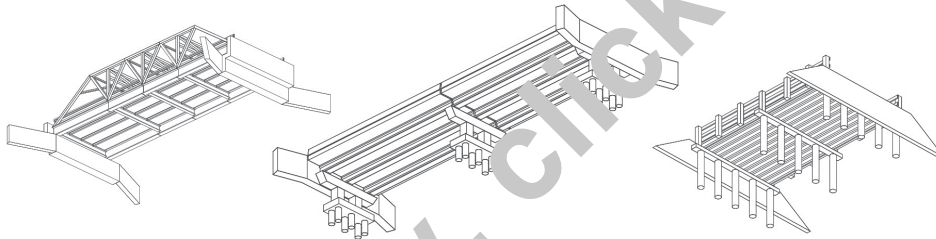
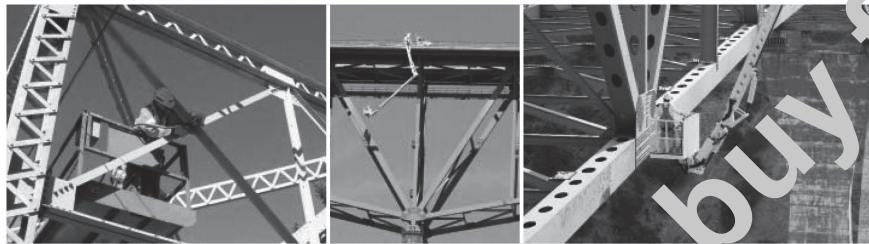


Manual for Bridge Element Inspection

First Edition, 2013



AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
STATE HIGHWAY AND
TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS

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PREFACE

This manual is intended as a resource for agencies performing element-level bridge inspections. It replaces the *AASHTO Guide to Commonly Recognized Structural Elements* (1994) and the *AASHTO Guide Manual for Bridge Element Inspection* (2011) as a reference for standardized element definitions, element quantity calculations, condition state definitions, element feasible actions, and inspection conventions.

This manual incorporates suggested changes that were submitted by many inspecting agencies, consultant inspection firms, and training instructors that helped improve this updated version. AASHTO would like to thank member agencies for their continued dedication to improving bridge inspection in the United States.

AASHTO also would like to recognize the dedication and tireless efforts of the following technical team members who worked together to develop this manual:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, 2012–2013.....	iii
HIGHWAYS SUBCOMMITTEE ON BRIDGES AND STRUCTURES, 2013.....	iv
PREFACE.....	
INTRODUCTION.....	xiii
SECTION 1: BACKGROUND.....	1-1
1.1—Condition Assessment Philosophy: Multipath and Defect Concepts.....	1-1
1.2—National Bridge Elements (NBEs).....	1-1
1.3—Bridge Management Elements (BMEs).....	1-1
1.4—Agency-Developed Elements (ADEs).....	1-1
1.5—How to Use This Manual.....	1-2
1.6—Organization.....	1-2
SECTION 2: ELEMENT LOCATION MATRIX.....	2-1
2.1—National Bridge Elements.....	2-1
2.1.1—Decks and Slabs.....	2-1
2.1.2—Railings.....	2-1
2.1.3—Superstructure.....	2-2
2.1.4—Bearings.....	2-2
2.1.5—Substructure.....	2-3
2.1.6—Culverts.....	2-3
2.2—Bridge Management Elements.....	2-3
2.2.1—Joints.....	2-3
2.2.2—Approach Slabs.....	2-4
2.2.3—Wearing Surfaces, Protective Coatings, and Concrete Reinforcing Steel Protective Systems.....	2-4
SECTION 3: DETAILED ELEMENT DESCRIPTIONS.....	3-1
3.1—Decks and Slabs.....	3-1
3.1.1—Element 12—Reinforced Concrete Deck.....	3-2
3.1.2—Element 13—Prestressed Concrete Deck.....	3-4
3.1.3—Element 5—Reinforced Concrete Slab.....	3-6
3.1.4—Element 15—Prestressed Concrete Top Flange.....	3-8
3.1.5—Element 16—Reinforced Concrete Top Flange.....	3-10
3.1.6—Element 28—Steel Deck with Open Grid.....	3-12
3.1.7—Element 29—Steel Deck with Concrete Filled Grid.....	3-13
3.1.8—Element 30—Steel Deck Corrugated/Orthotropic/Etc.....	3-14
3.1.9—Element 31—Timber Deck.....	3-15
3.1.10—Element 54—Timber Slab.....	3-17
3.1.11—Element 60—Other Deck.....	3-19
3.1.12—Element 65—Other Slab.....	3-21
3.2—Railings.....	3-23
3.2.1—Element 330—Metal Bridge Railing.....	3-24
3.2.2—Element 331—Reinforced Concrete Bridge Railing.....	3-25

3.2.3—Element 332—Timber Bridge Railing	3-26
3.2.4—Element 333—Other Bridge Railing.....	3-28
3.2.5—Element 334—Masonry Bridge Railing	3-30
3.3—Superstructure	3-32
3.3.1—Girders	3-32
3.3.1.1—Element 102—Steel Closed Web/Box Girder	3-33
3.3.1.2—Element 104—Prestressed Concrete Closed Web/Box Girder	3-34
3.3.1.3—Element 105—Reinforced Concrete Closed Web/Box Girder	3-36
3.3.1.4—Element 106—Other Closed Web/Box Girder	3-37
3.3.1.5—Element 107—Steel Open Girder/Beam.....	3-39
3.3.1.6—Element 109—Prestressed Concrete Open Girder/Beam	3-40
3.3.1.7—Element 110—Reinforced Concrete Open Girder/Beam.....	3-41
3.3.1.8—Element 111—Timber Open Girder/Beam.....	3-42
3.3.1.9—Element 112—Other Open Girder/Beam.....	3-44
3.3.2—Stringers.....	3-46
3.3.2.1—Element 113—Steel Stringer	3-47
3.3.2.2—Element 115—Prestressed Concrete Stringer.....	3-48
3.3.2.3—Element 116—Reinforced Concrete Stringer.....	3-49
3.3.2.4—Element 117—Timber Stringer	3-50
3.3.2.5—Element 118—Other Stringer	3-52
3.3.3—Trusses/Arches.....	3-54
3.3.3.1—Element 120—Steel Truss	3-55
3.3.3.2—Element 135—Timber Truss	3-56
3.3.3.3—Element 136—Other Truss	3-58
3.3.3.4—Element 141—Steel Arch.....	3-60
3.3.3.5—Element 142—Other Arch.....	3-61
3.3.3.6—Element 143—Prestressed Concrete Arch.....	3-63
3.3.3.7—Element 144—Reinforced Concrete Arch.....	3-65
3.3.3.8—Element 145—Masonry Arch.....	3-67
3.3.3.9—Element 146—Timber Arch.....	3-68
3.3.4—Floor Beams.....	3-70
3.3.4.1—Element 152—Steel Floor Beam	3-71
3.3.4.2—Element 154—Prestressed Concrete Floor Beam.....	3-72
3.3.4.3—Element 155—Reinforced Concrete Floor Beam.....	3-73
3.3.4.4—Element 156—Timber Floor Beam	3-74
3.3.4.5—Element 157—Other Floor Beam.....	3-76
3.3.5—Miscellaneous Superstructure Elements	3-78
3.3.5.1—Element 147—Steel Main Cables.....	3-79
3.3.5.2—Element 148—Secondary Steel Cables	3-80
3.3.5.3—Element 149—Other Secondary Cable.....	3-81
3.3.5.4—Element 161—Steel Pin and Pin & Hanger Assembly or both.....	3-83
3.3.5.5—Element 162—Steel Gusset Plate	3-84
3.4—Bearings	3-85
3.4.1—Element 310—Elastomeric Bearing.....	3-86
3.4.2—Element 311—Movable Bearing	3-88
3.4.3—Element 312—Enclosed/Concealed Bearing.....	3-89
3.4.4—Element 313—Fixed Bearing	3-90

3.4.5—Element 314—Pot Bearing	3-91
3.4.6—Element 315—Disk Bearing	3-93
3.4.7—Element 316—Other Bearing	3-94
3.5—Substructure Elements	3-95
3.5.1—Columns/Pier Walls	3-95
3.5.1.1—Element 202—Steel Column	3-96
3.5.1.2—Element 203—Other Column	3-98
3.5.1.3—Element 204—Prestressed Concrete Column	3-100
3.5.1.4—Element 205—Reinforced Concrete Column	3-102
3.5.1.5—Element 206—Timber Column	3-104
3.5.1.6—Element 207—Steel Tower	3-106
3.5.1.7—Element 208—Timber Trestle	3-108
3.5.1.8—Element 210—Reinforced Concrete Pier Wall	3-110
3.5.1.9—Element 211—Other Pier Wall	3-112
3.5.1.10—Element 212—Timber Pier Wall	3-114
3.5.1.11—Element 213—Masonry Pier Wall	3-116
3.5.2—Abutments	3-118
3.5.2.1—Element 215—Reinforced Concrete Abutment	3-119
3.5.2.2—Element 216—Timber Abutment	3-121
3.5.2.3—Element 217—Masonry Abutment	3-123
3.5.2.4—Element 218—Other Abutments	3-125
3.5.2.5—Element 219—Steel Abutment	3-127
3.5.3—Piles/Pier Caps/Footings	3-129
3.5.3.1—Element 220—Reinforced Concrete Pier Cap/Footing	3-130
3.5.3.2—Element 225—Steel Pile	3-132
3.5.3.3—Element 226—Prestressed Concrete Pile	3-134
3.5.3.4—Element 227—Reinforced Concrete Pile	3-136
3.5.3.5—Element 228—Timber Pile	3-138
3.5.3.6—Element 229—Other Pile	3-140
3.5.3.7—Element 231—Steel Pier Cap	3-142
3.5.3.8—Element 233—Prestressed Concrete Pier Cap	3-143
3.5.3.9—Element 234—Reinforced Concrete Pier Cap	3-144
3.5.3.10—Element 235—Timber Pier Cap	3-145
3.5.3.11—Element 236—Other Pier Cap	3-147
3.6—Culverts	3-149
3.6.1—Element 240—Steel Culvert	3-150
3.6.2—Element 241—Reinforced Concrete Culvert	3-152
3.6.3—Element 242—Timber Culvert	3-154
3.6.4—Element 243—Other Culvert	3-156
3.6.5—Element 244—Masonry Culvert	3-158
3.6.6—Element 245—Prestressed Concrete Culvert	3-160
3.7—Joints	3-162
3.7.1—Element 300—Strip Seal Expansion Joint	3-163
3.7.2—Element 301—Pourable Joint Seal	3-165
3.7.3—Element 302—Compression Joint Seal	3-167
3.7.4—Element 303—Assembly Joint with Seal	3-169
3.7.5—Element 304—Open Expansion Joint	3-171

3.7.6—Element 305—Assembly Joint without Seal.....	3-172
3.7.7—Element 306—Other Joint	3-173
3.8—Wearing Surfaces, Protective Coatings, and Concrete Reinforcing Steel Protective Systems.....	3-175
3.8.1—Element 510—Wearing Surfaces.....	3-176
3.8.2—Element 515—Steel Protective Coating	3-177
3.8.3—Element 521—Concrete Protective Coating.....	3-178
3.8.4—Element 520—Concrete Reinforcing Steel Protective System	3-179
3.9—Approach Slabs	3-180
3.9.1—Element 320—Prestressed Concrete Approach Slab	3-181
3.9.2—Element 321—Reinforced Concrete Approach Slab	3-183
3.10—Environmental Factors (Service Environments)	3-185
APPENDIX A: AGENCY-DEFINED ELEMENTS (ADES)	A-1
A1—Agency-Defined Subsets of the National Bridge Elements.....	A-1
A2—Agency-Defined Subsets of the Bridge Management Elements	A-1
A3—Independent Agency-Defined Elements.....	A-2
A3.1—Example Element Definition: Concrete Tunnel Ancillary Structure	A-2
A3.1.1—Element 600—Concrete Tunnel (Example).....	A-3
APPENDIX B: INSPECTION EXAMPLES	B-1
B1—Timber Bridge	B-1
B1.1—Element Quantities	B-1
B1.1.1—Deck	B-1
B1.1.2—Superstructure	B-1
B1.1.3—Substructure	B-2
B1.2—Element Condition States	B-2
B1.2.1—Defect #1, Timber Open Girder/Tram (Element 111).....	B-2
B1.2.2—Defect #2, Timber Pier Cap (Element 235).....	B-2
B1.2.3—Defect #3, Timber Pile (Element 228).....	B-3
B1.2.4—Defect #4, Metal Bridge Trailing (Element 330)	B-3
B1.3—Element Quantity and Condition State Summary	B-4
B2—Prestressed Concrete Girder Bridge	B-5
B2.1—Element Quantities	B-5
B2.1.1—Deck	B-5
B2.1.2—Superstructure	B-5
B2.1.3—Substructure	B-6
B2.2—Element Condition States	B-6
B2.2.1—Defect #1, Reinforced Concrete Deck (Element 12).....	B-6
B2.2.2—Defect #2, Reinforced Concrete Deck (Element 12).....	B-6
B2.2.3—Defect #3, Reinforced Concrete Deck (Element 12).....	B-7
B2.2.4—Defect #4, Compression Joint Seal (Element 302) and Reinforced Concrete Deck (Element 12).....	B-7
B2.2.5—Defect #5, Reinforced Concrete Pier Cap (Element 234)	B-7
B2.2.6—Defect #6, Reinforced Concrete Pier Cap (Element 234)	B-8
B2.2.7—Defect #7, Reinforced Concrete Column (Element 205)	B-8
B2.3—Element Quantity and Condition State Summary	B-10
B3—Steel Truss Bridge	B-11
B3.1—Element Quantities	B-11

B3.1.1—Deck	B-11
B3.1.2—Superstructure	B-12
B3.1.3—Substructure	B-12
B3.2—Element Condition States	B-12
B3.2.1—Defect #1, Reinforced Concrete Deck (Element 12).....	B-13
B3.2.2—Defect #2, Steel Truss (Element 120)	B-13
B3.2.3—Defect #3, Steel Truss (Element 120), Steel Gusset Plate (Element 162) and Steel Protective Coating (Element 515).....	B-13
B3.2.4—Defect #4, Steel Floor Beam (Element 152) and Steel Protective Coating (Element 515)	B-14
B3.2.5—Defect #5, Steel Stringer (Element 113)	B-14
B3.2.6—Defect #6, Steel Stringer (Element 113)	B-15
B3.2.7—Defect #7, Pier Wall (Element 210).....	B-15
B3.3—Element Quantity and Condition State Summary	B-16
APPENDIX C: ELEMENT GROUPINGS	C-1
APPENDIX D: MATERIALS AND DEFECTS BY MATERIAL TYPE	D-1
D1—Defect Definitions and Materials	D-1
D2—Materials and Defect Condition State Descriptions	D-5
D2.1—Steel (100).....	D-5
D2.2—Prestressed Concrete (300).....	D-7
D2.3—Reinforced Concrete (400).....	D-9
D2.4—Timber (500).....	D-11
D2.5—Other Materials (600).....	D-13
D2.6—Masonry (650).....	D-17
D2.7—Wearing Surfaces (800)	D-19
D2.8—Concrete Reinforcing Steel Protective Systems (820).....	D-19
D2.9—Steel Protective Coatings (850).....	D-20
D2.10—Concrete Protective Coatings (880).....	D-20
APPENDIX E: MATERIALS AND FEASIBLE ACTIONS BY MATERIAL TYPE	E-1
E1—Steel (100)	E-1
E2—Prestressed Concrete (300)	E-1
E3—Reinforced Concrete (400)	E-2
E4—Timber (500).....	E-2
E5—Other Materials (600).....	E-2
E6—Masonry (650).....	E-2
E7—Wearing Surfaces (800).....	E-3
E8—Concrete Reinforcing Steel Protective Systems (820).....	E-3
E9—Steel Protective Coatings (850).....	E-3
E10—Concrete Protective Coatings (880).....	E-3

INTRODUCTION

The proper assessment of the condition of bridge elements is the cornerstone of sound bridge management. The introduction of element inspection condition methods in the early 1990s represented a significant advancement in bridge inspection practice and has been adopted by the vast majority of the state transportation departments in the United States. Bridge owners nationwide have recognized the benefits of detailed condition assessments through the use of the raw inspection information, expanded performance measures, and bridge management system deterioration forecasting and evaluation. As the use of element-level inspection techniques has proliferated, the need for updates and enhancements to the standard element specification has been identified. This manual incorporates improvements through changes in the measurement units of decks and slabs, the development of a wearing surface element, the standardization of the number of element states, and the development of protective coating elements for concrete and steel, as well as deck protection systems. Elements constructed of innovative materials are also identified. The goal of this manual is to comprehensively capture the condition of bridges in a simple, effective way that can be standardized across the nation while providing the flexibility to be adapted to both large- and small-agency settings.

This manual is not intended to supplant proper bridge and element inspection training or the exercise of engineering judgment by the inspector or professional engineer.

SECTION 1:

BACKGROUND

1.1—CONDITION ASSESSMENT PHILOSOPHY: MULTIPATH AND DEFECT CONCEPTS

The *Manual for Bridge Element Inspection* (this manual) builds on the element-level condition assessment methods developed in the *AASHTO Guide for Commonly Recognized Structural Elements*. Improvements have been made to fully capture the condition of the elements by reconfiguring the element language to utilize multiple distress paths within the defined condition states. The multipath distress language provides the means to fully incorporate all possible defects within the overall condition assessment of the element. The overall condition of an element can be utilized in this aggregate form, or broken down into specific defects present as desired by the agency for Bridge Management System (BMS) use.

This manual provides a comprehensive set of bridge elements that is designed to be flexible in nature to satisfy the needs of all agencies. The complete set of elements captures the components necessary for an agency to manage all aspects of the bridge inventory utilizing the full capability of a BMS.

The element set presented within includes two element types identified as National Bridge Elements (NBEs) or Bridge Management Elements (BMEs). The combination of these two element types comprise the full AASHTO element set. All of the elements, whether they are NBEs or BMEs, have the same general condition assessment characteristics:

1. Standard number of condition states is four.
2. The standard condition states are good, fair, poor, and severe general descriptions.
3. Units of measure are length in feet, area in square feet, and each for enumerated elements.

1.2—NATIONAL BRIDGE ELEMENTS (NBEs)

The National Bridge Elements represent the primary structural components of bridges necessary to determine the overall condition and safety of the primary load carrying members. The NBEs are a refinement of the deck, superstructure, substructure, and culvert condition ratings defined in the Federal Highway Administration's *Recording and Coding Guide for the Structure Inventory and Appraisal of the Nation's Bridges*. Additional elements included in this section are bridge rail and bearings. The NBEs are designed to remain consistent from agency to agency across the country in order to facilitate and standardize the capture of bridge element conditions at the national level. In order to capture the diversity of new element design types and materials, many elements in this category have an "other" element type defined.

1.3—BRIDGE MANAGEMENT ELEMENTS (BMEs)

Bridge Management Elements include components of bridges such as joints, wearing surfaces, and protective coating systems and deck/slab protection systems that are typically managed by agencies utilizing Bridge Management Systems. The BMEs are defined with a recommended set of condition assessment language that can be modified to suit the agencies' needs as these elements are not intended to be utilized for the purposes of national policy-making. The BMEs defined within this manual were purposefully left fairly general in nature to provide the flexibility to develop agency-specific elements that best suit the local bridge management practices. Agencies may choose to develop additional BMEs as necessary following the agency-developed element conventions discussed in Appendix A. When considering additional elements, the agency should consider such factors as element performance, deterioration rates, feasible actions, and preservation costs, as well as the practical considerations of training and inspection costs.

1.4—AGENCY-DEVELOPED ELEMENTS (ADEs)

The elements presented within provide the flexibility for an agency to define custom elements in accordance with the defined element framework that may be sub-elements of NBEs or BMEs, or may be agency-defined elements without ties to the elements defined in this manual.

By defining a comprehensive set of bridge elements necessary for robust bridge management and the minimum set of elements necessary to assess the condition of primary components of bridges, this manual provides a flexible element set that can be tailored to the needs of all agencies. The identification numbers 800 and above are not used in this manual for any elements and are reserved for agency purposes.