

## Bridge Inspection

Bridges are an essential part of Cincinnati's transportation network, linking roadways and communities. Timely maintenance is critically important for the safety and welfare of the traveling public. The Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) is the city agency primarily responsible for inspecting, maintaining, and improving the transportation system within the City of Cincinnati. The Bridge Program is the specific program within DOTE charged with the responsibility of maintaining the bridges within this transportation system.

**In conformance with state law, every bridge in Cincinnati is inspected on an annual basis.** Following the completion of each annual bridge inspection cycle, a report is issued by DOTE to inform City Council of the condition of the bridges in Cincinnati. That report also functions as an annual update to inform City Council on how the funds appropriated to the Bridge Program are being utilized.

Excepting interstate highway bridges and bridges carrying state or federal routes which are inspected by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), DOTE Bridge Program personnel annually inspect every bridge in Cincinnati that supports a public roadway or crosses over or under a public roadway. These inspections are performed in accordance with the guidelines specified in the ODOT Bridge Inspection Manual. The objectives of these inspections are to:

1. Locate and determine the extent of any structural weaknesses or damage so that appropriate corrective actions can be taken to ensure public safety.
2. Provide a current information base on the condition of bridges within Cincinnati so that maintenance, repair, and replacement projects can be programmed efficiently.
3. Satisfy state and federal laws and regulations.

The ODOT Bridge Inspection Manual defines a bridge as "Any structure, including supports, of 10 feet or more clear span or 10 feet or more in diameter on, above, or below a highway." During the 2008 inspection season (which began in March of 2008 and was concluded in March of 2009), DOTE Bridge Program personnel inspected a total of 225 bridges. Based upon maintenance responsibility, these 225 bridges are divided into the following seven categories:

1. **City (DOTE) Bridges** (61 bridges): Vehicular and pedestrian bridges owned by the City and maintained by DOTE.
2. **County Bridges** (26 bridges): Vehicular bridges within City limits that support improved roads which are of general and public utility running into or through Cincinnati. By contractual agreement with Hamilton County, DOTE maintains these bridges. Hamilton County funds work performed on these bridges.

3. **Ft. Washington Way Bridges** (5 bridges): Bridges over Ft. Washington Way constructed with the Ft. Washington Way reconstruction project. DOTE shares maintenance responsibility for these bridges with ODOT.
4. **City (Skywalk) Bridges** (20 bridges): Central Business District pedestrian bridges on the skywalk system owned by the City. The Department of Public Services and property owners adjacent to the bridges maintain these bridges. Generally, DOTE is responsible for the major rehabilitation of these bridges.
5. **City (Other) Bridges** (11 bridges): Unique City owned structures located on, over, or under a roadway that technically qualify as bridges. Various City agencies including: Stormwater Management Utility, the Park Board, and the Recreation Commission maintain these bridges.
6. **Railroad Bridges** (51 bridges): Railroad bridges that cross over or under public roadways. CSXT, RailAmerica, Norfolk-Southern, and SORTA own and maintain these bridges.
7. **Private Bridges** (51 bridges): Privately owned vehicular, pedestrian, and utility bridges that cross over or under public roadways. The applicable private owners maintain these bridges.

Bridges that are part of the Interstate Highway System, including City streets and rail lines over the interstate routes, are inspected by ODOT. Following recent changes to the Ohio Revised Code (ORC 5501.49), bridges that carry state or federal routes or cross over those routes (with the exception of pedestrian bridges) are also inspected by ODOT. Along with inspection responsibility, ODOT is responsible for the structural maintenance of all but railroad bridges. Consequently, DOTE Bridge Program personnel do not inspect these bridges.