

Department of Transportation and Works

3.2.25 Bridge Inspections (2003 Annual Report, Part 2.36)

Introduction

In 2003, we performed a review of the bridge inspections performed by the then Department of Works, Services and Transportation. The objectives of our review were to assess whether the Department had:

- a bridge inspection program with objective standards for assessing bridge conditions;
 - a bridge information system that was current and accurate; and
 - a rehabilitation and replacement plan based on information gathered from bridge inspections.
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Conclusions from our 2003 review

As a result of our review we concluded the following:

- While the Department had a bridge inspection policy, it was neither documented nor was there documented approval of the policy.
 - The Department did not have documented guidelines to ensure that inspections were consistent among staff and across regions.
 - There were inconsistencies in bridge condition ratings resulting from completed inspections.
 - The bridge inspection database maintained by the Department containing information input from the bridge inspection reports was incomplete and inaccurate.
 - The Department's process relating to bridge rehabilitation and replacement required improvement.
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Update on Prior Years' Report Items

Update

In October 2005, we contacted the Department of Transportation and Works requesting an update as to further progress on the comments and recommendations included in our 2003 report. The information provided by the Department in response to our request is outlined below.

2003 Recommendations

The Department should:

- *develop and implement a documented and approved risk-based bridge inspection policy;*
- *prepare guidelines to ensure inspections are consistent among staff and across regions;*
- *ensure that the bridge inspection database is complete and accurate; and*
- *develop and implement a long-term plan for future funding requirements for the rehabilitation and replacement of bridges.*

Action Taken

The Department indicated that on 8 July 2004 an official "Policy for Bridge and Wharf Inspection" was approved by the Deputy Minister of Transportation and Works. The policy states "the frequency of inspections will be risk based and shall follow generally accepted engineering practices but shall not exceed two years".

The Department indicated that, since the 2003 report, it has developed a new form for documenting bridge inspections. The most significant change to the form has been the development of a new condition code system. This new system, with thirteen different rankings, gives an inspector greater flexibility in describing the condition of a bridge structure component compared to the previous four ranking system.

Update on Prior Years' Report Items

The Department also indicated that following the development of the new Bridge Inspection Form regional staff involved in performing bridge inspections attended training sessions prepared and presented by the Chief Bridge Engineer and his staff. These sessions refreshed for inspectors the various components of bridge structures, common areas of deterioration in bridge infrastructure and application of the new Bridge Inspection Form for documenting bridge inspections. The sessions were aimed at improving the consistency of observations and the application of condition codes among the field inspectors.

Finally, the Department indicated a new intranet site using Active Server Pages technology to connect to the existing Microsoft Access database has been developed for bridge inspection record storage and retrieval. This site was made available to regional staff in the spring of 2005. This allows regional staff who are carrying out the inspections to enter their observations directly into the system.
