

Historic Metal Truss Bridge Capital Rehabilitation Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Program Background

PennDOT, in conjunction with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the PA State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) completed a [Historic Metal Truss Bridge Management Plan \(Management Plan\)](#) in 2017. The Management Plan was developed to address the accelerating loss of historic metal truss bridges within the state. Historic metal truss bridges are those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. By many accounts Pennsylvania has the most distinct population of metal truss bridges in the United States; however, over half the population of historic metal truss bridges have been lost over the last 20+ years. The goal of the Management Plan is to take sensible measures to extend the useful life of historic metal truss bridges. The Management Plan serves as a planning tool to maximize the chances of rehabilitation.

The 2021 Twelve Year Program (TYP) update included Federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) discretionary funding (SPIKE funds) to promote the rehabilitation of historic metal truss bridges beginning in federal fiscal year 2023. This program has since been named the Historic Metal Truss Bridge Capital Rehabilitation Program (Program).

The Program is primarily focused on county and municipally owned historic metal truss bridges where owners desire to work collaboratively with PennDOT, MPO/RPOs, the SHPO and historic preservation interest groups and individuals to rehabilitate their resources for continuous vehicular transportation use. A preliminary list of historic metal truss bridges capable of meeting vehicular crossing needs was developed as part of the Management Plan. A Program committee (Committee) comprised of representatives from: PennDOT's Program Center; PennDOT's Bureau of Design and Delivery, Environmental Policy and Development Division; and the SHPO, with technical assistance from the FHWA, is evaluating these bridges further and selecting bridges for the Program.

A secondary focus of the Program is to provide support for adaptive re-use projects seeking to reuse a historic metal truss bridge in a new location within the state for pedestrian and/or bicycle use. At present it is not anticipated that this Program will fully fund adaptive re-use projects, but instead seek to support adaptive re-use projects which have funding shortfalls.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the program parameters?

For a rehabilitation project, the Committee considers parameters such as Average Daily Traffic (ADT), condition, risk factors, safety, land use, regional needs and goals, and regional economic benefit, while prioritizing Historic Metal Truss Bridges that fit the following parameters:

- Included in the Historic Metal Truss Bridge Management Plan with a focus on bridges evaluated as having an “exceptional” or “high” preservation priority (See Question #5).
- Visible by the public, either by vehicles or pedestrians.

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- Have strong local support, including local commitment to maintain the bridge following rehabilitation (See Question #6).

For an adaptive re-use project, the Committee will consider these same parameters. Additionally, the bridge/crossing must be:

- Eligible for funding under the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 23: Highways;
- Meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

2. How are bridge candidate projects selected?

Information from the Management Plan included meetings with bridge owners, MPOs/RPOs and the Committee agencies. The Committee used this information to create a preliminary list of bridges eligible for program funding based on the parameters outlined in Questions #1. Since then, PennDOT has conducted additional outreach to bridge owners to update the list as needs change. In addition to looking at the parameters, the total estimated cost of rehabilitation is a factor the Committee will consider in selecting projects; projects with lower estimated costs, or needing only partial funding from the Program, may be prioritized over projects requiring substantial costs/work.

Adaptive re-use projects may be supported through the Program. As with rehabilitation for continued vehicular use, the Program does not include an application process for financial support of adaptive use projects. Instead, the Program will rely on consideration of adaptive use efforts as the Program Committee is made aware of funding needs. The Program Committee may become aware of support needs for adaptive re-use projects through a variety of means. One way adaptive re-use support needs may reach the Program Committee is through FHWA/PennDOT funded bridge replacement projects where a determination is made that the historic truss cannot meet vehicular transportation needs; as part of the project development process the historic bridge is marketed for adaptive use and a party may be identified that wishes to re-use the bridge for a pedestrian and/or bicycle use. Another way adaptive re-use support needs may reach the Committee is through a Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside (TASA) application which doesn't receive TASA funding or TASA funding is insufficient. Adaptive re-use projects are then presented to the Committee for review based on the parameters outlined in question #1 above. The total estimated funding needs of the adaptive re-use project is also a factor the Committee will consider when evaluating an adaptive re-use project.

3. What type of bridge projects are eligible for funding?

The primary focus of the Program is National Register eligible or listed metal truss bridges identified in the Management Plan that can meet vehicular transportation needs. The Program will also support adaptive re-use projects involving relocating a National Register eligible or listed metal truss bridge to a new location for pedestrian and/or bicycle use.

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4. How much funding is available?

\$18 million total over a ten-year period has been approved on the TYP. The Program includes \$1 million for the first two years (FFY 2023 and FFY 2024) and \$2 million/FFY for the remaining years.

In addition to these funds, PennDOT may add funds to the Program as mitigation for the loss of a historic metal truss bridge following a determination that a bridge cannot be rehabilitated to meet vehicular needs. Pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, mitigation is necessary where a determination of an adverse effect is made. Addition of mitigation funds will be made on a case-by-case basis where the lead federal agency, in consultation with PennDOT, the SHPO and consulting parties determines it to be the best mitigation for the adverse effect.

5. What do “exceptional” and “high” preservation priority mean?

Preservation priority was determined in the Management Plan. Preservation priority was based on several characteristics including the bridge design, rarity, context, unique or distinguishing technological and design features, and overall condition. These classifications are used to prioritize the heritage value of bridges to effectively integrate them into the transportation planning process. Bridges of Exceptional and High Preservation Priority warrant higher levels of preservation consideration.

More information on Preservation Priority and the Historic Truss Bridge Management Plan can be found [here](#).

6. Why does the bridge need local support?

Historic metal truss bridges that fit the parameters for the Program are county and municipally owned structures. PennDOT does not own or maintain these assets; therefore, local commitment to continue maintenance after rehabilitation or adaptive re-use is an important factor for the Committee to consider when identifying and selecting potential bridge candidates. The interest of local groups and individuals advocating for preservation of the bridge will also be considered.

7. Why is the total estimated cost of rehabilitation a factor?

In 2017, as part of the Management Plan, PennDOT reached out to local historic metal truss bridge owners to discuss the transportation needs of their National Register eligible or listed metal truss bridges. Preservation assessments were conducted for those historic bridges not programmed on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and rehabilitation and preservation considerations, along with an estimated cost to rehabilitate the bridge to meet a minimum load carrying capacity (typically 15 tons).

The Committee is utilizing these estimates as part of project prioritization, while also considering that such estimates may be outdated due to changes in the bridge's conditions,

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inflation, and other factors. While a host of considerations must be weighed, projects that have higher costs will decrease the number of historic metal truss bridges that can be rehabilitated through this Program; therefore, the Committee will seek to maximize the program funds and realize the most preservation “wins” through support of lower cost projects when possible.

8. Who is responsible for managing the design and construction of the project?

PennDOT will be responsible for managing all aspects of the project for those bridges being rehabilitated for vehicular use, including preliminary engineering, right of way acquisition, final design, utilities, and construction. Through the Reimbursement Agreement System (RAS), PennDOT will temporarily take responsibility for the locally owned National Register eligible/listed metal truss bridge for the duration of construction. Afterwards, ownership and responsibility will return to the county or municipal owner who will be responsible for maintenance of the bridge. Adaptive re-use project management will depend upon where the bulk of the funding is coming from. For example, if the adaptive re-use project is primarily TASA funded, the sponsor will manage the project.

9. What type of maintenance is required by the local bridge owner after the project is complete?

The primary goal of this Program is to extend the life of historic metal truss bridges for vehicular transportation and to support adaptive re-use of metal truss bridges where continued vehicular use is not an option. Local bridge owners are highly encouraged to perform continuous maintenance on the rehabilitated bridge to ensure long term use. The financial cost of maintaining the bridge will be the owner’s responsibility. Maintenance should include, but not be limited to, the following activities:

- Annual washing of the historic metal truss bridge;
- Periodic inspections in accordance with National Bridge Inspection Standards (where applicable);
- Appropriate preventive maintenance;
- A systematic record-keeping system; and
- A means to handle the notification and implementation of emergency repairs.

Any stormwater or drainage facilities construction in connection with the historic metal truss bridge rehabilitation project are the owner’s responsibility to maintain.

Additional guidance on historic metal truss maintenance can be found [here](#) in PennDOT’s Truss Maintenance Manual.