



State Highways and Bridges

Update to 2008 Evaluation Report

Problems Identified

- **Untimely Bridge Inspections.** Only 85 percent of bridges were inspected within the federal 24-month standard, and MnDOT needed more inspectors to meet federal requirements for inspection of fracture-critical bridges.
- **Weaknesses in Performing and Documenting Routine Bridge Maintenance.** MnDOT districts had fallen behind in performing necessary bridge maintenance. Districts' documentation of maintenance performed following bridge inspections was inadequate.
- **Trunk Highway System Spending Not Aligned with "Preservation First" Policy.** MnDOT needed to (1) increase resources directed to preservation of existing highways and bridges, (2) improve methods of estimating project costs, (3) limit planned transportation projects to those that could realistically be delivered, and (4) establish financial management policies related to transportation funding mechanisms.

Changes Implemented

- **More Bridge Inspectors Hired.** The share of bridges receiving routine inspections in a timely manner rose from 85 percent as of early 2007 to 94 percent in 2009. MnDOT doubled its fracture-critical bridge inspector positions in 2008 by adding eight new staff; as of early 2010, it had two vacancies and was interviewing to fill them. Since 2008, the department increased full-time equivalent positions for bridge maintenance by about 40 percent.
- **New Procedures Implemented for Bridge Maintenance.** MnDOT implemented new procedures to uniformly document bridge-maintenance needs based on inspection results. The department uses a database to monitor maintenance recommendations; it uses bridge-maintenance performance measures to track how well expected outcomes are met.
- **Improvements Underway to Transportation Planning.** MnDOT recommended preservation spending standards for its eight districts. Each district provides annual updates including reasons for varying from the department's investment guidance.

Action Needed

- **Adopt and Use Financial Management Policies.** MnDOT developed draft financial management policies on debt management, Trunk Highway Fund balances, cash balances, and advanced construction. The agency needs to adopt final policies and fully incorporate the policies into its budgeting and forecasting.
- **Monitor Transportation Spending Policies.** MnDOT should continue to strengthen its processes to ensure that the districts meet the department's preservation investment guidance.