



Environmental Guidance

Historic Bridge Legacy Program and Public Outreach

Guidance on how to conduct public outreach activities to comply
with 23 U.S.C. 144(g) of the federal transportation code

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1.0 Introduction

As part of the Texas Department of Transportation's (TxDOT's) responsibilities under 23 USC 144 (g), TxDOT must make historic bridges proposed for replacement available for reuse as part of the department's environmental compliance efforts. This document assists the District environmental staff in fulfilling TxDOT's responsibilities to identify a new bridge owner. TxDOT's historians, along with the public involvement staff, developed this guidance to ensure consistency of efforts across the Districts. Although this program may be referred to as "marketing" or "historic bridge adoption," its official name is the Historic Bridge Legacy Program. This is an effort to highlight the differences between this program and the more well-known "Adopt a Highway" program.

Districts should announce the availability of a historic bridge as soon as discussions among the district, Bridge Division, and Historical Studies Branch identify replacement as a possible option. Historic bridge project alternatives are either documented in a formal Historic Bridge Team (HBT) report produced by the Bridge Division, or the project team can collaborate via SharePoint to develop them. However, once TxDOT programs a potential historic bridge replacement, a district may choose to hold informal conversations to attempt to identify new owners prior to announcing the availability of a bridge through a press release, flyers, or other means. This is often done while communicating with the county about Advance Funding Agreements (AFAs) or potential options for the crossing.

This guidance includes templates for web posting, press releases, flyers, and other media that may be useful to the districts in implementing the Historic Bridge Legacy program. The purpose of the Historic Bridge Legacy Program is to solicit letters of interest and reuse proposals from organizations interested in reusing the bridge off the highway system. District environmental staff should complete all the tasks outlined in this guidance.

2.0 Create a Stakeholder Outreach List

Create a contact list for announcing opportunities for bridge adoption. It should be updated frequently and regularly. ENV-HIST can assist in developing a stakeholder list, as necessary, and can announce availability of bridges to the *Beyond The Road* newsletter list. If kept current, this list can be the foundation for future district communication efforts. Districts should send information about bridge adoption opportunities and seek feedback regarding bridge adoption efforts and opportunities.

Stakeholder Lists

- TxDOT District Public Information Officer (PIO)
- TxDOT ENV-CRM
- TxDOT TPP Public Involvement
- Texas Historical Commission (THC)
- Historic Bridge Foundation (HBF)
- Truss bridge enthusiasts
- Historians
- County Historical Commissions (CHCs)
- Certified Local Governments (CLGs)
- Statewide or local preservation organizations and historical societies
- Engineering associations and programs
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Recreational Trails Program
- City government
- County government

- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
- Chambers of Commerce
- Civic Organizations
- Trails Organizations
- Schools

3.0 Bridges Unlikely to be Relocated

Bridge size, location, materials, or other constraints can make a bridge (such as concrete or masonry bridges) an unlikely candidate for successful relocation. While Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) regulations require attempts to find new owners for these bridges, such constraints should be acknowledged in the public materials.¹ See Section 8.0 about what documentation TxDOT needs for the project files.

1. With the assistance of ENV-HIST, develop a [Historic Bridge Adoption Information Packet](#). Use the template found in the Historic Resources Toolkit on TxDOT.gov.
2. ENV-HIST will post the bridge packet online, as appropriate.
3. Notify the following parties of the availability of the online bridge packet:
 - Texas Historical Commission (THC)
 - Historic Bridge Foundation (HBF)
 - CHC for the bridge location
4. Advertise the bridge online for 30 days from date of posting. Typically, this advertisement shall be posted prior to the completion of Section 106 and Section 4(f) findings and documentation.

4.0 Bridges More Likely to be Relocated

Before starting this section, ensure that ENV-HIST initiates Section 106 consultation with the Texas Historical Commission, Historic Bridge Foundation, County Historical Commission (CHC), and any other potential consulting parties on the project. This first consultation letter will inform the consulting parties that TxDOT is starting a project at the bridge crossing and will let the consulting parties know that TxDOT is starting to look for new owners of the historic bridge. Once ENV-HIST initiates consultation, the district shall conduct the following steps.

For bridges that can be relocated, such as smaller metal truss bridges, and for those built between 1945 and 1965 called out as “Group A Bridges” under the agreement between TxDOT and THC for Post-1945 Bridges that are likely candidates for relocation or preservation in place (Post-1945):

1. Develop printed materials.
 - With the assistance from ENV-HIST, develop a flyer for the historic bridge available for adoption. Use the [Adopting a Historic Bridge Flyer Template](#) found in the Historic Resources Toolkit on TxDOT.gov.

¹ Exceptions may be made for significant bridges, as determined in consultation with the Texas Historical Commission and Historic Bridge Foundation

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- With the assistance of ENV-HIST, develop an information packet for the historic bridge available for adoption. Use the [Historic Bridge Adoption Information Packet Template](#) found in the Historic Resources Toolkit on TxDOT.gov.
 - ENV-HIST will post bridge packet on [TxDOT's Historic Bridge Legacy Program](#) webpage, as appropriate.
 - Request printed copies of the Legacy Program Postcards from ENV-HIST to leave behind at presentation venues or to leave at strategic locations such as libraries, county courthouses, recreation and community centers, and schools. ENV-HIST shall mail the postcards to the district for distribution. Print copies of the Historic Bridge Legacy Program Brochure as necessary for distribution. [The Historic Bridge Legacy Program Brochure](#) is found in the Historical Resources Toolkit on TxDOT.gov.
2. Distribute appropriate notices and media advisories to stakeholders, the media, and the public.
- Prepare an official TxDOT email in accordance with TxDOT email guidelines. The official TxDOT email guidance and template can be found at <https://crossroads/divisions/cmd/creative-services/services/brand-and-design/txdot-brand-templates.html>). Send the email to stakeholders on the contact list and attach the Adopt a Historic Bridge flyer. Request stakeholders share the information with their members and associates and suggest they post the flyer on their websites and physical bulletin boards.

At a minimum, the following stakeholders must be notified:

- Texas Historical Commission
- Historic Bridge Foundation
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Recreational Trails Program staff
- County Historical Commissions within a 50-mile radius of the bridge location
- Certified Local Governments within a 50-mile radius of the bridge location
- County governments within a 50-mile radius of the bridge location
- City governments within a 50-mile radius of the bridge location
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations, as appropriate
- Trails organizations within a 50-mile radius of the bridge location.

TxDOT should search for a new bridge owner for AT LEAST 90 days.² This 90-day period may take place at any time during the environmental process. However, at least 30 of these days should occur after TxDOT receives Section 106 concurrence on the alternative that requires

² FHWA recommends a best practice of searching for a new owner for at least 180 days. Because TxDOT cannot choose an alternative prior to completion of the Section 106 process, TxDOT cannot with certainty guarantee availability of the bridge for relocation. However, identifying potential, responsible owners for a relocation bridge helps inform the Section 106 consultation. Districts and ENV historians should work together to determine an appropriate length of time for the posting based on factors including let schedule, nearby communities with interest and resources, and condition of bridge.

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moving a bridge. Please keep in mind that stakeholders may request a longer timeline to search for a potential new owner.

- With the assistance of ENV-HIST, develop an email notification to the GovDelivery Historic Bridges email list or the Beyond The Road email list.
 - With the assistance from the district public information officer (PIO), develop a media advisory and/or a public service advisory (PSA) announcing the availability of the bridge for adoption. Use the [Historic Bridge Adoption Public Service Announcement](#) template and the [Historic Bridge Adoption Media Advisory](#) template found in the Historic Resources Toolkit on TxDOT.gov to create these notices.
3. Consider selecting one or more of the following outreach options:
- A Post a bridge flyer and/or leave postcards as a takeaway on physical bulletin boards in public and private spaces. Be sure to obtain permission from the owners before posting flyers and postcards. Possible posting locations include:
 - Libraries within a 50-mile radius of the bridge location
 - City Hall
 - County Courthouse
 - Senior Citizen centers
 - Local businesses (restaurants, retailers)
 - Recreation and community centers
 - Places of worship
 - B Contact the district PIO and ask for assistance to:
 - Post notices on city or county websites
 - Post the information on community newspaper websites
 - Broadcast the adoption opportunity through TxDOT's social media
 - C Sign up to speak during the public forum portion of a meeting or request to speak at civic organizations. Possible venues for presenting information about a bridge adoption opportunity include:
 - City council meetings
 - School board meetings
 - County commissioner's court
 - Chambers of commerce
 - City/county historical societies and commissions
 - Civic organizations (Lions, Kiwanis and Rotary clubs)

Please keep in mind that stakeholders may request a longer timeline to search for a potential new owner.

See Section 8.0 about what documentation TxDOT needs for the project files.

5.0 Historic Bridge Legacy Webpage

All historic bridge outreach should direct potential new owners to TxDOT's Historic Bridge Legacy Program webpage (link: <https://www.txdot.gov/about/campaigns-outreach/texas-historic-bridges/adopt-a-historic-bridge.html>). On the page, the public can find the [Historic Bridge Legacy Program Brochure](#), which outlines program requirements, provides information on the adoption process and typical steps, and shares success stories. The brochure also includes a proposal checklist to assist interested parties in providing TxDOT with appropriate information. The page lists all historic bridges currently available through the program.

6.0 Timelines

Give potential interested parties time to collect information and make decisions regarding adopting a historic bridge. Advertisement times may be based on overall project timelines. ENV-HIST recommends the following timeline for a bridge in the program:

- Once the project team determines that bridge replacement is a possibility, work with ENV-HIST to initiate consultation with THC, HBF, and the appropriate CHC. Plan for 30 days for ENV-HIST to write, review, and send the consultation letters.
- While ENV-HIST prepares the correspondence, the district may prepare the Stakeholder Outreach List, the Historic Bridges Adoption Information Packet, and the Adopting a Historic Bridge Flyer, Public Service Announcement, and Media Advisory, as appropriate.
 - For bridges unlikely to be relocated, make sure to advertise the bridge for 30 calendar days. This includes posting the availability of the bridge on the TxDOT website for 30 days, as well as allowing the interested parties 30 days to respond. Determine your proposal acceptance date for enough time to allow for advertisement of the bridge and responses, probably at least 45 days from the date of posting online.
 - For bridges identified in the HBT report as likely to be relocated or Post-1945 “Group A Bridges” that are candidates for relocation or preservation in place, make sure to advertise the bridge for at least 90 days. *The longer the response time, the better.* This includes posting the availability of the bridge on the TxDOT website for 90 days, as well as allowing the interested parties 90 days to respond. Determine your proposal acceptance date for enough time to allow for advertisement of the bridge and responses, probably at least 100 days from the date of posting online. This 100-day period may take place at any time during the environmental process. However, at least 30 of these days should occur after TxDOT receives Section 106 concurrence on the alternative that requires moving a bridge. Discuss the appropriate timing with ENV-HIST.
- ENV-HIST sends the consultation letters to the THC, HBF, and CHC and requests the ENV web coordinator to post the Historic Bridge Adoption Information Packet online.
- For bridges unlikely to be relocated, TxDOT can shorten the timeline by searching for a new owner concurrently with the 30-day consultation period with the THC, HBF, and CHC. Once ENV-HIST receives comments/concurrence from the consulting parties on the replacement of the historic bridge, the advertisement period will expire.
- For bridges likely to be relocated, continue with the following timeline:
 - Once ENV-HIST notifies the district that the Historic Bridge Adoption Information Packet is available online, then the district shall complete the following tasks:

- ♦ Notify stakeholders that the bridge is available for adoption.
- ♦ Notify the GovDelivery Historic Bridges or Beyond The Road email group(s) that the bridge is available for adoption.
- ♦ Conduct additional outreach, such as posting media advisories, speaking to civic organizations, and posting flyers and postcards on physical bulletin boards.
- ENV-HIST works with THC, HBF, and CHC to answer questions and receive concurrence on proposed bridge project alternatives. Bridge advertisement should occur throughout this time period. Once all interested parties concur that the historic bridge should be replaced on the current alignment, continue advertising the bridge's availability for **at least 30 days** after concurrence, as appropriate.
- It is up to the district to determine if the appropriate response to the bridge advertisement is either a statement of interest or a full reuse proposal checklist. However, any new owner shall prepare a full reuse proposal checklist for consideration.

7.0 Addressing Responses

It is the responsibility of the district to receive and respond to letters of interest and evaluate prospective adoption applicants and proposals to reuse the bridge. ENV-HIST and the Bridge Division (BRG) can assist the district environmental and bridge staff in responding to letters of interest or evaluating potential recipients or reuse proposals.

Statement of Interest

During the public outreach effort, the department may receive statements of interest about the bridge and the adoption program.

- Responses to inquiries for additional information may include directing interested parties to the [Historic Bridge Legacy Program](#) webpage on TxDOT.gov where the TxDOT's *Historic Bridge Legacy Program Brochure* and an FAQ are posted.
- Parties who express an interest in submitting a reuse proposal should be directed to the [Historic Bridge Legacy Program Brochure](#) available on the Historic Bridge Legacy Program webpage at TxDOT.gov.

Evaluation of Potential Recipients and Reuse Proposals

Potential recipients of the historic bridge must meet general requirements as stipulated in [23 USC 144\(g\)](#). Reuse proposals must meet minimum standards of the TxDOT Historic Bridge Legacy Program. When evaluating potential recipients of a historic bridge and the reuse plan the following requirement standards must be considered.

- Recipients who desire to adopt a historic bridge must be willing to sign an agreement accepting responsibility for all legal and financial aspects of the bridge and coordinate any rehabilitation work with the Texas Historical Commission.
- Proposals must indicate that the bridge will not be reused on a public road for vehicular purposes.
- Proposals for all rehabilitation work on the bridge should follow [U.S. Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Properties](#).

Once a responsible entity is identified for the bridge, the district, BRG, and ENV-HIST will need to develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the adopter, TxDOT, THC, Local Government (as necessary), and historical consulting parties to sign. The MOA stipulates the reuse and maintenance commitments for the bridge. ENV-HIST will upload the signed MOA to ECOS for the project record.

8.0 Documentation for 4(f) and Administrative Record

FHWA requires documentation of TxDOT's efforts to find new uses for historic bridges as part of the Section 4(f) evaluation process. Evidence of TxDOT's public outreach efforts to find a suitable new owner for the bridge is part of this effort to identify new uses. As appropriate, the following items should be retained in the project file.

- A copy of the bridge flyer
- A screenshot of TxDOT's Historic Bridge Legacy website, showing the posting of the bridge packet
- A list of stakeholders contacted about the bridge
- A sample copy of the email sent to stakeholders, along with the date
- Copies of any responses to the email, along with the date
- A copy of the press release, along with the distribution list and date
- Copies of any news stories on the project bridge
- A list of physical places posted

9.0 Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFA	Advanced Funding Agreement
CHC	County Historic Commission
CLG	Certified Local Governments
EC	Environmental Coordinator
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
ENV-HIST	Texas Department of Transportation's Historical Studies Branch
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
HBF	Historic Bridge Foundation
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
PIO	Public Information Officer
PSA	Public Service Announcement
THC	Texas Historical Commission
TPP	Transportation Planning and Programming

Appendix A Document Revision History

The following table shows the revision history for this guidance document.

Revision History	
Effective Date Month, Year	Reason for and Description of Change
August 2025	Version 3 was released. Updated to include Historic Bridge Legacy Program brochure, clarified information related to historic bridge adoption agreements, corrected outdated links, and fixed typographical errors.
January 2020	Version 2 was released. Clarified timelines for bridge advertisement.
October 2016	Version 1 was released.