

POLICY BRIEF



COLORADO
Department of Transportation
Office of Policy and Government Relations

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UPDATE ON THE FASTER BRIDGE ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

Summary

2014 marks the five year anniversary of the 2009 FASTER legislation (Senate Bill 09-108) which established the Colorado Bridge Enterprise (CBE) Program. The primary purpose of the CBE was to quickly eliminate critical safety hazards to the traveling public by financing, repairing, and replacing bridges designated as structurally deficient or functionally obsolete and rated “poor.” At the time of the passage of FASTER, 128 bridges were identified. Today, a total of 180 bridges are included under the program. Of these, 105 have been repaired or replaced and an additional 15 are under construction. Of the remaining 60 bridges, 23 are in the design stage and 37 are waiting action. Of the 30 “worst” bridges originally identified, all but the I-70 East viaduct in north Denver has been addressed.

Background

In order to address Colorado’s growing list of structurally deficient bridges, the 2009 FASTER legislation established a bridge safety surcharge. Fees (ranging from \$13 to \$32) were imposed on vehicle registration based on vehicle weight. Revenues from the bridge safety surcharge were phased in over a three-year period and today generate approximately \$96 million annually. In addition to establishing the bridge safety surcharge, the FASTER legislation created the Colorado Bridge Enterprise (CBE). The CBE operates as a government owned business within the Colorado Department of Transportation and has the authority to issue revenue bonds in order to accelerate its work.

Bridges Included in the CBE

FASTER eligible bridges must be “poor” which means structurally deficient and/or functionally obsolete, AND have a sufficiency rating less than 50. In addition to the original set of bridges included in the CBE, new structures continue to roll into the program as they meet these eligibility criteria.

Structurally Deficient: Structural elements of the bridge need to be monitored and/or repaired in order to ensure its structural integrity. Does not imply that a bridge is unsafe.

Functionally Obsolete: Built to standards not used today. Includes features such as inadequate lane and shoulder widths and/or low vertical clearances.

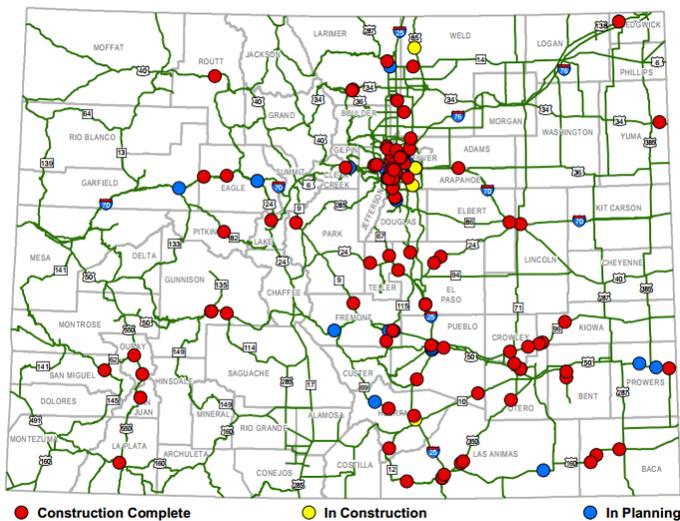
Sufficiency Rating: Based on calculating several factors to obtain a value indicative of bridge sufficiency. The result of this method is a percentage with 100 percent representing an entirely sufficient bridge and zero percent representing a deficient bridge.



Progress to Date

As of July 2014, 105 bridges have been repaired or replaced across the state. Another 37 bridges are under construction or being designed. In addition to Bridge Enterprise funds, CDOT was able to identify separate funding for 36 bridges that were originally part of the FASTER bridge list—freeing up additional resources under the CBE program. Today, Colorado ranks 11th best in the nation in terms of the percentage of bridge deck that is structurally deficient. The Bridge Enterprise website provides a list of the status of all CBE bridges across the state <http://www.coloradodot.info/programs/BridgeEnterprise>.

This progress is largely due to a 2010 bond issuance, which allowed the CBE to repair and replace bridges far faster than a pay-as-you-go approach. This acceleration also allowed the CBE to take advantage of temporarily low construction costs and avoid the costs and delays to motorists and businesses associated with closing or weight-restricting poor bridges.



I-70 East Viaduct

While significant progress has been made toward addressing Colorado's poor bridges, one major structure remains largely unaddressed. The I-70 East viaduct in north Denver was constructed in 1964 and was among the 30 poorest bridges originally identified by the FASTER legislation. In 2009 over \$20 million in repairs were made to the viaduct in order to keep the structure safe and give CDOT enough time to complete an Environmental Impact Statement to determine how this 1.8 mile stretch of interstate should be rebuilt.

Today, the Environmental Impact Statement is nearly complete and a preferred alternative has been preliminarily identified that would take down the viaduct and replace it with a lowered and partially covered highway. The Transportation Commission is also beginning to determine how this project—which could include improvements out to Tower Road—will be financed. To date, \$850 million in Bridge Enterprise funding has been tentatively identified for the viaduct portion of the project.

