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TO: WISCONSIN DOT AND CONSULTANT STAFF

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SUBJECT: NEW BRIDGE AESTHETICS POLICY

The latest version of the aesthetics chapter of the WisDOT Bridge Manual was released on 2/26/16 and includes a new aesthetics policy related to funding for formliner and stain on structures. (Note: this version is modified from what was released on 2/11/16.)

The use of aesthetics on transportation projects in Wisconsin has increased significantly over the last decade, much of which has successfully enhanced the appearance of our state's roadways. However, concerns have also been voiced by department staff, the public and contractors regarding the magnitude of aesthetic features applied to some of the state's highway structures. As a result of these concerns, a WisDOT team was formed with the goal of ensuring that structure aesthetics are funded appropriately, applied appropriately and in the context of the local environment, and provisions are established to properly maintain the enhancements for the life of the structure.

Two of the most common applications of aesthetics on structures are concrete architectural surface treatment (formliner) and concrete staining, which have not historically been considered Community Sensitive Solution (CSS) items, but instead have been funded by improvement project funds. In most cases the cost associated with the initial application of these items is relatively modest, whereas the cost of maintaining them is considerably higher. Since aesthetic structure features such as formliner and stain are not essential to improvement projects, the decision was made to identify these items as CSS items. Independent from WisDOT's decision regarding CSS, the state of Wisconsin passed Act 55 of 2015 Senate Bill 21 stating that WisDOT may not expend any state funds for community sensitive solutions.

Please see the attached excerpts from the Bridge Manual regarding the new policy as well as several non-CSS aesthetic concepts developed by WisDOT Bureau of Structures.



4.5 Aesthetics Process

A number of parties can be responsible for the appearance of a structure, as well as the project as a whole. The structural design engineer should be instrumental in leading the aesthetic design process, a process that may include the Region, the Bureau of Structures, the public and aesthetic advisors (architects, landscape architects, urban planners, artists, etc).

Public input comes in a variety of ways. Advisory groups, special interest groups and general public information meetings are all ways to receive public input and are part of the CSS (Community Sensitive Solutions) process.

The structural design engineer needs to be involved early in the aesthetic decision making process. BOS should have early representation on projects with considerable aesthetic concerns.

WisDOT policy item:

The 2015-2017 budget bill reduced State CSS funding to zero. Very low cost aesthetic enhancements through appropriate shape and geometric relief are allowed. See 4.3 for discussion on primary features such as shape. Geometric relief is defined as:

- Rustications produced by cut (likely) wood (e.g. rustication lines)
- Formliners such as ribbed or broken ribbed
- Formliners that do not replicate other objects (e.g. rocks or cut stone)
- Shapes that do not depict anything pictorially (e.g. animals, flowers, sailboats, etc.)

Items considered CSS (not state or federal funded on state and local projects that are eligible for state funding)*:

- Stain**
- Formliner, other than the geometric formliner defined above**
- Pedestrian railing or fencing other than that shown in the WisDOT Bridge Manual Standards (Maintenance of *all* fence and/or railing coatings, other than galvanization, is the responsibility of the Municipality and should be covered in the SMA***)
- Ornamentation, including city symbols, street names, etc.
- Non-standard lighting and sign supports
- Structure shapes that are not as defined in 4.3

* CSS items also require a State-Municipal Agreement (SMA)*** that makes local municipalities responsible for future maintenance and all associated costs.



** At the time the 2015-2017 budget was passed, formliner and/or staining were not considered CSS items, making them eligible for standard improvement project funds.

For lettings before **August 15, 2016** formliner and/or stain will be classified as eligible improvement items. A signed SMA*** is required and should state the Municipality will be responsible for maintaining the concrete surface and staining.

For lettings after **August 15, 2016** all state projects, and any local projects eligible for state funds, that include formliner and/or staining must have an SMA*** signed and dated prior to August 15, 2016 stating that the cost for formliner and/or staining will be paid for by project funds (state and/or federal); otherwise the items must be funded with 100% local funds. The SMA shall also state that the Municipality will be responsible for maintaining the concrete surface and staining. Exceptions to this policy include projects where the aesthetic items are required in order to be eligible for federal funds (e.g. NEPA documents, federal program requirements). In these cases the items would be eligible for state and federal funds, and long-term maintenance will be the responsibility of the facility owner. Local projects that are not eligible for state funds are not impacted by this policy.

*** SMA, or a maintenance agreement between the local municipality and the state, or another agreement determined by the state.



Figure 4.9-1
Aesthetic Concept Type I

- Plain abutment wings
- Single banded pier rustications
- Standard parapets
- Most rural and some urban applications



Figure 4.9-3
Aesthetic Concept Type II

- Rustication trim line on abutment wing
- Single or double banded pier rustications
- Rustication trim line(s) on parapets (one on 32" parapet and two on 42" parapet)
- Urban and other select applications

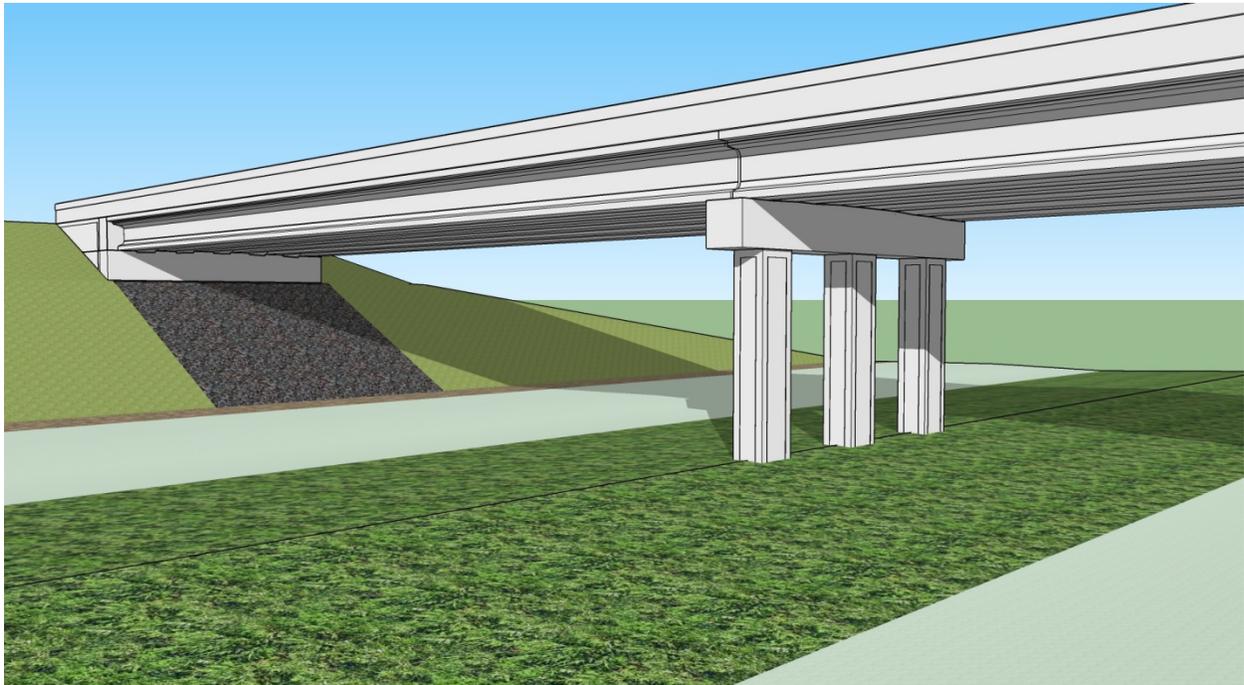


Figure 4.9-2
Aesthetic Concept Type III

- Recessed panel abutment wings
- Recessed panel columns
- Standard parapet
- Urban applications