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👉 Details: Public Hearing: Follow-up: Audit Report 01-17: An Evaluation: Bridge Inspection Program, Department of Transportation

(FORM UPDATED: 08/11/2010)

WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ... PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS

2007-08

(session year)

Joint

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on Audit...

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- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
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INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

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- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule** (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions (w/Record of Comm. Proceedings)
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

Record of Committee Proceedings

Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Follow-up: Audit Report 01-17

An Evaluation: Bridge Inspection Program, Department of Transportation.

September 17, 2007 **PUBLIC HEARING HELD** (Testimony from Invited Speakers Only.)

Present: (9) Senators Sullivan, Lassa, Decker and Cowles;
Representatives Jeskewitz, Rhoades, Kerkman,
Cullen and Parisi.
Absent: (1) Senator A. Lasee.

Appearances For

- None.

Appearances Against

- None.

Appearances for Information Only

- Janice Mueller, Madison — State Auditor, Legislative Audit Bureau
- Kate Wade, Madison — Legislative Audit Bureau
- Chris Klein, Madison — Executive Assistant, Department of Transportation
- Kevin Chesnik, Madison — Administrator, Division of Infrastructure Development, Department of Transportation
- Beth Cannestra, Madison — Director, Bureau of Structures, Department of Transportation
- Bruce Karow, Madison — Chief, Structures and Maintenance Section, Bureau of Structures, Department of Transportation

Registrations For

- None.

Registrations Against

- None.

Registrations for Information Only

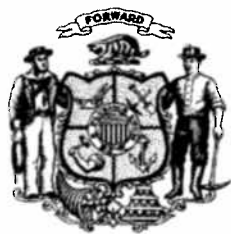
- None.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pam Matthews', written over a horizontal line.

Pam Matthews
Committee Clerk



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



CHAIR:
Energy and Utilities Committee

MEMBER:
Higher Education and Tourism
Joint Committee on Audit
State Building Commission

ROBERT L. COWLES

Wisconsin State Senator • 2nd Senate District

August 3, 2007

Sen. Jim Sullivan
Rep. Suzanne Jeskewitz
Co-Chairpersons, Joint Legislative Audit Committee
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL MAIL

Dear Co-Chairpersons Sullivan and Jeskewitz,

I am writing today to request an audit of the state's Bridge Inspection Program. The recent tragic bridge collapse in Minnesota has called attention to the fact that infrastructure maintenance and monitoring needs to be paid special attention by the Department of Transportation.

The Audit Bureau last conducted an audit of the Bridge Inspection Program in 2001, and after reviewing it, there seems to be some unresolved questions that may warrant revisiting.

In particular, the audit raised questions about the Department of Transportation's monitoring of program expenditures. The audit also showed that 15.9% of bridge inspections in 2001 were not completed within the federally mandated 24 month interval. It may be useful to see if that percentage has improved. Also, two-thirds of bridge traffic counts were outdated in 2001, which may have resulted in capturing less federal funding for bridge replacement and maintenance than was potentially available.

It also may be prudent to take a look at a couple of other issues. The proposed audit may also want to analyze the bridge maintenance prioritization system as well as the staffing qualifications and number of staff required to maintain safe state bridges.

I believe that now is an appropriate time to have an updated audit of the state's Bridge Inspection Program, which is why I'm making this request today. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please don't hesitate to contact me if you would like to discuss this issue further.

Sincerely,



ROBERT L. COWLES

Cc: Jan Mueller, Legislative Audit Bureau

Office:
Room 122 South, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
608-266-0484

Toll-free Hotline: 1-800-334-1465
TDD Hotline: 1-800-228-2115
Fax 608-267-0304

District:
300 W. St. Joseph Street
Green Bay, WI 54301-2328
920-448-5092
Fax: 920-4485093



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE

Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Committee Co-Chairs:

State Senator Jim Sullivan

State Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz

August 21, 2007

Senator Robert Cowles
Room 319 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707-7882

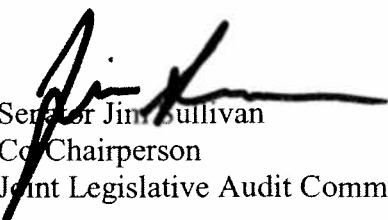
Dear Senator Cowles,

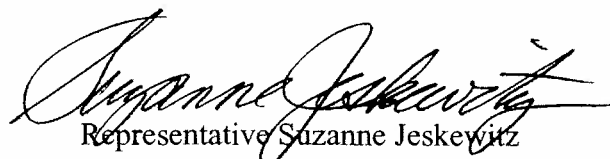
Thank you for the request that you recently submitted to the Joint Audit Committee. This letter serves as confirmation of the request.

Each request submitted receives serious consideration. As conscientious legislators, we all welcome new ways to do things less expensively, more efficiently, and provide appropriate legislative oversight. As co-chairs of the committee, we will meet regularly to discuss all requests. Shortly after the meeting, one of us will follow-up with you directly to let you know the status of your request.

Thank you again for your request and we will be in touch soon.

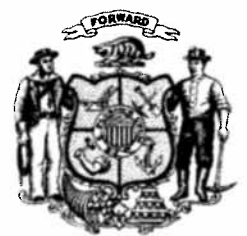
Sincerely,


Senator Jim Sullivan
Co-Chairperson
Joint Legislative Audit Committee


Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz
Co-Chairperson
Joint Legislative Audit Committee



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE





WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE

Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Committee Co-Chairs:
State Senator Jim Sullivan
State Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz

September 10, 2007

Mr. Frank Busalacchi, Secretary
Department of Transportation
120B Hill Farms State Transportation Building
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

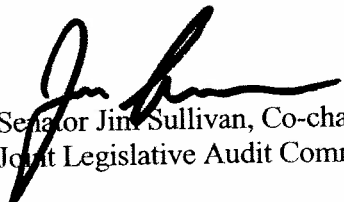
Dear Mr. Busalacchi:

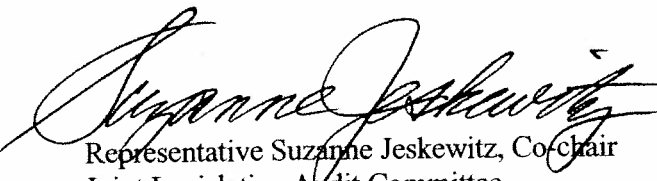
As indicated on the enclosed hearing notice, the Joint Legislative Audit Committee will hold a public hearing to follow-up on the Legislative Audit Bureau's evaluation of the *Bridge Inspection Program* (report 01-17), on Monday, September 17, 2007, at 2:00 p.m. in Room 411 South of the State Capitol.

At this hearing, testimony will be received from invited speakers only. At this time, we anticipate that the Legislative Audit Bureau will briefly summarize the findings and recommendations presented in its 2001 report. Following this presentation, we invite you, and the appropriate members of your staff, to offer testimony updating the Committee on the status of the Department of Transportation's implementation of the audit recommendations. We also ask that in your testimony you present information describing the current condition of Wisconsin's bridges, given the recent tragedy in Minnesota and the Department's subsequent review. Committee members may also ask you questions about the state's overall bridge inspection program in order to inform its next steps concerning a potential audit requested by Senator Cowles. A copy of this request is also enclosed for your review. Please plan to provide each committee member with a written copy of your testimony at the hearing.

Please contact Ms. Pam Matthews in the office of Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz at 266-3796 to confirm your participation in the hearing. Thank you for your cooperation and we look forward to seeing you on September 17th.

Sincerely,


Senator Jim Sullivan, Co-chair
Joint Legislative Audit Committee


Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz, Co-chair
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Enclosures

cc: Janice Mueller
State Auditor



Joint Legislative Audit Committee
September 17, 2007

I. Opening Remarks:

- Welcomes
 - Sen. Lassa joining us via phone
 - Sen. Decker & Rep. Rhoades are excused – Conference Committee
 - Sen. Lasee is excused

- This Public Hearing is limited to Invited testimony only. We will hear a brief overview from the LAB and then hear from the DOT.

II. Attendance – clerk will call the roll

III. Audit Report 01-17, An Evaluation: Bridge Inspection Program, Department of Transportation.

A. Audit Bureau Staff – Jan Mueller & Kate Wade

B. DOT –

Chris Klein, Executive Assistant

Kevin Chesnik, P. E., Administrator - Division of Infrastructure Development,

Beth Cannestra, P. E., Director - Bureau of Structures,

Bruce Karow, P. E., Chief - Structures and Maintenance Section
- Bureau of Structures

V. Adjourn



Bridge Inspection Program

Department of Transportation

Legislative Audit Bureau
September 2007

1

Hoan Bridge

- ◆ Failure resulted from extreme cold temperatures and a flawed design
- ◆ Repair costs were about \$15.8 million
- ◆ Although the Hoan's inspection history was intensive, routine inspections were not completed in a timely manner

2

21 State Bridges Similar to the Hoan Bridge

- ◆ Routine inspections of these 21 bridges have been timely
- ◆ 20 of the bridges did not have the specific design details that caused the Hoan Bridge to fail
- ◆ The Menomonee Valley Bridge required retrofitting

3

Inspection of State-Owned Bridges

- ◆ 4,858 state-owned bridges in April 2001
- ◆ District staff conducted most inspections, with central office assistance on the most complex
- ◆ Department generally followed federal inspection guidelines

4

Structurally Deficient State Bridges

◆ 420 structurally deficient state bridges in 2000

Percentage of Bridges Structurally Deficient

	<u>1996</u>	<u>2000</u>
Wisconsin	10.3%	8.8%
U.S.	10.7%	9.1%

5

Structurally Deficient State Bridges: 2002 through 2006

<u>Year Ended June 30</u>	<u>Number of Bridges</u>	<u>Percent Structurally Deficient</u>
2006	4,900	4.3
2005	4,900	5.1
2004	4,900	5.4
2003	4,900	6.2
2002	4,900	7.6

6

Expenditures and Staffing

- ◆ FY 2000-01 estimated program expenditures

State-staffed inspections	\$1.0 million
Consultant inspections	<u>\$1.2 million</u>
Total	\$2.2 million

- ◆ State staffing levels

FY 1999-2000	10.48 FTE
FY 2000-01	12.99 FTE

7

Improving Management Information

- ◆ Department did not maintain bridge-specific inspection expenditures
- ◆ Department did not assess the cost-effectiveness of hiring consultants for bridge inspections
- ◆ We recommended the Department collect and compare information on costs incurred by state staff and consultants

8

Inspection Frequency: 1996 through 1999

- ◆ Although administrative code required annual inspections, federal law required inspections every 2 years
- ◆ 1.5 percent of inspections were completed more than 24 months after a prior inspection

9

Inspection Frequency: January 2000 through August 2001

- ◆ Administrative code changed to require inspections every 2 years
- ◆ 15.9 percent of inspections were completed more than 24 months after a prior inspection

10

Inspection Frequency

- ◆ Inspection scheduling was at the professional discretion of district staff
- ◆ Department's central office did not provide districts with guidelines for scheduling inspections and it received no regular scheduling reports from the districts
- ◆ We recommended semi-annual reports on completed and upcoming inspections

11

Average Daily Traffic Counts

- ◆ Average daily traffic count is a factor in determining eligibility for additional federal funds
- ◆ Traffic count information maintained by the Department was not linked to the bridge inspection database
- ◆ Outdated traffic count information was being used to rate two-thirds of the state's bridges

12

Recommendations

- ◆ Collection and analysis of inspection costs
- ◆ Exchange of scheduling information between the districts and the central office
- ◆ Utilization of current average daily traffic counts to ensure accurate eligibility determination for federal funds



An Evaluation: Bridge Inspection Program, Department of Transportation

Comments to the Joint Committee on Audit
411 South, State Capitol
Senator Jim Sullivan, Senate Chair
Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz, Assembly Chair

Monday, September 17, 2007

By Kevin Chesnik PE, Division Administrator, Wisconsin Department of
Transportation

Thank you Chairpersons Sullivan and Jeskewitz for the invitation to speak on the state of the Department of Transportation's bridge inspection program.

With the tragic collapse of the I35W bridge in Minneapolis, much of the nation's attention was shifted to the condition of the bridges within their communities. Departments of Transportation across the country took immediate action to verify the condition of their infrastructure.

Here in Wisconsin we immediately provided the condition ratings of all 13,654 bridges in the state. In addition, we immediately re-inspected the 15 bridges in Wisconsin that have a design similar to the I35 bridge. These inspections were performed as a precautionary measure and resulted in no special or additional concerns. Additionally, Wisconsin is the one state in the nation that is taking the extra effort to install sensors on this type of bridge.

Wisconsin is a leader in the nation for the condition of its bridges. As published in the 2006 report from Better Roads, Wisconsin is sixth in the nation for the least number of functionally obsolete and/or structurally deficient bridges.

Part of the credit for this high standing is our rigorous bridge inspection program. The Department completely re-wrote their structure inspection manual, modified its structure's inspection collection system and revised its bridge inspection pocket manual. The Federal Highway Administration was so impressed with these documents and system that they now use them as a model for the nation. Additionally, based on our manuals, changes were made to the National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS).

All states' bridge inspection programs are required to follow these National Bridge Inspection Standards. As part of these standards, lead inspectors must complete a two week training course and have either five years of inspection experience or be a licensed professional engineer. These lead inspectors head the inspection efforts and sign the final inspection report. The Wisconsin DOT

has 60 trained lead inspectors. There are an additional 168 local officials and consultants who are trained as lead inspectors.

The Wisconsin DOT performs the routine inspections on all of the state system. This includes both state trunk and interstate highways. The local units are responsible for their own bridge inspections and we monitor their compliance with the National Bridge Inspection Standards. Some local units have their own staff inspectors and others consult it out.

As noted in the 2001 audit, all bridges within the state must be inspected at least every 24 months. The audit reported 15.9% of Wisconsin bridges are not inspected within this timeframe and recommended we improve on that number. Currently, Wisconsin has only one bridge that has not met this inspection requirement and that is only because it is a new bridge and has not been opened up to traffic yet. Additionally, the local units are 99.99% compliant with their inspections on their 8,777 bridges.

During an inspection, the bridge condition is noted in the following areas: deck, superstructure, and substructure. If there are structural concerns with any of these elements, the inspector may ask to have a load rating performed for the bridge. During this rating process it is determined whether the bridge should be load posted or not. Wisconsin currently has 74 bridges with weight restrictions; 54 of these bridges have been recently load posted as a result of the new weight limit laws.

As part of the inspection, the inspector also notes if repair work should be made to the bridge. If repair work is necessary, WisDOT crews may perform the work, or county crews may perform the work under our direction. If more comprehensive repairs are required, we will program either a rehabilitation or replacement project.

The 2001 audit also reported we lacked a statewide master list of bridges with underwater components. The Department maintains a database entitled the Highway Structures Information System. This is a very comprehensive database that contains virtually anything we need to know about the structures in the State of Wisconsin. This database contains inspection reports, bridge plans, geometric and traffic data for the roadway, and the ratings for our bridges. It also has a very powerful reporting system which allows reports to be run with "real time" data. This reporting capability is how Wisconsin vastly improved their conformance with the federal inspection requirements. An inspector can ask for a report of when inspections are due for their structures and can then easily ensure the inspection is completed on time.

Reports are also available for posted bridges, bridges with vertical clearance concerns, etc. Special reports can also be run to determine the number of bridges in each structure type and by owner. The system is widely used by

WisDOT bridge staff and local units responsible for the maintenance of their bridges.

When programming highway funds, Wisconsin gives the highest priority to bridge projects. This system has allowed Wisconsin to be a leader in its overall quality of bridges.

The 2001 audit reported that 8.8% of state-owned bridges are structurally deficient. Today, there are 4% of state-owned bridges that are classified as structurally deficient. While we were able to reduce the total by more than half since the audit we are still working to improve. However, it is important to remember the term structurally deficient does not mean the bridge is unsafe. Structurally deficient or not, if the Department feels a bridge is unsafe it will not be open to traffic.

From these numbers it is clear the Wisconsin Department of Transportation took many actions after the 2001 audit was performed. As a result, the Wisconsin bridge program is in much better shape than it was in 2001. We are fully complying with all federal bridge inspection requirements and more importantly Wisconsin's bridges are safe to travel on.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.



CHAIR:
Energy and Utilities Committee

MEMBER:
Higher Education and Tourism
Joint Committee on Audit
State Building Commission



ROBERT L. COWLES

Wisconsin State Senator • 2nd Senate District

September 24, 2007

Senator Jim Sullivan
Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz
Co-Chairpersons, Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Dear Senator Sullivan and Representative Jeskewitz:

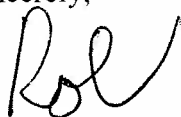
In testimony delivered to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee on September 17th, officials from the Department of Transportation discussed improvements made to the bridge inspection program since the Legislative Audit Bureau's last review in October 2001 (report 01-17). While I found their testimony both informative and encouraging, I write today to request a limited-scope review of the State's bridge inspection program.

This limited-scope review could include:

- an independent analysis to confirm compliance with the requirement that all bridges be inspected at least once every two years;
- a review of district staff oversight of the completion of bridge maintenance work identified in the inspection process;
- an analysis of the inspection, maintenance, and rehabilitation history of a limited sample of bridges that were rated "structurally deficient" in 2000; and
- a review of the extent to which current average daily traffic count information is included in inspection reports and Department data to ensure available federal financing is maximized.

I appreciate your attention to this important issue, and believe it is important for the Committee to continue to trust but verify the information provided in response to the 2001 audit report and its recommendations. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



ROBERT L. COWLES

Office:

Room 122 South, State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882
608-266-0484

Toll-free Hotline: 1-800-334-1465
TDD Hotline: 1-800-228-2115
Fax 608-267-0304

District:

300 W. St. Joseph Street
Green Bay, WI 54301-2328
920-448-5092
Fax: 920-4485093





WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Committee Co-Chairs:
State Senator Jim Sullivan
State Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz

October 3, 2007

Senator Robert Cowles
319 South, State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin 53702

Dear Senator Cowles:

Thank you for your letter, dated September 24, 2007, requesting that we direct the Legislative Audit Bureau to review the State's bridge inspection program, which is administered by the Department of Transportation (DOT).

After discussing the request with the State Auditor, we have directed the Legislative Audit Bureau to conduct a limited-scope review of this program. At our request, Bureau staff will contact DOT staff who administer the program in order to:

- confirm compliance with the requirement that all bridges be inspected at least once every two years;
- review district staff oversight of bridge maintenance work identified in the inspection process;
- analyze the inspection, maintenance, and rehabilitation history of a limited sample of bridges that were rated "structurally deficient" in 2000; and
- review the extent to which current average daily traffic count information is included in inspection reports and DOT data to ensure available federal funding is maximized.

When it has completed its review, the Bureau will prepare a letter report on its findings.

If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact our offices.

Sincerely,

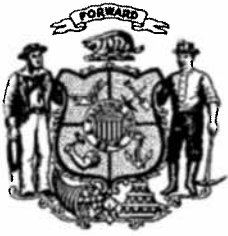
Senator Jim Sullivan, Co-chair
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

Representative Suzanne Jeskewitz, Co-chair
Joint Legislative Audit Committee

cc: Frank Busalacchi, Secretary
Department of Transportation

Janice Mueller
State Auditor



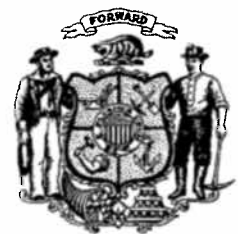


The following document was too large to scan into the committee record. The cover and table of contents, if available, have been scanned for your convenience.

Most large publications have been added to the Theoblod Legislative Library's collections. Search LRBCat (<http://lrbeat.legis.wisconsin.gov/>) for availability.

For further assistance, contact the reference desk at (608) 266-0341 or lrb.reference@legis.wisconsin.gov.

State of Wisconsin - Legislative Reference Bureau
1 East Main Street, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53703



AN EVALUATION

Bridge Inspection Program

Department of Transportation

01-17

October 2001

2001-2002 Joint Legislative Audit Committee Members

Senate Members:

Gary R. George, Co-chairperson
Judith Robson
Brian Burke
Joanne Huelsman
Mary Lazich

Assembly Members:

Joseph K. Leibham, Co-chairperson
Samantha Starzyk
John Gard
David Cullen
Barbara Gronemus

LEGISLATIVE AUDIT BUREAU

The Bureau is a nonpartisan legislative service agency responsible for conducting financial and program evaluation audits of state agencies. The Bureau's purpose is to provide assurance to the Legislature that financial transactions and management decisions are made effectively, efficiently, and in compliance with state law and that state agencies carry out the policies of the Legislature and the Governor. Audit Bureau reports typically contain reviews of financial transactions, analyses of agency performance or public policy issues, conclusions regarding the causes of problems found, and recommendations for improvement.

Reports are submitted to the Joint Legislative Audit Committee and made available to other committees of the Legislature and to the public. The Audit Committee may arrange public hearings on the issues identified in a report and may introduce legislation in response to the audit recommendations. However, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in the report are those of the Legislative Audit Bureau. For more information, write the Bureau at 22 E. Mifflin Street, Suite 500, Madison, WI 53703, call (608) 266-2818, or send e-mail to Leg.Audit.Info@legis.state.wi.us. Electronic copies of current reports are available on line at www.legis.state.wi.us/lab/windex.htm.

State Auditor - Janice Mueller

Editor of Publications - Jeanne Thieme

Audit Prepared by

Kate Wade, Director and Contact Person
Dean Swenson
Jessica Lathrop
David Miller
Michael Oakleaf

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State of Wisconsin \ LEGISLATIVE AUDIT BUREAU

JANICE MUELLER
STATE AUDITOR

22 E. MIFFLIN ST., STE. 500
MADISON, WISCONSIN 53703
(608) 266-2818
FAX (608) 267-0410
Leg.Audit.Info@legis.state.wi.us

October 25, 2001

Senator Gary R. George and
Representative Joseph K. Leibham, Co-chairpersons
Joint Legislative Audit Committee
State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Senator George and Representative Leibham:

We have completed an evaluation of the Department of Transportation's bridge inspection program, as requested by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. In fiscal year 2000-01, the Department spent approximately \$2.2 million in segregated state funds to inspect state-owned bridges, including an estimated \$1.2 million to hire consultants from the private sector.

The Department's written policies for inspecting the 4,858 state-owned bridges are generally consistent with federal regulations and other national guidelines, and state staff meet federal bridge inspection qualifications. The Department does not, however, adequately monitor bridge inspection costs or evaluate the cost-effectiveness of its use of consultants by comparing their costs to the costs of inspections performed by state staff. It also does not use the most recent data on bridge traffic to measure the condition of state bridges. We have included recommendations to address these concerns.

The Department has increased staff time devoted to bridge inspection. However, we found that from January 2000 through August 2001, 15.9 percent of routine bridge inspections and 8.0 percent of inspections of structurally deficient bridges were not completed within the two-year period required by both state and federal law. Therefore, we have also included a recommendation that the Department ensure inspections are completed in a timely manner.

National bridge experts have determined that the Department could not have foreseen the failure of the Hoan Bridge in Milwaukee in December 2000. We found, however, that the Department had not conducted routine inspections of the bridge as frequently as required by law. The Department estimates that the bridge repair work will cost approximately \$15.8 million.

We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation extended to us by the Department. The Department's response is Appendix 3.

Respectfully submitted,

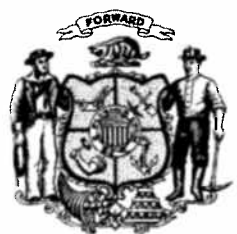
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Janice Mueller
State Auditor

JM/KW/ss



WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE



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Sep 17, 5:40 PM EDT

DOT: Bridges, inspections have improved since 2001 audit

By RYAN J. FOLEY
Associated Press Writer

MADISON, Wis. (AP) -- The condition of Wisconsin's bridges has improved dramatically since a critical state audit in 2001, Department of Transportation officials told lawmakers Monday.

DOT officials said they have cut the number of state-owned bridges considered structurally deficient in half in the last six years.

Workers have also inspected nearly all of the state bridges within the last two years as required by law, officials told the Legislature's Audit committee.

Lawmakers asked for Monday's briefing after the Aug. 1 collapse of an interstate bridge in Minneapolis.

Sen. Rob Cowles, R-Green Bay, is pushing for a new audit of the bridge inspection program. But the department and other lawmakers said the program's improvements mean no major review is needed.

The 2001 audit found that a relatively high number of state-owned bridges were in poor shape and that DOT inspectors were failing to inspect many bridges on time. The audit also said the agency failed to track expenses in the program and did not have current traffic figures for many bridges.

Wisconsin DOT official Kevin Chesnik told lawmakers the agency took actions to respond to the audit.

"As a result, the Wisconsin bridge program is in much better shape than it was in 2001," he said.

Lawmakers ordered the 2001 audit after Milwaukee's Hoan Bridge partially collapsed the year before as a result of a flawed design, freezing temperatures and heavy traffic.

Since then, Chesnik said the number of state-owned bridges classified as structurally deficient has declined to 4 percent from 8.8 percent. That classification means the bridges need repairs but aren't necessarily unsafe, he said.

All but a handful of the state's 13,654 bridges have been inspected within the last two years as required, Chesnik added. The 2001 audit found that 16 percent of them were not inspected within that timeframe.

DOT officials said a new computer database that contains inspection reports and other information has helped them make sure bridges are inspected on time.

Cowles said he was surprised by the progress but wanted the Legislative Audit Bureau to review the program's effectiveness anyway.

"I would like to see more certainty that all of these things really did happen," he told DOT officials. "I

don't want to question your integrity, but the old saying is 'Trust but verify'."

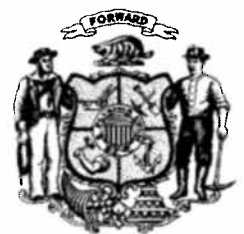
Sen. Jim Sullivan, D-Wauwatosa, said the DOT has an impressive bridge inspection program - but so did Minnesota.

"It only takes one and this is the tough part about your job," he said. "You are being asked to protect us against random, tragic accidents."

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Fewer bridges in state deficient

DOT officials speak to legislators

By PATRICK MARLEY
pmarley@journalsentinel.com

Posted: Sept. 17, 2007

Madison - The Department of Transportation nearly halved the number of structurally deficient state-owned bridges over five years, officials testified at a legislative hearing Monday.

The DOT also has made strides since 2001 in inspecting bridges on time, agency officials said. Then, 16% of bridges had not been inspected within the previous two years, as required. Today, all but one bridge has been inspected within that period.

Legislative auditors reviewed the state's bridge inspection program in 2001 after the partial collapse of the Hoan Bridge in Milwaukee. The Legislative Audit Committee held a follow-up hearing on the matter Monday because of the deadly collapse of the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis last month.

Auditors reported Monday that since their initial report, the number of structurally deficient bridges in the state has dropped. In 2002, 7.6% of the roughly 4,900 state-owned bridges were considered structurally deficient. In 2006, that rate had dropped to 4.3%, they said.

The Journal Sentinel reported last month that more than 15% of the state's nearly 14,000 bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. That review includes locally owned bridges and state-owned bridges.

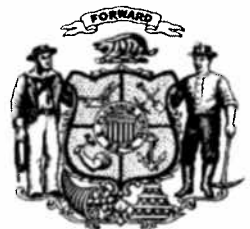
Structurally deficient bridges are those that are deteriorating and limited to lighter vehicles. Functionally obsolete bridges are older structures that are narrow, have low clearances or do not meet current design criteria.

Gov. Jim Doyle last month ordered the DOT to put sensors on 15 bridges with similar designs to the one that collapsed in Minneapolis. Chris Klein, the department's executive assistant, said Monday the department would soon install stress gauges on 14 of the bridges, but the sensors would not report data to the DOT's headquarters in real time as initially planned.

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September 18, 2007

#156

For information contact:

Michael Erickson, WisDOT Bureau of Transit and Local Roads
(608) 266-0194 michael.erickson@dot.state.wi.us

Governor Doyle announces \$65.5 million for local bridge improvements

Governor Jim Doyle today announced the distribution of \$65.5 million in federal and state dollars to fund 308 bridge projects along Wisconsin's approximately 100,000-mile local roads system.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) oversees the Local Bridge Improvement Assistance Program. This program provides 80 percent federal or state funding to replace or rehabilitate deteriorating bridges and requires a 20 percent local funding share.

"This federal, state and local partnership will complete necessary improvements to local bridges throughout the state. These projects will enhance public safety and support economic development along our local transportation network," Governor Doyle said.

In Wisconsin, county officials set priorities for local bridge and highway improvement projects. While construction timetables for the projects vary, most of the work is expected to be completed over the next three to five years. A list of projects being funded through the Local Bridge Improvement Assistance Program can be viewed on the WisDOT Web site at: www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/approved.htm.

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NOTE: This document can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/news>




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Auditors to review Wisconsin's bridge inspection program

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 Fox Valley stories on bridge safety, Minnesota bridge collapse

The Associated Press October 5, 2007

MADISON — Auditors will review the state's bridge inspection program to make sure problems identified in the past have been corrected, lawmakers said Friday.

The Legislative Audit Bureau will make sure bridges are being inspected every two years as required by law and check whether maintenance work ordered by inspectors is completed.

Auditors will also analyze the inspection and maintenance histories of bridges that were rated structurally deficient in 2000 to see whether improvements were made.

Sen. Robert Cowles, R-Green Bay, pushed for the audit after an interstate bridge collapsed in Minneapolis on Aug. 1, killing 13 people and injuring about 100 others.

The co-chairs of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee — Sen. Jim Sullivan, D-Wauwatosa and Rep. Suzanne Jeskewitz, R-Menomonee Falls — approved a limited-scope review this week.

The review will be the first since 2001, when auditors found that a relatively high number of state-owned bridges were in poor shape and that DOT inspectors were failing to inspect many of them on time. The audit was ordered after the partial collapse of Milwaukee's Hoan Bridge in 2000.

Department of Transportation officials told the audit committee last month they have improved the program dramatically since the audit and another review was not needed.

Workers have inspected nearly all of the state bridges within the last two years and the number of bridges considered structurally deficient has been cut in half in the last six years, DOT officials testified.

Cowles said he hopes the independent review will confirm those claims.

"We need to get independent confirmation that shortcomings in the bridge inspection program have been rectified since the last audit in 2001," he said in a statement. "Wisconsin must do everything it can to avoid tragedies like the one in Minnesota."



When a Bridge Falls DOWN

America's roads and bridges need serious attention, but where's the money going to come from?

BY MATT SUNDEEN

The catastrophic collapse of the I-35 bridge over the Mississippi River in August sent shockwaves that reverberated well beyond the immediate vicinity of Minneapolis-St. Paul. The deteriorating condition of the country's network of highways, bridges and rail lines is a problem that has long concerned transportation experts. For most, the bridge collapse was a call-to-action to fund overdue improvements and fix the nation's aging transportation infrastructure. Although many federal, state and local lawmakers agree repairs are needed, what the appropriate response should be continues to be a matter for debate.

INCREASED DEMANDS

Rapid growth in population, personal travel and freight movement has put stress on the nation's roads and bridges and outpaced efforts to maintain and improve the system. Put simply, more people are traveling more miles than ever before. An estimated 300 million people now live in the United States, and since 1990, highway travel has increased 35 percent. Trade with Asia and South America has increased shipments across all transportation modes, and the Federal Highway Administration predicts that freight traffic will double by 2020.

Greater use has caused wear and tear on our roads and bridges. According to the Federal Highway Administration, 33 percent of America's roads are in poor or mediocre condition, and 26 percent of America's bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Experts caution that major failures similar to the I-35 bridge collapse are, however, unlikely.

"It's a rare problem," says Federal Highway Administration Spokesman Doug Hecox. "It's undeniable that the infrastruc-

Matt Sundeen is a transportation and funding expert at NCSL.

ture is aging. But if anything, bridge inspection programs over-scrutinize. It wasn't any shortcoming in the inspection process." States inspect every bridge at least once every two years, and some deteriorating bridges more frequently, according to FHWA officials.

The larger concern may be the everyday problems caused by poorly maintained infrastructure. Road conditions are a significant factor in approximately one-third of traffic deaths, killing approximately 14,000 people every year. Driving on bumpy roads and bridges, falling concrete, and potholes cost U.S. motorists an estimated \$67 billion a year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs—as much as \$333 per motorist. Outdated facilities can handle fewer vehicles at slower speeds, creating traffic congestion and costly delays. Old roads or bridges might also be functionally obsolete—designed for smaller populations and unable to meet the current needs of an expanding community.

FUNDING RUNNING DRY

Considerable money is needed not only to maintain current conditions, but to make improvements to meet growing demands. But transportation funding resources are shrinking. A 2005 report by the National Chamber Foundation concluded that total annual transportation spending from all levels of government is now \$42 billion short of the amount needed to maintain and \$91 billion short of the amount needed to improve the transportation network. The report estimated a \$1 trillion cumulative transportation funding shortfall from all levels of government by 2015.

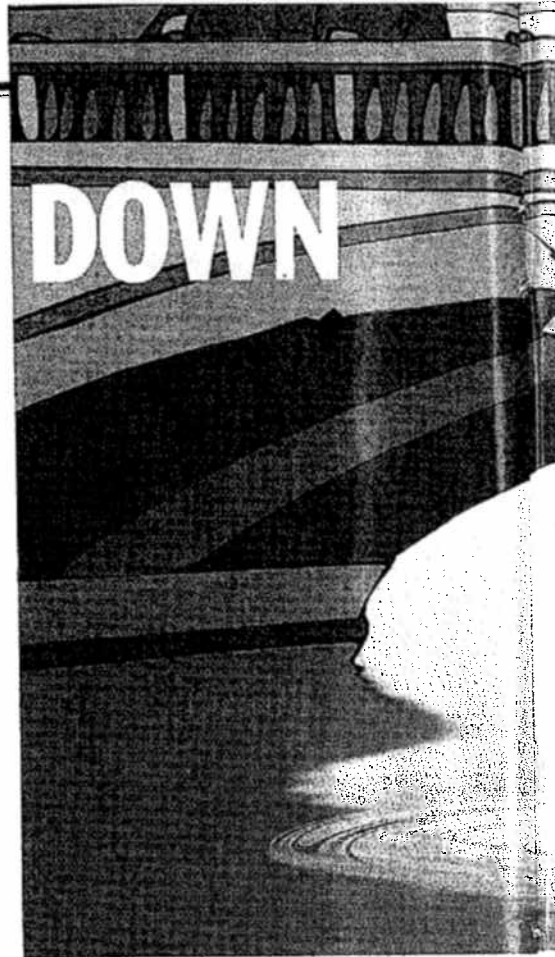
Much of the problem in transportation funding can be traced to the declining value of the gas tax against inflation. Motor vehicle fuel taxes are the primary source of federal transportation revenue and a transportation funding staple in most states. But with gasoline prices hovering near \$3 per gallon, few lawmakers have been willing to raise motor fuel tax rates. Over time, that's meant that gas

tax revenues can't keep pace with the rising costs of construction, materials and labor.

During the last decade, the federal gas tax lost approximately 25 percent of its real value against inflation. Most experts agree that federal gas tax revenues deposited in the Federal Highway Trust Fund—the primary source of federal transportation funding sent to the states—will be insufficient to meet obligations in three years. Unless the problem is solved, much of the burden for fixing transportation problems may fall to the states.

"States have a justifiable concern about funding," says the Federal Highway Administration's Hecox. "We shouldn't bank on gasoline for the trust fund. New ideas are needed, and it's critical we nail down the funding issue now."

But states have their own funding challenges. Only a handful have raised gas tax rates sufficiently to keep pace with inflation. State general funds are increasingly consumed by big ticket items such as Medicaid, K-12 education and corrections, and little money is left for transportation needs. State lawmakers are exploring other traditional revenue sources such as tolls and transportation-related fees. But toll and fee changes



U.S. BRIDGES IN POOR CONDITION

More than a quarter of all highway bridges are in bad shape.

Percent of Bridges That Are "Structurally Deficient" or "Functionally Obsolete"

State	Percent
Alabama	26%
Alaska	35%
Arizona	41%
Arkansas	23%
California	29%
Colorado	17%
Connecticut	34%
Delaware	15%
District of Columbia	62%
Florida	18%
Georgia	20%
Hawaii	45%
Idaho	24%
Illinois	17%
Indiana	22%
Iowa	27%
Kansas	21%
Kentucky	31%
Louisiana	29%
Maine	35%
Maryland	27%
Massachusetts	52%
Michigan	26%
Minnesota	12%
Mississippi	26%
Missouri	31%
Montana	24%
Nebraska	23%
Nevada	12%
New Hampshire	31%
New Jersey	25%
New Mexico	19%
New York	38%
North Carolina	29%
North Dakota	23%
Ohio	24%
Oklahoma	32%
Oregon	28%
Pennsylvania	43%
Puerto Rico	49%
Rhode Island	51%
South Carolina	23%
South Dakota	25%
Tennessee	21%
Texas	20%
Utah	17%
Vermont	35%
Virginia	26%
Washington	30%
West Virginia	37%
Wisconsin	15%
Wyoming	21%
Average	26%

Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics: August 2007.

BRIDGE SAFETY FACTS

- ◆ There are approximately 600,000 bridges in the United States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.
- ◆ The I-35 Bridge in Minnesota was 40 years old at the time of collapse. Nearly half (46 percent) of bridges in the United States are 40 years old or older. Approximately 29 percent of bridges are older than 50 years, and nearly 10,000 bridges are 100 years old or more.
- ◆ The National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS) requires biennial safety inspections for bridges longer than 6.1 meters (approximately 20 feet) located on public roads.
- ◆ Most bridges are inspected every two years. Those in excellent condition may receive exemptions from the NBIS standard. Bridges in poor condition may be inspected more frequently. Approximately 83 percent of bridges are inspected once every two years, 12 percent are inspected annually and 5 percent are inspected on a four-year cycle.

often face the same political hurdles as gas tax increases and may not provide sufficient money to cover needs.

DEBATE ON SOLUTIONS

In Minnesota, legislators want to make sure that the I-35 bridge collapse doesn't divert them from finding solutions for long-term transportation funding. Lawmakers want to ensure the immediate safety of their constituents, but also worry that the tragedy will take attention away from broader transportation concerns. In the past two years, Governor Tim Pawlenty has vetoed legislation to raise the state's gas tax to pay for transportation needs. Recently, he's signaled that he may now be open to it.

"We've had a lot of negotiations, but we aren't getting anywhere," says Representative Bernard Lieder, chair of Minnesota's Transportation Com-

mittee. "The transportation issue is resonating because of the bridge collapse, but we can't divert all of our attention just to bridges. We've got to have a total transportation bill that includes highways and transit and involves local jurisdictions."

Other states are also exploring solutions to specifically address bridge and road conditions. Missouri Governor Matt Blunt called a special session this summer during which legislators passed an ambitious plan to build or repair 802 bridges in five years. The new legislation allows construction groups to bid for the entire 802 bridge project and then provide maintenance for 25 more years.

Missouri House Transportation Chairman Neal St. Onge, the primary bill sponsor, says the Minnesota tragedy helped bring light on a long-standing problem in his state. "Missouri has some serious infrastructure problems," says St. Onge. "This bill will speed up repair and save money. But, it's



**REPRESENTATIVE
BERNARD LIEDER
MINNESOTA**



**REPRESENTATIVE
NEAL ST. ONGE
MISSOURI**

GROUPS PREPARE FOR SAFETEA-LU'S SUCCESSOR

Many in the nation's capital and around the country are struggling in the waning days of the federal transportation act, SAFETEA-LU, to determine the vision and funding that will carry forward America's transportation system. Organizations and commissions are preparing reports to help give new insights to Congress as SAFETEA-LU's successor takes shape during the 2008 session.

With the support of NCSL and its sister organizations representing state and local policymakers, the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) has convened an Intergovernmental Forum on Transportation Financing. Policymakers and experts from national, state and local levels of government and academia are considering current roles and responsibilities of each level of government for surface transportation programs and addressing the intergovernmental issues involved with making transportation finance sustainable. The NAPA study is expected by the end of this year.

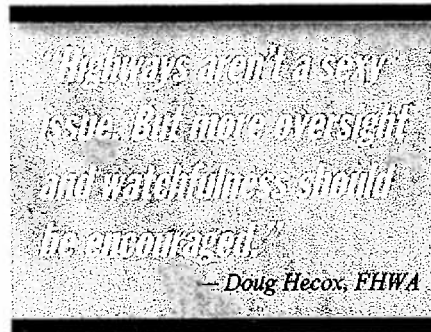
At the same time, the National Surface Transportation Revenue and Policy Commission, created by SAFETEA-LU and chaired by U.S. Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, has been conducting hearings around the country to examine the condition and future needs of the nation's surface transportation system. The commission is exploring short- and long-term alternatives to replace or supplement the fuel tax as the principal revenue source to support the Highway Trust Fund over the next 30 years. Their report will be released by December.

SAFETEA-LU also created a National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission. This group, formed in March, will conduct an investigation of future highway and transit needs, and current and projected Federal Highway Trust Fund revenues. It will look into the impact of possible changes in what kinds of cars people will be buying, fuel use and travel alternatives. These recommendations are due no later than March 2009.

—Jeremy D. Meadows, NCSL

important to also remember that it will vastly improve safety." Missouri has 1,000 bridges, according to St. Onge, that are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. "You can't put a price on safety," he says.

Other states that were already exploring comprehensive transportation plans and different funding alternatives will likely step up efforts in sessions next year. Many lawmakers are closely watching a pilot project in Oregon that is testing whether the state could replace the gas tax with a fee based on actual miles traveled. Proponents believe the "vehicle miles tax" more equitably charges



motorists for highway use and helps compensate for the loss of gas tax revenues caused by hybrid and more fuel efficient vehicles. Critics worry that GPS technology used to track vehicle travel under the program could jeopardize privacy. They also charge that the new tax diminishes the incentive to use hybrids and other high mileage vehicles.

States are also considering initiatives like ones passed in Indiana and Chicago to sell leasing rights to operate transportation assets—such as toll roads and bridges—to private entities. "A lot of states wish they could do this," says Indiana Senator Tom Wyss who, in 2005, spearheaded legislation that authorized the sale of a 75-year lease to operate the Indiana Toll Road to a private entity for \$3.8 billion. "This paid for our entire transportation program. It was a win for everyone."

The concept is not without controversy,



SENATOR
TOM WYSS
INDIANA

however. Critics worry that such leases cede too much responsibility for public assets to the private sector and could hamstring future transportation funding efforts. Similar privatization proposals have been at least temporarily rejected in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and a half dozen other jurisdictions.

BEYOND STATE FUNDING

In addition to appropriating state money, state legislators have other options for shaping transportation programs. "Personal legislative involvement is always good," says the Federal Highway Administration's Hecox. "Highways aren't a sexy issue. But more oversight and watchfulness should be encouraged."

Minnesota's Department of Transportation is developing a list of best practices in response to the I-35 collapse. The document will likely include recommendations for inspections and proficiency standards for bridge and highway inspectors. Legislators worried about bridge conditions in their state can push their own DOT officials to standardize inspection practices or adopt more rigorous procedures.

State lawmakers can also make their voices heard in Washington, D.C. In August and September congressional committees conducted hearings to examine the I-35 bridge collapse and consider proposals to fund bridge repairs across the country. In coming months, federal lawmakers will begin work on a new transportation funding bill. The most recent reauthorization legislation—the Safe Accountable Flexible Equity Act—A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)—passed in 2005 and will expire in 2009. It included a record number of congressional earmarks that supported projects such as the infamous "Bridge to Nowhere" in Ketchikan, Alaska. The new legislation will significantly shape future transportation policy and will likely address concerns about the viability of the federal Highway Trust Fund. State lawmakers concerned about deteriorating road and bridge infrastructure have an opportunity to work with their congressional delegations to ensure that reauthorization legislation addresses state concerns.

"Transportation is not just a state issue," says Minnesota's Representative Lieder. "We need to find solutions with the federal government and local governments that address a wide range of concerns."



Wisconsin County Highway Departments Reassure Public on Bridge Safety in State

Funding Levels from Legislature Critical for Proper Maintenance

After the tragic bridge collapse in Minnesota, the Wisconsin County Highway Association (WCHA) and the Wisconsin Counties Association (WCA) want to reassure residents that county highway departments continue to be diligent in their inspection, monitoring, repair and replacement of local bridges and county roads throughout the state.

"The traveling public's safety is always the number one priority of Wisconsin's 72 county highway departments," says WCHA Executive Director Daniel J. Fedderly, P.E.;R.L.S. "It is the responsibility of county highway departments to ensure that all local bridges in the state meet the required 24-month inspection cycle at a minimum, and in many cases for selected structures, ensure an even more frequent inspection cycle."

According to Bruce Stelzner, Chippewa County Highway Commissioner and Secretary of WCHA, "Wisconsin counties have always placed a high priority on bridges throughout the state and will continue to advocate for funding as the Legislature currently deliberates the transportation budget. Adequate bridge funding at the state and county level is critical to achieving the program objectives established by these inspections."

Wisconsin counties provide maintenance services for not only the local bridges throughout Wisconsin, but also those on the state system. Further, counties provide maintenance services on the entire state roadway system. The level of maintenance services provided by counties on state roads and bridges depends on the funding levels established by the Governor and Legislature.

Therefore, the funding levels that the Legislature establishes in the current transportation budget are critical to accomplishing the maintenance activities as established by the inspection programs. Understandably, the spotlight is currently on funding for bridges. While this is a large component, the focus also needs to be on funding for all infrastructure needs, as the complete highway system is aging and in need of varying levels of work from maintenance to re-construction.

Recent legislation in Wisconsin (2005 Wisconsin Act 167) that increased allowable truck weights

that the timber industry can haul has placed an even higher priority on the monitoring of local bridges. It also makes critical the need to ensure that structures that may not be able to carry the increased loads are posted.

“Load rating and posting our local bridges for the maximum load the bridge can carry is not a choice but a requirement for public safety” says Mark Servi, Washburn County Highway Commissioner and WCHA President. “Increased trucks weights and the increased possibility of overweight trucks can dramatically affect bridges that may not have the capacity to carry the increased loads.”

WCHA and WCA stressed that they will continue to work with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to identify the highest priority structures for evaluation. As always, counties will work to evaluate bridges on the local highway system and place postings that limit the loads on them.

“The local bridge program, which provides funding for the repair and replacement of bridges, will continue to be a primary focus of WCHA and WCA,” said WCA Legislative Associate Matthew Stohr. “Bridge funding and transportation in general will continue to be a priority as county boards begin their own budget deliberations for 2008.”

Jerry Holub, Sheboygan County Board Supervisor and Chairman of WCHA stated, “County highway depart-

ments across the state have been very aggressive in taking care of the local bridges in Wisconsin over the years. WCHA urges the Legislature and county boards to prioritize

bridge funding as they work on their respective budgets, ensuring the county highway departments have the necessary resources to continue this important effort.” ■

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