and found a different number of cars than that of the Bridge Company.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The papers, letters, studies, and manuals were collected by Lindgren during his years as the mayor of Fargo. There is a great deal of correspondence covering permit application, support and opposition of the bridge, flood management, and the numerous issues and concerns the construction of the bridge raised. The Papers are divided into five series: Overview, Correspondence, Legal, Manual/Studies and Bridge Company.

The [Overview Series](#) provides an understanding of the bridge controversy. It contains newspaper clippings that detail the debate over the construction and the political efforts by the cities of Fargo and Moorhead to have the bridge built. Included is an article by H. Elaine Lindgren that documents the citizen protest movement and contains an excellent time line of events in the debate's history. A letter by Lindgren provides an official's view of the bridge debate. Meeting minutes are included because they show the decision making process of accepting or refusing the bridge plans and the efforts by the Bridge

Company and private citizens to build or block the building of the bridge. The gas tax material is also included since the city proposed such a tax to fund the construction of the 12th Avenue bridge.

The [Correspondence Series](#) covers a wide range of information. The permit application procedure is well documented and the behind the scenes efforts of citizens and city officials to impede or push through the application is also well documented. The citizens' support and opposition of the bridge is covered. People were concerned about the impact on pollution, residential safety, and recreation the bridge's construction would have on the surrounding area. City officials of Fargo and Moorhead had strong feelings about the bridge which is reflected in letters written between them. Exclusion from federal funding to help with flood damage repair and flood prevention measures promoted city officials and concerned citizens to contact FEMA about the bridge's impact on Fargo's status of maintaining federal funding.

The [Legal Series](#) consists of agreements between Fargo, Moorhead, and the Bridge Company and lawsuits filed against and by the City of Fargo. Citizens Organized for Residential Protection filed lawsuits against the city to prevent construction of the bridge. The City of Fargo sued Cass County over bridge construction funds and the Fargo Park Board over the amount of land condemned for construction of the bridge. The agreement between Fargo and Moorhead was necessary since each city needed to purchase the right of way. The Public Hearing of September 30, 1983 is included because it was necessary for the Army Corps of Engineers to hear final plans and citizen concerns before making their judgment about issuing a permit for the bridge's construction. The Department of the Army Permit is also included because it was a direct result of the public hearing.

The [Manual/Studies Series](#) contains plans for the 12th Avenue Bridge, its alternatives, economic studies, traffic studies and flood studies. The Army Corps of Engineers used Moore Engineering's plans to determine the flooding based on computer models. Residents in the area near the proposed bridge counted traffic over a twenty-four hour period on several different occasions to determine if the bridge was feasible. There is a manual published by the Coast Guard on how to apply for its bridge permits. The majority of the studies and manuals deal with the construction of the bridge and its impact on the Fargo-Moorhead area.

The [Bridge Company Series](#) contains very little about the company itself but does provide some information about the company and its motives behind building the bridge. The Bridge Company sent its own studies and plans to the Army Corps of Engineers without the approval of the City of Fargo several times and later sent their plans to the city council, which is included in this series. In the early 1990s the Bridge Company was having a difficult time paying the taxes, investors and operating costs so they attempted to have a law passed in Bismarck that made them a tax exempt entity.

BOX AND FOLDER LIST

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Overview Series

- 1/2 Overview of bridge issue, Lindgren's letter
- 1/3 "The Informal-Intermittent Organization: A Vehicle for Successful Citizen Protest," by
H. Elaine Lindgren
- 1/4 Newspaper clippings
- 1/5 Meeting minutes
- 1/6 Gas tax figures and debate

Correspondence Series

- 1/7 Issues, concerns, and press releases regarding the bridge
- 1/8 Correspondence covering financial backing for the bridge
- 1/9 Fargo and Moorhead city officials correspondence about the bridge
- 1/10 Fargo Park Board correspondence
- 1/11 Letters in opposition to the bridge
- 1/12 Letters and material in favor of the bridge
- 1/13 Correspondence asking why things proceeded before official word was given
- 1/14 Moore Engineering and Bridge Feasibility Study correspondence
- 1/15 FEMA correspondence regarding flood impact of the 12th Avenue bridge
- 1/16 Permit correspondence
- 2/1 Correspondence with elected state and federal officials
- 2/2 CORP correspondence

Legal Series

- 2/3 Lawsuits filed by CORP against the City of Fargo
- 2/4 Lawsuits filed by and against the City of Fargo
- 2/5 Legal agreements between Fargo, Moorhead and the Bridge Company
- 2/6 Public hearing announcement (September 30, 1983) and requests for more public hearings
- 2/7 Department of the Army permit

Manual/Studies Series

- 2/8 *Transportation Analysis District Comparison Between 1980 and 2000*
- 2/9 *Impact Statement of the Proposed 12th Avenue Bridge on Jack Williams Stadium, Fargo,
North Dakota-May 1, 1987*
- 2/10 *TSM and Federal Highway Funds for Transportation Improvements 1977*
- 2/11 *Preliminary Data for Permit Application St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers, 1979*
- 2/12 *Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Studies for the Fargo Moorhead
Metropolitan Area, September 1965*
- 2/13 *An Alternative Proposal to the Cities of Fargo and Moorhead for a Bridge Across the
Red River of the North*

- 2/14 *Fargo Moorhead Metropolitan Area Highway Plan Update-1985*
- 2/15 *Highway Plan Update supplements*
- 2/16 *Applications for Coast Guard Bridge Permits-October 1981*
- 2/17 *Independent studies of FEMA, Corps of Engineers and interested parties*
- 3/1 *The Report of the Task Force for the Fargo-Moorhead Cultural and Heritage Bridge*
- 3/2 *Urban Transportation Economics*
- 3/3 *Bridge Feasibility Study-Fargo Moorhead Council of Governments*
- 3/4 *National Cooperative Highway Research Program Synthesis of Highway Practice #117-
Toll Highway Financing*
- 3/5 *Fargo Moorhead 1st Avenue North Bridge*
- 3/6 *Report to the Transportation and Communication Policy Committee*
- 3/7 *Preliminary Design Study 12th Ave. N., Fargo N. Dak.*
- 3/8 *Fargo-Moorhead 12th Avenue-15th Avenue River Crossing*
- 3/9 *Low Cost Urban Transportation Alternatives: Volume I*
- 3/10 *Preliminary Data for Permit Application, St. Paul District, Corps of Engineers, April 1983*
- 3/11 *Fargo-Moorhead 12th/15th Avenue River Crossing Environmental Worksheet*
- 4/1 *Near Northside II: A Study of a Portion of a Neighborhood*
- 4/2 *Bike trail and permit information compiled by Linda Elofson*
- 4/3 *Flood statistics and predictions involving the 12th Avenue bridge*

Bridge Company Series

- 4/4 *Bridge Company material and permit applications*
- 4/5 *Bridge Company's attempt to become tax exempt*