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City of Duluth Communications Office

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SUBJECT: New Aerial Lift Bridge Schedule Proposed
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New Aerial Lift Bridge Schedule Proposed

The City of Duluth has received preliminary approval from the National Coast Guard to test a new schedule for the Aerial Lift Bridge. The proposed schedule allows a temporary deviation from federal regulations to help improve vehicular traffic flow, relieve traffic congestion, and improve access and response times for emergency responders to Minnesota Point while still providing access for water vessels. The new policy would provide two scheduled bridge lifts during the hour for all smaller vessels. Commercial vessels of 300 tons or greater would still be provided access on request. The City and Coast Guard will be compiling comments prior to and during the test period.

"This is a common sense solution. By limiting the number of lifts in a given hour we are improving public safety, improving traffic flow, and reducing wear and tear on the mechanics of the Bridge. I want to thank the Coast Guard, Park Point residents, and City staff who have been working on this proposal," said Mayor Don Ness.

The Aerial Lift Bridge schedule would apply for the period of May 3 to October 31, 2010. The bridge would open on the hour and on the half hour between the hours of 6:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., seven days per week. The bridge would open on signal for all vessels from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m., and at all times for federal, state, and local government vessels used for public safety, vessels in distress, commercial vessels engaged in rescue or emergency salvage operations, vessels engaged in pilot duties, vessels seeking shelter from severe weather, and all commercial vessels 300 gross tons or greater.

The current schedule for the bridge requires the bridge to open on signal for all vessels, 24 hours, 7 days a week, between March 16 and December 31 each year. With about 15,000

vehicles crossing the bridge each day during peak tourist season and an average of 27 bridge openings each day, the existing schedule causes traffic congestion on the bridge and roadway which provides the only access and evacuation route across the ship canal to Minnesota Point. The City hopes the proposed schedule would relieve the congestion on land and water and provide better access to Minnesota Point. Vessels can still gain access to Duluth harbor at all times through Superior harbor, WI.

Council approval will be required to implement this new Bridge policy. A resolution will be presented to the City Council at the April 26, 2010 meeting. If approved, the schedule would be implemented on May 3.

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