

Skidders Falls Bridge PEL Study

Frequently Asked Questions

SURVEY

1. **Can the public input to the survey be extended?** The deadline for answering the questions and adding comments to the online survey has been extended to **June 1, 2021**. Please encourage friends and neighbors to complete the survey at <https://bit.ly/SFBsurvey>. Or request a hard copy by calling the project hotline (610) 234-5148.

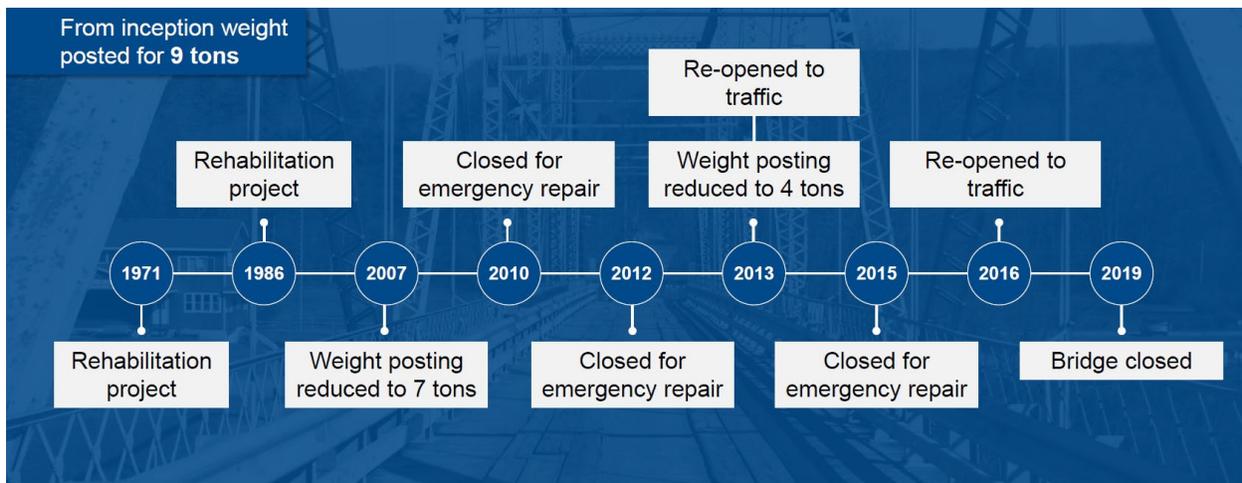
PEL STUDY AND NEPA

2. **What is a Planning and Environmental Linkages Study?** The Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) process is an approach used to identify transportation issues and environmental concerns, which can be applied to make planning decisions. For Skidders Falls, a PEL study allows PennDOT to conduct early research and analyses that can be used to inform the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. All Federal Agencies must comply with NEPA when undertaking a federally funded action. These planning studies will inform the NEPA process.
3. **How will the PEL Study be used in determining the future of the Skidders Falls Bridge?** The Skidders Falls Bridge PEL Study is conducting stakeholder and community outreach as well as performing data analysis to identify local transportation needs. The final product will be development of a defined “transportation purpose and need” that can be used to move forward with the Skidders Falls Bridge Project and inform the NEPA process.
4. **What is a Transportation Purpose?** The purpose statement is comprised of one or two sentences that articulate a project’s primary objective(s). The purpose is not a solution, but the reason why an agency is proposing a certain project, and what it plans to accomplish with the project.
5. **What is a Transportation Need?** The transportation need describes the key problem or problems and the cause of those problems. Project needs are based on technical information and analyses, such as measures of traffic flow, congestion and travel demand. The transportation need is the background to justify the public use of the funds for transportation repairs or improvements.
6. **What happens after the PEL Study is complete?** PennDOT will use the transportation purpose and need developed in the PEL Study to identify and analyze potential alternatives to meet the transportation needs. The alternatives analysis will be conducted in accordance with Federal regulations in NEPA. NEPA requires federal agencies to assess the environmental impacts of their proposed actions prior to making decisions.

Under NEPA, a range of reasonable alternatives will be considered based on the defined purpose and need. The analysis will identify the anticipated impacts of each potential alternative, including social, economic, cultural, and environmental impacts. It will also consider appropriate mitigation of identified impacts. The process will include interagency coordination and consultation and ongoing public involvement, including opportunities to participate and comment.

BRIDGE USE AND TRAFFIC VOLUMES

7. **Why is the bridge closed now?** A Customer complaint and subsequent District Bridge Unit inspection on October 16, 2019 identified timber deck and lateral truss bracing deterioration requiring the bridge be closed.
8. **It seems like PennDOT had delayed maintenance on the bridge in order to justify removing it. Why?** As demonstrated by the below graphic, PennDOT has provided regularly scheduled maintenance and rehabilitative efforts for the structure. In addition to regular maintenance, PennDOT has performed inspections of the structure every 6 months since 2013 to monitor the condition of the bridge and ensure public safety.



9. **What was the traffic count on the bridge before it was closed?** Based upon recent traffic counts on both the Pennsylvania and New York side of the bridge, approximately 400 vehicles a day used the bridge when it was open.
10. **We only need the bridge for personal vehicles and ambulances. We have no need for larger trucks on a one-lane bridge. Why are they being included in the discussion?** We are currently evaluating past traffic data, inviting public feedback, and gathering input from the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), the National Park Service (NPS) and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) providers which will all be used to determine what types of vehicles used the bridge in the past and the type of vehicles that may need to use the bridge in the future. This data will inform the purpose and need.

Past counts taken between 1998 and 2017 demonstrate that larger vehicles and trucks – up to 40 tons – were crossing the bridge. This is above the weight postings on the bridge which was reduced to 4 tons in 2013. The “headache” bars were installed in 2016 to restrict the size of vehicles using the bridge. However, the bars have been repeatedly vandalized to allow trucks larger than the posted weight limit to continue to utilize the bridge. The chart below summarizes the traffic count findings including those exceeding the posted weight limit.

Year	Volume	Volume of Vehicles > 10 Ton	Volume of Heaviest Truck Counted
July 27, 2017	379	13	13 (2-axle w/ 6 tires) 8+ tons
July 18, 2012	384	29	1 (4-axle) 30+ tons
September 6, 2007	412	39	3 (5-axle semi) 40+ tons
September 10, 2002	368	37	3 (5-axle semi) 40+ tons
July 15, 1998	913	83	7 (5-axle semi) 40+ tons