

August 3, 2007

The Honorable Christine Gregoire  
Governor, State of Washington  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire:

I am pleased to provide you with this summary report on the condition of both state and locally owned bridges in Washington state. The safety of bridge structures is ensured through meticulous inspections and rating of the primary components of bridges by the WSDOT Bridge Preservation Office or local agency staff. The condition of all bridge decks, superstructures and substructures are rated based on these inspections. There are a total of 7000 bridges on the state, city and county road systems and all are inspected every two years.

The Federal Highway Administration requires assessments of each bridge to determine adequacy for structural and functional purposes. Factors considered include the load-carrying capacity strength, height clearance, waterway capacity and roadway alignment leading to and from the bridge. Structural assessments of the deck, superstructure and substructure together with the condition ratings determine whether a bridge should be classified as structurally deficient. Functional obsolescence is assessed by comparing the existing configuration of each bridge to current standards and demands. A more complete description of the rating process and a summary report on the entire WSDOT bridge program is contained in the attached 2007 Annual Bridge Update from the August 2007 edition of the Gray Notebook.

With the recent collapse of the I-35W bridge in Minnesota much of the national discussion has focused on bridges being classified as structurally deficient. Unfortunately these discussions have led to much confusion as to the term's actual meaning. Structurally deficient means that a bridge requires repair or replacement of a certain component, such as cracked or spalled concrete or the entire bridge itself. If the condition is such that it no longer is able to carry its intended traffic loads it may be weight restricted. Being structurally deficient does not imply that the bridge is in danger of collapse or unsafe to the traveling public.

There are a total of 122 bridges on the state highway system and 240 on the city and county road systems that fall into this category of structurally deficient. A complete list of bridges in this category is attached. Sixty-nine of the state highway system bridges on the list are programmed for replacement, repair or rehabilitation. The remaining 53 bridges are lower in priority and will be continually monitored, inspected and

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programmed for future repairs as the conditions become more critical. Of the 240 bridges on the city and county systems, 81 are programmed for replacement, repair or rehabilitation have recently completed one of these actions. The remaining 159 continue to be monitored through regular inspections.

There are a total of 48 steel deck truss bridges that are of heightened concern because of the events in Minnesota. One of the structurally deficient state highway bridges fall in this category. This is the Manette Bridge in Bremerton which is to be replaced in 2009. However, this bridge's deficiency is not in the fracture critical steel members but in the supporting concrete columns. Corroded rebar limits the strength of the columns. This bridge is restricted to 105,500 lbs. This bridge is being inspected every 12 months. This bridge is highlighted in yellow in the attached list of structurally deficient bridges. Six of the local city or country steel deck truss bridges are classified as structurally deficient. Currently one structure is closed and under contract for replacement (Elwha River Bridge), two structures are programmed for replacement (Ione Bridge and Granite Falls Bridge) and the remaining three structures will continue to be monitored through inspections (Hood River Bridge, South Park Bridge, and West Cashmere Bridge). These are also highlighted in yellow.

Finally the Murray Morgan Bridge in Tacoma continues to be of special concern and is also highlighted in the attached list. This 96 year old structure currently is restricted to loads of no more than 10 tons and is being inspected every six months. In light of the events in Minnesota, we have asked the City of Tacoma to strictly enforce this weight limit and we have advanced the next scheduled inspection to occur this month. We expect to have more conversations with the City of Tacoma regarding the future of this bridge as soon as the inspection and analysis is complete.

Sincerely,

Paula J. Hammond, P.E.  
Interim Secretary of Transportation

PJH:jaa  
Enclosures

cc: Dan Mathis, FHWA