

## CASE STUDY:

# La Crosse, Wisconsin

### Background

La Crosse, Wisconsin has a rich history. Getting its name from French settlers that observed Native Americans playing a game resembling lacrosse on the banks of the river, La Crosse grew as a major commercial hub in the mid 1800's and 1900's. With three colleges and universities in La Crosse, it is known today as a regional technology and medical hub. Adding to its history, La Crosse also boasts the first installation of GridSmart in Wisconsin, and one of the first deployments of GridSmart while the technology was still in the research and development stage.

"GridSmart was still in an evolutionary stage, and we were seeding the market with prototype systems – in various climates and applications – in an effort to get customer feedback and improve the technology and make it commercially viable. Our goal was to exceed our customers' expectations by delivering a product unlike any other. We saw the frigid temperatures and snow as a challenge, so we contacted Wisconsin DOT to discuss the opportunity for a test site," states Vig Sherrill, Chief Executive Officer for Aldis. In September 2008, Wisconsin DOT (WisDOT) and Aldis reached an agreement to test and evaluate the product and provide feedback to Aldis on the ease of use, ease of installation and maintenance, performance, and durability, among other variables. The system would be monitored for some period of time, and when WisDOT gained confidence in the system, the system would replace the loops currently providing detection.

WisDOT agreed to install the camera at the intersection of U.S. Highway 53/State Highway 35 and the I-90 Eastbound off-ramp just north of downtown La Crosse. The camera was installed in October 2008. Andy Winga, Traffic Engineer of WisDOT SouthWest Region, comments, "The installation took approximately three hours. It was ridiculously simple – no aiming or focusing of the camera, just get it level to the ground and connect the single CAT 5e cable from the camera to the processor down in the cabinet. Whether you are talking about loops or another video detection product, three hours to equip an entire intersection is impressive."

### The Evaluation

WisDOT began monitoring the system remotely from their office via a DSL connection from the local phone company. Snow began to fall, and GridSmart soon faced its first challenge. "We began having issues with the snow on sunny days – the glare would create contrast issues with the image and the system would not perform as well," says Winga. "But we expected this...it was a development project after all. The Aldis team jumped on the issue quickly, and I was very surprised to see the problem resolved within a few weeks." In February 2009, another issue brought the system to a halt. The sub-zero temps froze the ruggedized processor and caused it to fail. "I was once again amazed by the speed at which Aldis reacted. Within weeks, we had a new prototype processor with an internal heating element, and the problem was resolved," comments Winga.

### CUSTOMER PROFILE



### LOCATION

La Crosse is a regional technology and medical hub in Wisconsin.

### BENEFITS

Of using a GridSmart System...

- « Fewer calls from drivers
- « Ease of use and installation
- « Remote access to intersection



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Aldis worked with WisDOT during the evaluation to better understand shadows, glare, occlusion, and other obstacles typically associated with video detection products. "I have to say that I was not a believer in video. I had been disappointed with other systems, and I was very skeptical of the GridSmart system," says Winga.



"In October 2009, just after a software update from Aldis – which took all of five or six minutes – we switched the intersection over to GridSmart for detection," states Winga.

## Results

After going live with the GridSmart system on this complex intersection, the intersection has been working smoothly. "We have yet to receive a trouble call on the intersection related to detection," comments Winga. "For a traffic engineer that is a very good thing... people will let you know when they are having to wait at an intersection."

WisDOT is enjoying the remote visibility the GridSmart system provides to the intersection as well. "The system acts as a surveillance camera in some respects... I can access the camera remotely and see what is happening at any time using the software pan, tilt, and zoom. The camera doesn't move, and it doesn't affect the detection... but I can look in any direction to see what is happening if we get a report of an incident.

Also important to note is that the lens has not been cleaned since the camera was installed almost three years ago. The downward orientation and the camera housing minimize the effect of rain, snow, and road spray on the camera's visibility.

Concluding his thoughts on GridSmart, Winga adds, "GridSmart has certainly changed my perception... video can work."

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*Andy Winga, Traffic Engineer*