

Local Assistance  
Highway Bridge Program Advisory Committee Meeting  
June 18, 2020—Decisions Made, Action Items and Summary

**Attendees**

Dee Lam, Acting Division Chief, DLA  
Mark Samuelson, DLA  
Robert Peterson, DLA  
Linda Newton, DLA  
Eileen Crawford, DLA  
Jeremy Wright, DLA  
Robert Zeffoff, DLA  
Jim Perrault, DLAE D6  
Rand Helde, SLA  
Michael Chung, San Joaquin County  
Matt Randall, Placer County  
Chris Sneddon, Santa Barbara County  
Marina Espinoza, CSAC  
Debbie O'Leary, City of Oxnard

Rebecca Neves, City of Placerville  
Robert Newman, City of Santa Clarita  
Jesse Gothan, City of Sacramento  
Ross McKeown, MTC  
José Luis Cáceres, SACOG  
Amy Lewis, CALCOG  
Jon Pray, CTC  
Teri Anderson, CTC  
Greg Kolle, FHWA  
Max Katt, Quincy Engineering  
Gavin Keating, Quincy Engineering  
Margot Yapp, NCE  
Shahram Misaghi, NCE  
Susan Herman, CSUS

**Decisions**

The committee recommended that the Caltrans HBP managers update the program prioritization scheme to move BPMP from priority 6 to 3 (implementation details to be discussed further), with the condition requiring agencies to have a Preventive Maintenance Plan.

**Action Items**

Item Number	Status	Who	Action	Date Created	Target Date
A95	Open	DLA	Bridge Capacity System (BCS) hosting: consider costs and risks, with input from County of LA, Caltrans IT, and LTAP Center	2/19/15	2020
A106	Open	All	Review proposed HBP policy improvements regarding: ADT/Future ADT, approach roadway length, bridge project item eligibility for Federal-aid reimbursement, width of bridge project lanes and shoulders	8/23/18	6/18/20
A110	Open	CSAC reps	Contact county agencies whose unprogrammed bridge projects	2/21/19	2020

			appear on the scour critical list coded 1 or 2, to promote awareness of HEC 23 chapter 2 (Scour Plan of Action and Countermeasures), available mitigation funding, and HBP prioritization criteria.		
A112	Open	DLA	Invite a specialist from Caltrans Division of Environmental Analysis to provide input on NEPA process, for discussion on how to streamline.	4/18/19	2020
A114	Open	All	Discuss possible changes to 6-A scoping document to help estimate project cost more precisely.	4/18/19	6/18/2020
A115	Open	All	Discuss future of BIC program to balance flexibility and fairness—e.g., whether to simplify the program to encourage better utilization, discontinue program, or other action.	4/18/19	2020
A120	Open	DLA	Circulate letter for comment to 6 county agencies whose yet-to-be programmed bridge projects appear on the scour critical list coded 2, seeking response on Scour Plan of Action and Countermeasures.	8/22/19	2020
A122	Open	DLA	Draft guidelines for CSAC and CLC to use in implementing SB 137 Federal-State Highway Funds exchange.	12/12/19	2020
A123	Open	DLA	How many projects are we delivering versus in the past with rising costs?	2/20/20	2020
A124	Open	DLA	Report on Bridge Projects with Inactive Obligation and possible actions by the HBP managers.	2/20/20	2020
A125	Open	DLA	Increasing HBP apportionment: Dee will convene a group with Caltrans Federal liaison Nicole Longoria and report back on available channels for advocacy and sources of support.	6/18/20	2020

A126	Open	CEAC/ LCC	Increasing HBP apportionment: Develop statewide talking points targeted to non-bridge experts, and specifying exact dollar amount needed for bridge program. Identify channels and lobbyists who can advocate for HBP in the highway bill currently in Congress.	6/18/20	2020
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## **Discussions**

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

### **2. Agenda Review**

**No changes to the agenda were made**

### **3. Review of 4/16/20 Draft action summary**

- HBP will provide a report on inactive bridge project in August (A124)
- Committee agendas and final action/discussion summaries are now being posted on the HBP website: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/local-assistance/fed-and-state-programs/highway-bridge-program/committee>
- No corrections or changes were made to the action list, finalize for posting

### **4. Local Bridge Assessment Update**

Max Katt of Quincy Engineering presented results from a survey of local bridge owners, data from which will inform the bridge portion of the *2020 California Statewide Local Streets and Roads Needs Assessment*. He will provide the slides to committee members for reference.

- This year there will be a standalone bridge report with data on both NBI and non-NBI bridges
- The survey of bridge owners was revised from last year and included 21 questions covering agency capabilities and main concerns, use of the BIC program, widening of bridge deck areas, sources of funding for bridge projects, “soft” costs vs. construction, accuracy of bridge inspection reports, maintenance and repair expenses, and plans for future spending to meet safety criteria
- General awareness of HBP issues was higher at the county than the city level; city respondents weighed in on pavement questions rather than bridges

- Responses to the questions about agency capabilities (for evaluating bridge inventory, design, and undertake repairs without external contracting) suggested a need to increase awareness of inventory and of agencies' responsibility to make informed decisions on their bridge assets
- 2/3 of respondents said they spent less than \$500K in local funds over the last 3 years on all bridge projects. A few reported they spend \$5M +
- Half of respondents said they spend 50% or more on soft costs (i.e., non-construction costs such as environmental mitigation) relative to construction costs.
  - This question is worth drilling down. Sometimes it's unclear whether construction management counts as construction or soft cost
  - Local agencies are more aware lately of water quality issues and enforcement of them, e.g. stormwater detention basins, as well as the need to incorporate this early on as part of footprint for overall environmental evaluation
- About 1/4 of respondents said they are seeing between 21% and 100% percent increase in deck width in new and replacement bridges
  - This item had many "don't know" responses. Better historical data on deck width can be found elsewhere
  - Max suggested that the HBP advisory committee could use an expert on roadway geometrics to advise on minimum width standards
  - The survey item doesn't capture age of bridge
- The question about the BIC program included a descriptive paragraph about BIC with a link to the LAPM; however, about 1/4 of respondents said they were unaware of the program. About the same proportion of respondents said they were interested in the program
- Responses about the bridge inspection reports indicate that most agencies are using the reports and see them as accurate
- Reported maintenance and repair expenses seem quite low
- Some respondents said they would need to need to spend 100 times their annual budget just to meet minimum safety criteria over the next 10 years
- Takeaways from survey:
  - Response rate was lower this year than in the past, mainly due to COVID-19 related office shutdowns that made it difficult for respondents to gather data—one budget analyst said she had to consult 6 or 7 different bureaus to compile the data
  - Respondents were not equally knowledgeable about their agency's bridge inventory or other data requested—more reliable input might be obtained if bridge-specific contacts can be engaged
  - Outreach and education is needed, to get "don't know" responses down.
  - Agencies' biggest concerns are: Funding availability, Environmental mitigation and document clearance, State and federal agency regulations

- Local agency portion of survey is done. Matt's team will analyze the NBI data during June-July and will coordinate with Matt and Greg to follow up with focus group before the August HBP committee meeting

## **5. Financial Status**

The program's full fiscal year apportionment may be spent by end of June.

## **6. HBP Funding**

Jose Luis reported on advocacy strategies for the HBP advisory committee to raise awareness about the need for a higher apportionment amount.

The most immediate opportunity for advocacy is this year's highway act reauthorization (INVEST Act). It will be important to request a specific dollar amount that includes data on program backlog and cost inflation.

Potential talking points/channels include:

- The HBP apportionment has remained the same for 11 years
- HBP is massively over-subscribed; has a 20-year backlog. Report this at the upcoming RTPA meeting and advocate through CALCOG, League of Cities, CEAC
- Bridges deteriorate "silently" in comparison to pavement, so local officials are less aware of repair/replacement needs
- HBP delivers on an annual basis, while other programs deliver as little as 30% of their obligated funds programmed years ago
- HBP is replacing bridges with deck widths originally designed for Model-Ts; it's accommodating California's increasing population while also complying with new regulations on bike/ped access and more

Dee Lam will convene a group with Caltrans Federal liaison Nicole Longoria and report back on available channels for advocacy and sources of support.

CEAC/LCC will develop a set of statewide talking points targeted to non-bridge experts, and specifying the dollar amount needed for bridge program.

## **7. 2020 Prioritization / BPMP Priority**

The committee decided to re-prioritize new Bridge Preventive Maintenance Program (BPMP) projects from priority level 6 to 3. The new priority would apply to 2022 list.

- Metering projects into the program allows HBP to be more needs-based rather than first-come first-served; however, due to cost increases since 2019, metering is insufficient to reduce the backlog of projects. Multiple strategies are needed
- Maintenance is important to keep bridges in good condition
- Why aren't we requiring bridge owners to do their own preventive maintenance to enter the bridge program for replacement or rehab in the first place? Local

jurisdictions coming in for HBP need an incentive to have local measures, gas taxes, SB-1 revisions, etc.

- Not funding maintenance encourages agencies to come back when in greater need—funding maintenance is a better reflection of the program’s mission and vision
- The current priority list is based on safety; other factors need to be weighed
- Require all agencies applying to HBP to have a Bridge Preventative Maintenance Plan

## **8. HBP Guideline Changes**

Matt shared participant poll data from the June 3 & 4 outreach webinars on the Local Highway Bridge Program reform policies.

- 656 attended the Zoom webinars over the two days
- Presenters fielded a total of 275 questions during and after the event. Participant questions generally fell into five categories: General/administrative, Technical/engineering, Funding, Process, and adequacy of Caltrans resources/responsiveness to carry out the new guidelines efficiently. Most of the questions had to do with process details and Caltrans responsiveness
- Another theme was, “What will be the result of implementing each policy change, in terms of time and money saved or other measure(s)?”
- Poll items asked participants to rate the effect each policy change would have on their agency or clients’ agency. The new policy limiting approach roadway work received the largest vote: 59% of respondents said this change would have “some negative effect.”
- Most poll items received 50% or more in the “some negative” and “major detrimental effect” categories combined, with the exception of the high cost bridge federal funding cap of \$80M, which was rated “no effect” by 40% respondents and “positive effect” by 29%
- Comments from the committee:
  - Important to be very clear about when changes will be rolled out. Final version of updates will be published January 2021. HBP program managers aren’t advocating to change rules on projects that are currently in process (e.g. mandatory field reviews won’t apply to a project in ROW phase); however, many projects just started PE this year, or won’t start until next year so some changes can, in fact, be applied as soon as they are published.
  - Many who attended the webinar were grappling with unfamiliar technology and had low awareness of the issues
  - Nearly all respondents said they would attend future webinars on HBP committee activities and policies

The committee discussed two of the guideline updates and scheduled a new date to continue the discussion on **Thursday, July 9 at 10am.**

1c— All projects must have a Field Review, Type Selection, Hydraulic Report, 65% and 95% plans reviewed by HQ and/or SLA

- The purpose of the type selection report review is to ensure the most cost-effective solution is being considered and that the preferred alternative is HBP eligible. The 65% PS & E review is to determine whether project scope is consistent with type selection. 95% review is a perfunctory update just prior to construction authorization to ensure project meets current code/standards
- Q: How long do the 65% and 95% reviews take? They may be problematic if they slow down project. A: The review time for 65% is not long. Open communication between local agency and SLA will be required to ensure these can get done quickly
- Q: What are we saving in cost or time by adding these reviews? A: They ensure the project continues to be eligible, which protects local agencies from having funding pulled from their project
- Q: Procedurally, how is the review handled? What is workflow? A: DLAE staff works with SLA to get review done. It's always best to go through DLAE staff
- Other comments:
  - A turnaround time commitment from Caltrans would be helpful
  - Make sure the benefits of the review to the local agency are emphasized in all messaging
  - Messaging should also include accountability, noting who is the project advocate in the end, i.e., who is the designated decision maker after the 65% review?
  - Change applies to rehab & replace projects

2a—Limit HBP Funding to Basic Bridge Costs. All bridges are only funded at the cost of basic structural solution. No aesthetics treatment (except historic bridge projects). HBP will not pay for signature structures.

- Make sure language is specific, e.g. does “historic” mean the bridge is on the National Register? Other terms to define: signature, gateway, special
- Needs to be consistent with language on federal statutes such as NRHP, NEPA
- Should “baseline” be covered in the type selection report—materials, truss type?

## **9. Review New Action Items**

Items A125 and 126 were added

## **10. Round Table**

- Eileen is retiring soon; her last meeting will be July 9. New HBP manager Andy Chou starts July 1
- Matt will send proposed language on BIC policy to the group for consideration; would like to move burden of cost increases from Caltrans to the local agency. Jose Luis will host a separate conversation about BIC

- Regarding the SB-137 federal/state swap: HSIP is prioritized for the state-only funds, but this could change in subsequent years
- The 2021 FSTIP will be adopted in May or June 2021
- Ross shared appreciation for Matt for doing a fantastic job with the webinars
- Jeremy noted that the project delivery agreements for Prop 1b Seismic projects deadline has moved to August 30. Since April he has approved 3-5 projects but is still less than half the delivery agreements. Some still need Board approvals; others haven't responded at all. Jeremy will create a list of those with no delivery agreement. Ross will share list with RTPA moderator—meeting is next week

## **11. Adjourn**