

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. Pennsylvania has, by many accounts, 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 currently focused on county and municipally owned historic metal truss bridges where owners desire to work collaboratively with PennDOT, MPO/RPOs, 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 comprised of representatives from: PennDOT's Program Center; PennDOT's Bureau of Project Delivery Environmental Policy and Development Section; the FHWA; and the SHPO is evaluating these bridges further.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are the program parameters?

The Program Committee will consider 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 (HMTBMP) and have an “exceptional” or “high” preservation priority (See Question #5)
- Would be visible by the public, either by vehicles or pedestrians
- Have strong local support, including local commitment to maintain the bridge following rehabilitation (See Question #6)
- Not already programmed on the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and unlikely to be programmed on the STIP due to issues like low ADT, but could meet the vehicular transportation needs of the crossing through rehabilitation.

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2. How are bridge candidate projects selected?

A preliminary list of bridges eligible for program funding was selected by the Program Committee based on the parameters outlined in Question #1 and information from the Management Plan, which had included meetings with bridge owners, MPOs/RPOs and the Program Committee agencies. In addition to looking at these parameters, the total estimated cost of rehabilitation is also a factor that the Program 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.

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 Historic Metal Truss Bridge Management Plan that can meet vehicular transportation needs.

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 a form of mitigation for the loss of historic metal truss bridges. Additions of mitigation funds will be made on a case-by-case basis, following the determination that a programmed historic metal truss bridge cannot be rehabilitated to meet vehicular needs, thereby resulting in an Adverse Effect, and no other options to mitigate the adverse effect have been identified.

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 consistent maintenance after rehabilitation is an important factor for the Committee to consider when selecting potential bridge candidates. The interest of local groups and individuals advocating for preservation of the bridge will also be considered.

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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 STIP. Preservation assessments included a bridge description, preservation priority justification, 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 Program Committee is utilizing these estimates as part of project prioritization. While a host of considerations must be weighed, projects that have higher costs will decrease the number of historic metal trusses 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 including preliminary engineering, right of way acquisition, final design, utilities, and construction. Through a Reimbursement Agreement System (RAS) agreement, PennDOT will temporarily take responsibility for the locally owned National Register eligible/listed metal truss bridge for the duration of the project. Afterwards, ownership and responsibility will return to the county or municipal owner who will be responsible for maintenance of the bridge.

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

Since the goal of this Program is to extend the life of historic metal truss bridges for vehicular transportation, 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;
- 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 will also be the owner’s responsibility to maintain.

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