



DATE: 04/29/2022 (date of email)  
TO: County Highway Commissioners  
FROM: David Bohnsack, P.E.  
SUBJECT: Official Bridge File

**\*\*\* Text from the email sent to the county highway commissioners on 4/29/2022 \*\*\***

During recent requests for bridge documents from local bridge owners, there was some confusion about the official bridge file. Some of the confusion was about what documents must be saved, where the documents are stored, and how long the documents must be kept. The information below should clear up some of the confusion (*Reference: 23 CFR Part 650 C – National Bridge Inspection Standards, 650.313 (d) – Prepare bridge files*).

#### **What is the official Bridge File?**

WisDOT's Structure Inspection Manual states *"The primary location for components of the structure/bridge files is Wisconsin's Highway Structures Information System (HSIS). This is supplemented by regional and county (local) files which are maintained by the regional or county (local) Inspection Program Managers."*

HSIS is supplemented with other files – local and regional files. HSIS is the storage location for all bridge inspection reports dated April 1, 2017 and after. Inspections shown in HSIS prior to April 1, 2017 may be incomplete. Other documentation in local bridge files may not have been electronically stored in HSIS. The local office bridge file may contain the only copy of some documents. **Do not dispose of inspection reports or other bridge documentation unless the complete document is available in HSIS.**

If you have converted paper documents to an electronic format, please contact me to see if the files can be loaded into HSIS.

#### **What documents must be saved?**

The *bridge file* must contain documentation applicable to bridge inspection, maintenance, rehabilitation, agreements, etc. An inexhaustive list of applicable bridge file components is below:

- Inspection reports
- Maintenance records
- Channel cross-sections
- Waterway information – channel cross-sections, soundings, stream profiles
- Special inspection procedures or requirements
- Load rating documentation, including load testing results
- Posting documentation
- Critical findings and actions taken
- Scour assessment

- Scour Plan of Action (POA) (for scour critical bridges and those with unknown foundations)
- Inventory and evaluation data and collection/verification forms
- Significant correspondence
- Agreements
- Historic information
- Other pertinent bridge documents

### **Where to store the bridge files?**

Documents must be saved in a designated accessible Bridge File. The Bridge File can be a folder in a file drawer in the bridge owner's office or an electronic copy stored on a bridge owner's electronic storage system. Electronic files can be scanned copies of paper documents or an original electronic file.

### **How long must the Bridge File be maintained?**

The Bridge File must be maintained/saved, **either paper or electronic**, for as long as the bridge exists.

If bridge files have been destroyed or lost, to the extent possible, the bridge files should be recovered. Unrecoverable historical documents do not have to be re-created; for example, as-built plans, pile records, inspection reports, etc.

### **\*\*\* Clarification from 5/5/2022 Email \*\*\***

If the bridge is constructed through the **State LET** program, BOS Design Section receives all the design documentation including the scour calculations from the designer. The documentation is loaded into HSIS once the bridge has been checked complete on the annual completion report. There may be lag time because of the number of documents that need to be loaded from all the new bridges. There is no requirement for the bridge owner to track down copies of the design documents unless they want copies for their records.

### **\*\*\* Local Let Memo \*\*\***

Additional information on **Local Let** documentation can be found in the [Local Let Memo](#) under the Maintenance & Inspection Policy Memos on the WisDOT's Bureau of Structures webpage.