



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Bridge Aesthetics Policy

July 2018

Approved:

A blue ink signature of Travis Underhill, written in a cursive style, is positioned above a horizontal line.

Travis Underhill, Deputy Commissioner
Capital Program Management

Background

There has been a growing interest on the part of local agencies to create gateway features at the entrance to their communities. Bridges carrying overpassing roads to the community are often the desired location to include these features. While a gateway feature can bolster community identity and pride as well as enhance the aesthetic of the roadway corridor, INDOT must balance community requests with the obligation to maintain overall highway safety.

Policy

This policy is intended to

- Provide a process for coordinating, reviewing, and approving requests for placing signs, lettering, logos, architectural surface treatments, street lights, and other aesthetic treatments (collectively “aesthetic features”) on bridges that cross State-owned roads.
- Establish criteria for evaluating proposed aesthetic features.

Direct comments or technical questions about this policy to the Capital Program Management Deputy Commissioner.

Application

This policy applies to

- Vehicular and pedestrian bridges;
- INDOT and Local Public Agency construction projects via contract, regardless of funding source; and
- Work completed via an INDOT permit.

Process for Evaluating Requests

All requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Evaluation criteria and examples of unacceptable aesthetic features are included under the Evaluation Criteria heading below.

Requests Prior to Project Authorization. Where a local agency requests an aesthetic feature prior to programming the project, the district Technical Services Director should begin coordination with the Bridge Design Director, Bridge Asset Management Director, and the LPA/MPO Grant Administration Director as soon as possible thereafter.

Requests during Design. Where a local agency requests an aesthetic treatment after the Start Plan Development date or during the design phase, the designer should begin coordination with the Bridge Design Division Director and Bridge Asset Management Director as soon as possible. The initial request for consideration of aesthetic features should include conceptual details. Requests received after the Stage 1 Design submittal may affect the project schedule.

Requests via Permit. Where a local agency requests an aesthetic treatment as part of a permit application, the permit manager or permit coordinator should begin coordination with the Bridge Design Division and Bridge Asset Management Division upon receiving the application. Details, including any method of attachment, should be included with the request. Additional information may be requested prior to approval.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used to evaluate requests to place aesthetic features on a bridge.

1. The aesthetic treatment must not negatively affect safety or create an attractive nuisance. This includes, but is not limited to, brightly lit or flashing features, advertisements for local attractions or venues (with or without a logo), and community slogans.
2. Concrete form liners and concrete dye are generally acceptable aesthetic features. Architectural treatments will be considered on the non-traffic face of a bridge railing only.
3. INDOT may require vandal protection (pedestrian fence) on bridges carrying significant pedestrian traffic over high volume State Routes and Interstates. Approved lettering or logos used in conjunction with pedestrian fence must be placed on the inside of the fence.
4. Aesthetic features that extend above the top of bridge railing, barrier, or pedestrian fence are unacceptable. The use of aesthetic pedestrian fence will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
5. Aesthetic features that extend below the normal lines of the bridge superstructure or otherwise reduce the vertical clearance of the bridge are unacceptable. This criterion applies regardless of maintaining a vertical clearance that is above the required minimum.
6. Aesthetic features bolted to the bridge superstructure or bridge railing are generally unacceptable.
7. Temporary features are unacceptable.
8. Features that require field welds are unacceptable.
9. Large panel signs should be located off the bridge. When this is not feasible, only two locations are acceptable.
 - a. Mounted directly to the substructure unit.
 - b. Mounted to the superstructure directly over a substructure unit.
10. Light supports should be located off the bridge. Where this is not feasible, light supports should be located over substructure elements (i.e. not over the travel lane or shoulder) and behind the bridge railing. Light supports integral with the bridge railing will be considered on a case-by-case basis. These supports should maintain the bridge railing profile not extend above the top of the bridge railing parapet.

Other Considerations

1. City and county names may be submitted for consideration provided the bridge is within the territorial jurisdiction of that city or county. Advertisements for community businesses or venues will not be considered. All requests to include wording or logos on a bridge over the interstate must be approved by the FHWA Indiana Division.
2. Street names and path names may be submitted for consideration provided the bridge carries that public street or public path. Private street names or private path names will not be considered.
3. The local agency requesting the aesthetic feature, e.g., custom form liners or aesthetic pedestrian fence, may be required to fund the additional cost over what INDOT would normally install on the bridge.
4. An agreement identifying maintenance and inspection responsibilities is required.
5. All aesthetic features must be designed and detailed in accordance with INDOT policies and specifications as well as current AASHTO LRFD code. The more stringent requirement of either AASHTO *LRFD Bridge Design Specifications* or AASHTO *LRFD Specifications for Structural Supports for Highway Signs, Luminaires, and Traffic Signals* must be used. Elements not explicitly covered by these design codes must be coordinated with the Bridge Design Division Director.

Approval. The Capital Program Management Deputy Commissioner must approve all aesthetic features prior to contract letting or execution of a permit. Prior to approval, each request must have concurrence from Bridge Design Division, Bridge Asset Management Division, and the District Technical Services directors. FHWA Indiana Division approval is required for wording or logos on a bridge over the interstate.

Documentation. Documentation, including final details, summary of comments and resolutions, must be kept in the project file or permit file, as appropriate.

References

INDOT [Operations Memo 10-03](#) *Maintenance of County, City, or Private Separated Crossings of INDOT Facilities*

INDOT [Operations Memo 10-06](#) *Public Art & Landscaping on INDOT-controlled Right of Way*

INDOT [Design Memo 17-20](#) *Complex Bridge Design Requirements*

[FHWA Order 5160.1A](#) *Policy on Sponsorship Acknowledgment and Agreements within the Highway Right-of-Way*