Preliminary Bridge Plan Review Process

This document explains, in more detail, the State Aid Bridge Office's process for reviewing preliminary bridge plans and provides a few tips and recommendations to help the process go more smoothly.

After the owner/owner's consultant prepares the preliminary bridge plans, two hard copies shall be sent to the State Aid Bridge Office for review and acceptance.

See the Submittal and Acceptance Process for Bridge Projects (PDF) document for the plan content and associated documents to be submitted. There are occasions where we may ask for additional documents or e-files to assist us in the plan review. These may include: GEOPAK files, roadway plan sheets and/or electronic layouts, roadway alignment data and/or coordinate information, utility information, aesthetic details, or additional hydraulic information.

If your bridge project is considering an innovative design technique, a complex structure, or is historic, upfront collaboration with the State Aid Bridge Office should be conducted before preparing preliminary plans. This collaboration typically entails a meeting or two to establish approval with the State Bridge Engineer.

For bridge repair projects, we recommend calling the State Aid Bridge Office early to discuss the proposed repair work. There may be cases when certain bridge elements, such as bridge barriers, will need to be brought up to current standards, depending on the level of repair work. In some cases, this additional required work can make the project less feasible. Bridge preservation and rehabilitation work is discussed in the Bridge Preservation and Improvement Guidelines Fiscal Year 2016-2020 (PDF) document.

During preliminary plan reviews, we verify that the bridge follows design requirements set forth in AASHTO LRFD Bridge Design Specifications, the MnDOT LRFD Bridge Design Manual and the State Aid Operations Chapter 8820. If these design requirements are not followed, a Design Exception or Variance may be required. The design concerns in question should be communicated with the District State Aid Engineer and dealt with early in the design phase of the project. If a Design Exception or Variance is needed, State Aid Bridge will require the owner or their consultant to submit information/documentation to support the Design Exception or Variance, and information about them shall be shown on the preliminary plans. See the State Aid Manual for more information on Design Exceptions and Variances.

We may also bring up bridge funding eligibility issues in order to remind the owner to verify what funding sources will be used and to make sure of funding eligibility with the State Aid Bridge Programs Engineer. For example, a portion of the bridge may need to be funded with local funds by the owner if the proposed deck width or sidewalk widths exceed State Aid

Operations Chapter 8820 guidelines or the funding eligibility guidelines set forth in the State Aid Manual. It's always a good practice to figure out the funding eligibility and sources early in the planning process to avoid any unforeseen surprises later on. Bridge funding availability and funding eligibility should be directed to the State Aid Bridge Programs Engineer and/or the State Aid Bridge Engineer.

Typically the review time for preliminary plans is 2 weeks, but this can fluctuate due to complexity of the bridge project and workload.

State Aid Bridge reviews and marks up comments (in red) and returns an electronic PDF copy of the marked up plans to the owner, owner's consultant and DSAE for review. The owner and DSAE, as they see fit, may add additional comments to pass on to the owner's consultant. An electronic PDF copy of the transmittal letter is forwarded to: DSAE, Owner, Owner's Consultant, and the State Aid Bridge file.