

DRAFT Local Assistance
Highway Bridge Program Advisory Committee Meeting
August 20, 2020 —Decisions Made, Action Items and Summary

Attendees

Mark Samuelson, DLA
Linda Newton, DLA
Andy Chou, DLA
Jeremy Wright, DLA
Robert Zezoff, DLA
Jim Perrault, DLAE D6
Kirk Anderson, DLAE D6
Sudhakar Vatti, SLA
Michael Chung, San Joaquin County
Matt Randall, Placer County
Chris Sneddon, Santa Barbara County

Jason Vivian, Tulare County
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
Jon Pray, CTC
Greg Kolle, FHWA
Max Katt, Quincy Engineering
Susan Herman, CSUS

Decisions

The Committee deferred deciding on adding new prioritized projects into the HBP until after the reform proposals take effect. The prioritization lists will be brought back to the December meeting.

The Committee advised Caltrans to develop HBP policy language on the recommended Chapter 6 Reforms to include in a future office bulletin. They approved new recommendations 1, 2, & 4 from the Committee, and the HBP re-definition of high cost bridge projects and a mid-level definition.

Action Items

All completed Action Items will be removed from the list for the next meeting summary.

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	8/23/18	Complete

Item Number	Status	Who	Action	Date Created	Target Date
			reimbursement, width of bridge project lanes and shoulders		
A110	Open	CSAC reps	Contact county agencies whose unprogrammed bridge projects 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.	2/21/19	2020
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	12/10/2020
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 LCC to use in implementing SB 137 Federal-State Highway Funds exchange.	12/12/19	Complete
A123	Complete	DLA	How many projects are we delivering versus in the past with rising costs?	2/20/20	Complete

Item Number	Status	Who	Action	Date Created	Target Date
A124	Complete	DLA	Report on Bridge Projects with Inactive Obligation and possible actions by the HBP managers.	2/20/20	Complete
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

Discussions

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dee Lam was not able to attend.

2. Agenda Review

No changes to the agenda were made.

3.1 and 3.2 Review of 6/18/20 and 7/9/20 Draft action summary

No changes were made to the action summaries.

3.3 Number of projects being delivered now vs. in the past (A123)

HBP shared a report summarizing how many projects had construction authorized per District over the fiscal years 2000-2020. BART projects, low water crossings, and preventive maintenance were filtered out of the report. From the snapshot it is apparent that from 2008-2013 the highest numbers of projects went to construction (avg. 47); from 2017-present there were fewer (avg. 35.5), likely because of cost increases.

- 2008 was during the recession—construction bids were low, which may account for the high number of projects that were delivered
- There have been a few instances in recent years of projects that were authorized for construction but could not begin due to lack of HBP funds. Many have taken advantage of advance construction (AC) in the absence of HBP funding.
- The report will be helpful in efforts to advocate for the bridge program funding. The replacement ratio needed to keep bridge inventory age under 100 years old (per FHWA's analysis) is much higher than the numbers that are actually being replaced.
- This report will be updated and shared annually in December going forward

4. Local Bridge Assessment Update

The Advisory Committee reported that the bridge portion of the Local Streets and Roads Needs Analysis is underway as of this month. Quincy Engineering (Quincy) will send preliminary results for input and feedback from the HBP advisory subcommittee in advance

of the September 25 LSRNA oversight committee meeting that will review Quincy Engineering's findings.

Quincy shared slides to clarify the study methodology:

- Response rate to survey. High participation rate from counties; lower from cities. Excluding city jurisdictions that have 0 bridges in the NBI, participation ratios for cities were around 56%.
- Study will break down bridge needs by component; deck condition alone will no longer be considered a replacement qualifier.
- Sufficiency rating (SR) can't give a complete picture for comparing bridge importance across 600+ bridge owners. However, SR is a helpful overall number for communicating with elected officials and other non-specialists.
- The methodology uses AASHTO minimum criteria to estimate needs for bridge width; sidewalks replaced on one side for rural and both sides for urban.
- Criteria for estimating maximum bridge replacement length, per FHWA: original length+20% or +20 feet
- Quincy proposed that joint seals, spall repairs, other element-level inspection data to capture preventive maintenance costs also be considered in analysis. HBP said element-level inspection data is too granular; the report should instead use load ratings + NBI repair recommendations for 58, 59, 60 items that qualify under "fair" condition. Quincy will follow up on this to clarify the game plan.
- Quincy asked whether it would be helpful to have historical ratios of costs per project phase with inflation calculations. This will be another follow up item with DLA.
- Overall approach of the bridge needs assessment is to capture bridge replacement needs in the present and how much it will cost now to maintain bridge inventory in its current condition, assuming design standard of 75-year life cycle. Once that dollar amount is defined, it can then be drilled down into seismic, scour, other specific types of work, and future needs for replacing the aging inventory. In 2018 the need to maintain bridge inventory at current condition (SR) was ~\$600M/ year; 2018 Total Needs (present worth) was \$4.9B
- Quincy will collect subcommittee input in the first/second week of September, and produce a fresh iteration of the analysis for September 25. Likely will need one more iteration after that before final presentation.

5. Financial Status

- Apportionment balance for the year is now at \$0
- Some E-76s are still in process
- FAST Act expires September 30; FHWA will likely grant extension but length is unknown
- \$75M in Off-system apportionment has its own code; this is codified in the FAST Act

6. 2020 Prioritization

HBP called for a decision about whether to admit new projects into the HBP for the next fiscal year. If no action is taken now, the earliest that new projects can be admitted into the program will be March 2021.

- The HBP managers recommend not allowing more projects into the program
- There are four priority-1 On-system projects in line; one priority-1, four priority-2, and eight priority-3 Off-system projects.
- HBP commented that the priority-1 projects on both lists are scour critical. Cost for priority 1 for On and Off is \$57,165,339.
- One Committee member recommended adding in the priority 1s (On-system) and priority 1-2-3 (Off-system). The new INVEST in America Act is proposing a 25% increase in Off-system funding. Also, looking that the priority-1 Trinity County bridge (SR 28), it doesn't seem fair that some projects currently in the program are bridges that were in better condition. It may appear that concerns about the program being over-subscribed are overriding the intent of the program.
- One Committee member asked, what is the rationale for admitting new projects right now when the program is over-subscribed? Let's wait until the new HBP policies are in place. All projects currently in the works do meet the intent of the program.
- One Committee member supported deferring a decision. He would like to see any new projects that are admitted to the program fall under the new HBP eligibility guidelines.
- All Committee members supported deferring any action until new policy is in place.
- Q, Committee: if none of the projects in the queue are admitted to the program for this fiscal year, will new applications for priority 1 projects bump down those that are already within the queue? A: Within rank 1 there are additional qualifications; however, existing rank-1 projects in the queue will not become 2s or 3s or lower rankings because their deficiencies will not change.
- Q, HBP if we choose not to admit the projects on the list into the HBP will we request that the sponsors re-apply to the HBP? A: Yes.
- Q, Committee: for projects programmed in 2018, this is the first year they can receive PE funds, correct? A: Yes, unless they use AC for their PE.
- The committee voted to defer a decision until a later date.

7. SB 137 (A122)

HBP shared the final draft of the SB 137 – Optional Federal HSIP / NHPP Funds and State Match Exchange Discussion and Implementation Guidelines.

- One Committee member noted that for the bridge program to realize the efficiencies of the state-only funds, it would make sense to incentivize preventive maintenance. BPMP projects are easy to deliver and typically do not trigger federal agency studies

8. HBP Grant Proposal for SB 137 funds

The HBP Committee shared an idea highlighting the benefits of HBP's possibly utilizing 20% of the Federal-State funds exchange per SB 137 to streamline delivery of some projects. He also proposed a grant application process and safeguards to ensure the scope of work would still be eligible for federal HBP.

- A priority ranking calculator would be available to the agencies themselves
- HBP manages the funds swap with CTC, not individual project sponsors
- One Committee member noted the idea would work especially for low cost bridges in terms of streamlining the process (especially by avoiding NEPA) and being able to start ROW a little sooner
- Another Committee member noted this option would be a good pilot for getting preventive maintenance done
- The DLAE noted, for comparison, that HSIP is currently using State-only funds for planning documents (Local Roadway Safety Plans). Funds are allocated by CTC as a lump sum, then individual plans are reviewed & approved by HSIP managers. Project sponsor submits an allocation request for reimbursement that Local Assistance has delegated authority to approve.
- Likewise, for HBP this would be a good opportunity for bridge owners to create systemic plans for BPMP

9. Lunch

10. Inactive Bridge Projects (A124)

HBP shared the inactive list dated July 31, 2020, in response to a request about RTPAs being held accountable for inactive projects in their regions—need more information about them to be able to answer questions from FHWA.

- DLA Implementation usually tracks inactive projects; HBP managers will review the list (105 projects for a total of \$38M) to determine if they are still valid, which can be final vouchered, and which are no longer inactive.
- What happens to the balance assuming the project just needs to be final invoiced and closed? Back to the program to be programmed? Yes. However, if funds are de-obligated off the project, they go back into the statewide HBP pot.
- Caltrans Districts have been working with inactive projects for some time. DLAEs recommend certain strategies to local agencies—mainly, to invoice every 6 months if possible. Even for amounts as low as \$1000. If the project has environmental studies, etc. consider holding some dollars back to invoice in the interim period.
- One Committee member said agencies should invoice about 90 days in advance of the inactivity deadline to ensure enough time for the invoice processing.

11.1 High Cost Bridge Projects

HBP shared that after Dee Lam's 8/12/20 CTC presentation, Secretary Kim commented: Local agencies have a disconnect in their expectations of HBP relative to the amount of funding HBP receives. Link to the presentation:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_cYKlaNSDs

- HBP said that HBP high cost bridge policy says managers can program up to 50% of any sub-program for high cost bridge projects. Demand for high-cost bridges in On-system program for next FFY will be more than 50% of the \$214M available (\$107M available). Several currently-programmed projects will come in at the beginning of 2021 for conversions that want to sign high-cost agreements. HBP asked for the committee's approval to program more but did not provide an exact anticipated amount. This would reduce programming capacity for FFY 2021 for non-high cost bridges. The committee said to keep the high cost capacity at current policy.

The Committee presented alternative solutions for high cost bridges. Two meetings were held on Friday July 24 and Tuesday July 28, 2020. Jose Luis Caceres, Chris Sneddon., Ross McKeown, Matt Randall, Jesse Gothan, and Rebecca Neves attended one or both meetings. The meetings resulted in three recommendations (detailed in handout).

- Recommendation #1: Revise federal/local reimbursement ratio for all new HBP projects: 80%/20% for on federal aid system projects and 88.53%/11.47% for off-federal aid system projects. Apply to projects coming into the program (projects without e76 for PE).
 - The Committee commented that it might make sense to have the same reimbursement formula for On and Off system bridges.
- Recommendation #2: High Cost Bridge (HCB) projects over \$50M require scoping document to get into the program paid for by local agency. Scoping document consists of preliminary design developed by agency (30% plans & estimate). Project funding limited to 80/20 reimbursement ratio split at 30% plans estimate for On federal-aid system & 88.53%/11.47% Off federal aid system projects. Caltrans to provide standard outline and format of scoping document. Apply to projects coming into the program (projects without e76 for PE).
 - Additional sentence: "Local Assistance strongly recommends that sponsors with high cost bridge projects near \$50M follow this procedure. High cost bridge projects claiming a cost under \$50M shall not be reimbursed for expenses exceeding \$50M."
 - Standard format for scoping doc would hopefully reduce effect of variations in consultant methodologies for estimating costs.
- Recommendation #3: Caltrans shall not accept new high-cost projects into the local HBP that result in the sum of all unobligated high cost bridge project phases, current & proposed exceeding 50% of 15 years of anticipated local HBP revenue. Applies to both on and off federal aid system projects.
 - HBP said this is essentially already in place per existing policy—needs to be fleshed out further so the nuance is clearer.

- Recommendation #4: To be eligible for the bridge program, agencies must submit a bridge asset management plan for their inventory. The plan should follow FHWA guidelines and address bridge preservation/preventative maintenance. The plan must also demonstrate continued maintenance efforts during the life of their bridges that have been completed at their cost. Caltrans/HBPAC to develop & provide a standard outline and format of this document. The plan could be scaled / simplified for owners with only a few bridges. See pages 32-56 for an example:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mdot/Local_Bridge_Asset_Management_Guide_480551_7.pdf

- The Committee noted that having a locally-owned bridge asset management plan for the entire program would be helpful. This would give a framework for local bridge asset management plans to roll up into.

11.2 Re-definition of high cost bridges

HBP shared talking points about re-defining a high cost bridge project from \$20 M to \$35M for construction only. Then adding a mid-level project definition between \$15M to \$35M for CON and splitting the construction commitment over 2 years.

- One Committee member suggested defining \$40M as high-cost and splitting construction reimbursement over 4 years.
- Another noted that larger conversions are better for cash flow.
- HBP offered to run some programming scenarios and bring them back to the committee.

11.3 High Cost Bridge Projects Closing Remarks

- HBP suggested the subgroup take these proposals back to their local partners for feedback; The Committee indicated that local partners would accept these reforms and that further survey/feedback of these proposals is not warranted.
- Mark Samuelson said there is an expectation that reforms will be completed and in place by the end of this calendar year.

The Committee recommended implementing recommendations 1, 2 & 4, as well as the re-definition of High Cost and the addition of mid-level project definition.

12. Review New Action Items

No new action items were added

13. Round Table

Adjourn