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30.1 Crash-Tested Bridge Railings and FHWA Policy

Notice: All contracts with a letting date after December 31, 2019 must use bridge rails and transitions meeting the 2016 Edition of MASH criteria for new permanent installation and full replacement.

WisDOT policy item:

For all Interstate structures, the 42SS parapet shall be used. For all STH and USH structures with a posted speed ≥ 45 mph, the 42SS parapet shall be used.

The timeline for implementation of the above policy is:

- All contracts with a letting date after December 31, 2019.
(This is an absolute, regardless of when the design was started.)
- All preliminary designs starting after October 1, 2017
(Even if the let is anticipated to be prior to December 31, 2019.)

Contact BOS should the 42" height adversely affect sight distance, a minimum 0.5% grade for drainage cannot be achieved, or for other non-typical situations.

Crash test procedures for full-scale testing of guardrails were first published in 1962 in the *Highway Research Correlation Services Circular 482*. This was a one-page document that specified vehicle mass, impact speed, and approach angle for crash testing and was aimed at creating uniformity to traffic barrier research between several national research agencies.

In 1974, the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) published their final report based on NCHRP Project 22-2, which was initiated to address outstanding questions that were not covered in *Circular 482*. The final report, NCHRP Report 153 – “*Recommended Procedures for Vehicle Crash Testing of Highway Appurtenances*,” was widely accepted following publication; however, it was recognized that periodic updating would be required.

NCHRP Project 22-2(4) was initiated in 1979 to address major changes to reflect current technologies of that time and NCHRP Report 230, “*Recommended Procedures for the Safety Performance Evaluation of Highway Safety Appurtenances*,” was published in 1980. This document became the primary reference for full-scale crash testing of highway safety appurtenances in the U.S. through 1993.

In 1986, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued a policy memorandum that stated highway bridges on the National Highway System (NHS) and the Interstate Highway System (IHS) must use crash-tested railings in order to receive federal funding.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) recognized that the evolution of roadside safety concepts, technology, and practices necessitated an update to NCHRP Report 230 approximately 7 years after its adoption. NCHRP Report 350, “*Recommended Procedures for the Safety Performance Evaluation of Highway Features*,” represented a major update to the previously adopted report. The updates



were based on significant changes in the vehicle fleet, the emergence of many new barrier designs, increased interest in matching safety performance to levels of roadway utilization, new policies requiring the use of safety belts, and advances in computer simulation and other evaluation methods.

NCHRP Report 350 differs from NCHRP Report 230 in the following ways: it is presented in all-metric documentation, it provides a wider range of test procedures to permit safety performance evaluations for a wider range of barriers, it uses a pickup truck as the standard test vehicle in place of a passenger car, it defines other supplemental test vehicles, it includes a broader range of tests to provide a uniform basis for establishing warrants for the application of roadside safety hardware that consider the levels of use of the roadway facility, it includes guidelines for selection of the critical impact point for crash tests on redirecting-type safety hardware, it provides information related to enhanced measurement techniques related to occupant risk, and it reflects a critical review of methods and technologies for safety-performance evaluation.

In May of 1997, a memorandum from Dwight A. Horne, the FHWA Chief of the Federal-Aid and Design Division, on the subject of “Crash Testing of Bridge Railings” was published. This memorandum identified 68 crash-tested bridge rails, consolidated earlier listings, and established tentative equivalency ratings that related previous NCHRP Report 230 testing to NCHRP Report 350 test levels.

In 2009, AASHTO published the *Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware* (MASH). MASH is an update to, and supersedes, NCHRP Report 350 for the purposes of evaluating new safety hardware devices. AASHTO and FHWA jointly adopted an implementation plan for MASH that stated that all highway safety hardware accepted prior to the adoption of MASH – using criteria contained in NCHRP Report 350 – may remain in place and may continue to be manufactured and installed. In addition, highway safety hardware accepted using NCHRP Report 350 criteria is not required to be retested using MASH criteria. However, new highway safety hardware not previously evaluated must utilize MASH for testing and evaluation. MASH represents an update to crash testing requirements based primarily on changes in the vehicle fleet.

All bridge railings as detailed in the Wisconsin LRFD Bridge Standard Detail Drawings in Chapter 30 are approved for use on WisDOT projects. In order to use railings other than Bureau of Structures Standards, the railings must conform to MASH or must be crash tested rails which are available from the FHWA office. Any railing not in the Standards must be approved by the Bureau of Structures. Any railings that are not crash tested must be reviewed by FHWA when they are used on a bridge, culvert, retaining wall, etc.

WisDOT and FHWA policy states that railings that meet the criteria for Test Level 3 (TL-3) or greater shall be used on NHS roadways and all functional classes of Wisconsin structures (Interstate Highways, United States Highways, State Trunk Highways, County Trunk Highways, and Local Roadways) where the design speed exceeds 45 mph. Railings that meet Test Level 2 (TL-2) criteria may be used on non-NHS roadways where the design speed is 45 mph or less.

There may be unique situations that may require the use of a MASH crash-tested railing of a different Test Level; a railing design using an older crash test methodology; or a modified railing system based on computer modeling, component testing, and or expert opinion. These unique



situations will require an exception to be granted by the Bureau of Project Development and/or the Bureau of Structures. It is recommended that coordination of these unique situations occur early in the design process.



30.2 Railing Application

The primary purpose of bridge railings shall be to contain and redirect vehicles and/or pedestrians using the structure. In general, there are three types of bridge railings – Traffic Railings, Combination Railings, and Pedestrian Railings. The following guidelines indicate the typical application of each railing type:

1. Traffic Railings shall be used when a bridge is used exclusively for highway traffic.

Traffic Railings can be composed of, but are not limited to: single slope concrete parapets, sloped face concrete parapets, vertical face concrete parapets, tubular steel railings, and timber railings.

2. Combination Railings can be used concurrently with a raised sidewalk on roadways with a design speed of 45 mph or less.

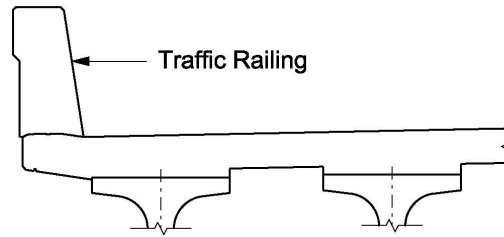
Combination Railings can be composed of, but are not limited to: single slope concrete parapets with chain link fence, vertical face concrete parapets with tubular steel railings such as type 3T, and aesthetic concrete parapets with combination type C1-C6 railings.

3. Pedestrian Railings can be used at the outside edge of a bridge sidewalk when a Traffic Railing is used concurrently to separate highway and pedestrian traffic.

Pedestrian Railings can be composed of, but are not limited to: chain link fence, tubular screening, vertical face concrete parapets with combination type C1-C6 or type 3T railings, and single slope concrete parapets.

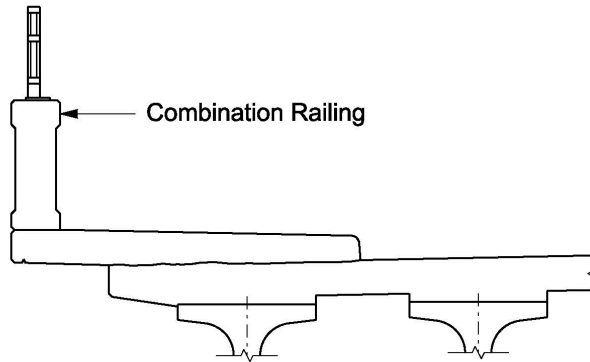
See [Figure 30.2-1](#) below for schematics of the three typical railing types.

Note that the railing types shown in [Figure 30.2-1](#) shall be employed as minimums. At locations where a Traffic Railing is used at the traffic side of a sidewalk at grade, a Combination Railing may be used at the edge of deck in lieu of a Pedestrian Railing. At locations where a Combination Railing is used at the exterior edge of a raised sidewalk, a Traffic Railing may be used as an alternative as long as the requirements for Pedestrian Railings are met.



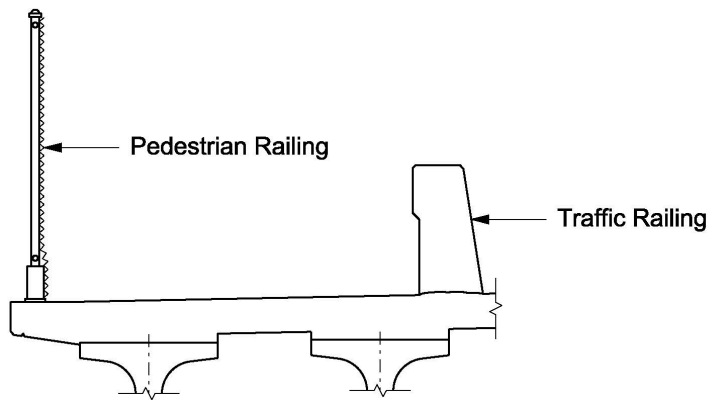
Traffic Railing

Traffic Railing
All Design Speeds



Combination Railing

Combination Railing
Design Speeds of 45 mph or Less



Pedestrian Railing

Traffic Railing

Pedestrian Railing
All Design Speeds

Figure 30.2-1
Bridge Railing Types



The application of bridge railings shall comply with the following guidance:

1. All bridge railings shall conform to **MASH 2016 requirements for lets after December 31, 2019.**
2. Traffic Railings placed on state-owned and maintained structures (Interstate Highways, United States Highways, State Trunk Highways, and roadways over such highways) with a design speed exceeding 45 mph shall be solid concrete parapets. Where the minimum 0.5% deck grade cannot be accommodated for proper drainage based on project specific constraints, the designer shall utilize open railings as described in this section. (**NOTE:** WisDOT does not currently have an open rail meeting the minimum MASH TL-3 requirements for NHS roadways or non-NHS roadways with design speeds exceeding 45 mph. An open rail meeting MASH TL-3 is being investigated.)

Traffic Railings placed on locally-owned and maintained structures (County Trunk Highways, Local Roadways) with a design speed exceeding 45 mph are strongly encouraged to utilize solid concrete parapets.

3. Traffic Railings placed on structures with a design speed of 45 mph or less can be either solid concrete parapets or open railings with the exception as noted below in the single slope parapet application section. It should be noted that open railing bridges can incur maintenance issues with salt-water runoff over the edge of deck.
4. New bridge plans utilizing concrete parapets shall be designed with single-sloped (“SS”) parapets. See item No. 1 below for usage.
5. Per **LRFD [13.8.1]** and **LRFD [13.9.2]**, the minimum height of a Pedestrian (and/or bicycle) Railing shall be 42” measured from the top of the walkway or riding surface respectively. Per the *Wisconsin Bicycle Facility Design Handbook*, on bridges that are signed or marked as bikeways and bicyclists are operating right next to the railing, the preferred height of the railing is 54”. The higher railing/parapet height is especially important and should be used on long bridges, high bridges, and bridges having high bicyclist volumes. If an open railing is used, the clear opening between horizontal elements shall be 6 inches or less.
6. Aesthetics associated with bridge railings shall follow guidance provided in [30.4](#).
7. For bridge railings on un-posted roadways, assume a design speed limit of 55 mph for determining the appropriate bridge railing.

The designation for railing types are shown on the Standard Details. Bridge railings shall be employed as follows:

1. The default parapet shall be the “42SS”. If site distance issues arise due to the 42-inch height, please contact BOS for consideration of a shorter parapet (“32SS” and “36SS”). Single slope parapet “56SS” shall only be used if 56” CBSS adjoins the bridge. The “42SS” is TL-4 under MASH. The “32SS” is TL-3 under MASH. The “36SS” is TL-4 under MASH. *At this time, the “56SS” Test Loading is still unknown.*



A “SS” or solid parapet shall be used on all grade separation structures and railroad crossings to minimize snow removal falling on the traffic below.

2. The sloped face parapet “LF” and “HF” parapets shall be used as Traffic Railings for rehabilitation projects (joint repair, impact damage, etc.) only to match the existing parapet type. The sloped face parapets were crash-tested per NCHRP Report 230 and meet NCHRP Report 350 crash test criteria for TL-4 based on a May 1997 FHWA memorandum.
3. The “51F” parapet shall only be used as a Traffic Railing on the median side of a structure when it provides a continuation of an approach 51 inch high median barrier.
4. Although the vertical face parapet “A” can be used for all design speeds, Bureau of Structures Development Section approval is required for design speeds exceeding 45mph. The vertical face parapet is recommended for use as a Combination Railing on raised sidewalks or as a Traffic Railing where the design speed is 45 mph or less. If the structure has a raised sidewalk on one side only, a sloped parapet should be used on the side opposite of the sidewalk. For design speeds exceeding 45 mph, at locations where the parapet is protected by a Traffic Railing between the roadway and a sidewalk at grade, the vertical face parapet can be used as a Pedestrian Railing. The vertical face parapet “A” is considered at TL-3 when on a bridge deck and TL-2 when on a raised sidewalk (The structural capacity is TL-3, however the vaulting effect of the sidewalk lowers the rating to TL-2).
5. Aesthetic railings may be used if crash tested according to [30.1](#) or follow the guidance provided in [30.4](#). See Chapter 4 – Aesthetics for CSS considerations.

The Texas style aesthetic parapet, type “TX”, can be used as a Traffic/Pedestrian Railing on raised sidewalks on structures with a design speed of 45 mph or less. For design speeds exceeding 45 mph, at locations where the parapet is protected by a Traffic Railing between the roadway and a sidewalk at grade, the type “TX” parapet can be used. The type “TX” parapet is TL-2 under MASH.

6. The type “PF” tubular railing, as shown in the Standard Details of Chapter 40, shall not be used on new bridge plans with a PS&E after 2013. This railing was not allowed on the National Highway System (NHS). The type “PF” railing was used as a Traffic Railing on non-NHS roadways with a design speed of 45 mph or less.
7. Combination Railings, type “C1” through “C6”, are shown in the Standard Details and are approved as aesthetic railings attached to concrete parapets. The aesthetic additions are placed at least 5” from the crash-tested rail face per the Standard Details and have previously been determined to not present a snagging potential. Combination railing, type “3T”, without the recessed details on the parapet faces may be used when aesthetic details are not desired or when CSS funding is not available (see Chapter 4 – Aesthetics). These railings can only be used when the design speed is 45 mph or less, or the railing is protected by a Traffic Railing between the roadway and a sidewalk at grade. The crash test criteria of the combination railings are based on the concrete parapets to which they are attached.



8. Chain Link Fence and Tubular Screening, as shown in the Standard Details, may be attached to the top of concrete parapets as part of a Combination Railing or as a Pedestrian Railing attached directly to the deck if protected by a Traffic Railing between the roadway and a sidewalk at grade. Due to snagging and breakaway potential of the vertical spindles, top-mounted Tubular Screening and Chain Link Fence should only be used when the design speed is 45 mph or less, or the screening is protected by a Traffic Railing between the roadway and a sidewalk at grade.

Contact the Bureau of Structures Development Section when protective screening is warranted and used for design speeds exceeding 45 mph. In some cases, a Chain Link Fence mounted on the outside face (side-mounted) of the concrete parapet may be acceptable.

9. Type "H" aluminum or steel railing can be used on top of either vertical face or single slope parapets ("A" or "SS") as part of a Combination Railing when required for pedestrians and/or bicyclists. For a design speed greater than 45 mph, the single slope parapet is recommended. Per the Standard Specifications, the contractor shall furnish either aluminum railing or steel railing. In general, the bridge plans shall include both options. For a specific project, one option may be required. This may occur when rehabilitating a railing to match an existing railing or when painting of the railing is required (requires steel option). If one option is required, the designer shall place the following note on the railing detail sheet: "Type H (insert railing type) railing shall not be used". The combination railing is TL-3 under MASH.
10. Timber Railing as shown in the Standard Details is not allowed on the National Highway System (NHS). Timber Railing may be used as a Traffic Railing on non-NHS roadways with a design speed of 45 mph or less. The Timber Railing has not been rated under MASH.
11. The type "W" railing, as shown in the Standard Details, is not allowed on the National Highway System (NHS). This railing may be used as a Traffic Railing on non-NHS roadways with a design speed of 45 mph or less. The type "W" railing shall be used on concrete slab structures only. The use of this railing on girder type structures has been discontinued. Generally, type "W" railing is considered when the roadway approach requires standard beam guard and if the structure is 80 feet or less in length. Although the type "W" railing was crash-tested per NCHRP Report 230 and meets NCHRP Report 350 crash test criteria for TL-3 (based on a May 1997 FHWA memorandum), FHWA has since restricted its use as indicated above.
12. Type "M" steel railing, as shown in the Standard Details, shall generally be used as a Traffic Railing on all functional classes of Wisconsin structures with a design speed of 45 mph or less. The type "M" railing may be used on roadways with a design speed exceeding 45 mph where the minimum 0.5% deck grade cannot be accommodated for proper drainage based on project specific constraints. The type "M" railing also can be used in place of the type "W" railing when placed on girder type structures as type "W" railings are not allowed for this application. However, the type "M" railing is not allowed for use on prestressed box girder bridges. This railing shall be considered where the Region requests an open railing. The type "M" railing is TL-2 under MASH.



13. Type “NY3/NY4” steel railings, as shown in the Standard Details, shall generally be used as a Traffic Railing on all functional classes of Wisconsin structures with a design speed of 45 mph or less. The type “NY3/NY4” railings may be used on roadways with a design speed exceeding 45 mph where the minimum 0.5% deck grade cannot be accommodated for proper drainage based on project specific constraints. The type “NY3/NY4” railings also can be used in place of the type “W” railing when placed on girder type structures as type “W” railings are not allowed for this application. The type “NY4” railing may be used on a raised sidewalk where the design speed is 45 mph or less. However, the type “NY” railings are not allowed for use on prestressed box girder bridges. These railings shall be considered where the Region requests an open railing. The type “NY” railings are TL-2 under MASH.
14. The type “F” steel railing, as shown in the Standard Details of Chapter 40, shall not be used on new bridge plans with a PS&E after 2013. It has not been allowed on the National Highway System (NHS) in the past and was used on non-NHS roadways with a design speed of 45 mph or less. Details in Chapter 40 are for informational purposes only.
15. If a box culvert has a Traffic Railing across the structure, then the railing members shall have provisions for a three beam connection at the ends of the structure as shown in the Facilities Development Manual (FDM) SDD 14b20. Railing is not required on box culverts if the culvert is extended to provide an adequate clear zone as defined in FDM 11-15-1. Non-traversable hazards or fixed objects should not be constructed or allowed to remain within the clear zone. When this is not feasible, the use of a Traffic Railing to shield the hazard or obstacle may be warranted. The railing shall be provided only when it is cost effective as defined in FDM 11-45-1.
16. When the structure approach three beam is extended across the box culvert; refer to Standard Detail, Box Culvert Details for additional information. The minimum dimension between end of box and face of guard rail provides an acceptable rail deflection to prevent a vehicle wheel from traversing over the end of the box culvert. In almost every case, the timber posts with offset blocks and standard beam guard are used. Type “W” railing may be used for maintenance and box culvert extensions to mitigate the effect of structure modifications.

See the FDM for additional railing application requirements. See FDM 11-45-1 and 11-45-2 for Traffic Barrier, Crash Cushions, and Roadside Barrier Design Guidance. See FDM 11-35-1 Table 1.2 for requirements when barrier wall separation between roadway and sidewalk is necessary.



30.3 General Design Details

1. Epoxy coated bars are required for all concrete parapets, curbs, medians, and sidewalks.
2. Adhesive anchored parapets are allowed at interior Traffic Railing locations only when the adjacent exterior parapet is a crash test approved Traffic Railing per 30.2 (i.e., cast-in-place anchors are used at exterior parapet location). See Standards for Parapet Footing and Lighting Detail for more information.
3. Sign structures, sign trusses, and monotubes shall be placed on top of railings to meet the working width and zone of intrusion dimensions noted in FDM 11-45-2.3.1.1 and 11-45-2.3.6.2.3 respectively.
4. Temporary bridge barriers shall be designed in accordance with FDM SDD 14b7. Where temporary bridge barriers are being used for staged construction, the designer should attempt to meet the required offsets so that the barrier does not require anchorage which would necessitate drilling holes in the new deck.
5. Provide for expansion movement in tubular railings where expansion devices or concrete parapet deflection joints exist on the structure plan details. The tubular railing splice should be located over the joint and spaced evenly between railing posts. The tubular railing splice should be made continuous with a movable internal sleeve. If tubular railing is employed on conventional structures where expansion joints are likely to occur at the abutments only, the posts may be placed at equal spacing provided that no post is nearer than 2 feet from deflection joints in the parapet at the piers.
6. Refer to Standard for Vertical Face Parapet “A” – for detailing concrete parapet or sidewalk deflection joints. These joints are used based on previous experience with transverse deck cracking beneath the parapet joints.
7. Horizontal cracking has occurred in the past near the top of some concrete parapets which were slip formed. Similar cracking has not occurred on parapets cast in forms. Therefore, slip forming of bridge parapets shall not be allowed.
8. For beam guard type “W” railing, locate the expansion splice at a post or on either side of the expansion joint.
9. Sidewalks - If there is a Traffic Railing between the roadway and an at grade sidewalk, and the roadway side of the Traffic Railing is more than 11'-0" from the exterior edge of deck, access must be provided to the at grade sidewalk for the snooper truck to inspect the underside of the bridge. The sidewalk width must be 10'-0" clear between barriers, including fence (i.e., use a straight fence without a bend). For protective screening, the total height of parapet and fence need not exceed 8'-0". The boom extension on most snooper trucks does not exceed 11'-0" so provision must be made to get the truck closer to the edge.
10. Where Traffic Railing is utilized between the roadway and an at grade sidewalk, early coordination with the roadway designer should occur to provide adequate clearances



off of the structure to allow for proper safety hardware placement and sidewalk width. Additional clearance may be required in order to provide a crash cushion or other device to protect vehicles from the blunt end of the interior Traffic Railing off of the structure.

11. On shared-use bridges, fencing height and geometry shall be coordinated with the Region and the DNR (or other agencies) as applicable. Consideration shall be given to bridge use (i.e., multi-use/snowmobile may require vertical and horizontal clearances to allow grooming machine passage) and location (i.e., stream crossing vs. grade separation).
12. Per **LRFD [13.7.1.1]**, the use of raised sidewalks on structures shall be restricted to roadways with a design speed of 45 mph or less. The height of curbs for sidewalks is usually 6 inches. This height is more desirable than higher heights with regards to safety because it is less likely to vault vehicles. However, a raised curb is not considered part of the safety barrier system. On structure rehabilitations, the height of sidewalk may increase up to 8 inches to match the existing sidewalk height at the bridge approaches. Contact the Bureau of Structures Development Section if sidewalk heights in excess of 8 inches are desired. See Standard for Median and Raised Sidewalk Details for typical raised sidewalk detail information.
13. Pedestrian loads, as described in the AASHTO LRFD Bridge Design Specifications, shall be used to not only design the pedestrian railings on the structure, but shall also be used to design stairway railings that are adjacent to the structure and are part of the contract.

WisDOT policy item:

Noise walls are not allowed on WisDOT bridges.

Contact BOS for discussion on project specific exceptions to this policy. For example, a possible exception would be if a new bridge replaces an existing bridge that currently has a noise wall. Offset requirements of **LRFD [15.8.4, Case 4]** would need to be followed.



30.4 Railing Aesthetics

Railing aesthetics have become a key component to the design and delivery of bridge projects in Wisconsin. WisDOT Regions, local communities and their leaders use rail aesthetics to draw pedestrians to use the walkways on structures. With the increased desire to use, and frequency of use of aesthetics on railings, it has become increasingly important to set policy for railing aesthetics on bridge structures.

Railing aesthetics policies have been around for multiple decades. In the 1989 version of the AASHTO Standard Specifications, generalities were listed for use with designing bridge rails. Statements such as “Use smooth continuous barrier faces on the traffic side” and “Rail ends, posts, and sharp changes in the geometry of the railing shall be avoided to protect traffic from direction collision with the bridge rail ends” were used as policy and engineering judgment was required by each individual designer. This edition of the Standard Specifications aligned with NCHRP Report 350.

Caltrans conducted full-scale crash testing of various textured barriers in 2002. This testing was the first of its kind and produced acceptable railing aesthetics guidelines for single slope barriers for NCHRP Report 350 TL-3 conditions. Some of the allowable aesthetics were: sandblast textures with a maximum relief of 3/8”, geometric patterns inset into the face of the barrier 1” or less and featuring 45° or flatter chamfered or beveled edges, and any pattern or texture with a maximum relief of 2½” located 24” above the base of the barrier. Later in 2002, Harry W. Taylor, the Acting Director of the Office of Safety Design of FHWA, provided a letter to Caltrans stating that their recommendations were acceptable for use on all structure types.

In 2003, WisDOT published a paper titled, “Acceptable Community Sensitive Design Bridge Rails for Low Speed Streets & Highways in Wisconsin”. The goal of this paper was to streamline what railing aesthetics were acceptable for use on structures in Wisconsin. WisDOT policy at that time allowed vertical faced bridge rails in low speed applications to contain aesthetic modifications. For NHS structures, WisDOT allowed various types of texturing and relief based on crash testing and analysis. Ultimately, WisDOT followed many of the same requirements that were deemed acceptable by FHWA based on the Caltrans study in 2002.

NCHRP Report 554 – Aesthetic Concrete Barrier Design – was published in 2006 to (1) assemble a collection of examples of longitudinal traffic barriers exhibiting aesthetic characteristics, (2) develop design guidelines for aesthetic concrete roadway barriers, and (3) develop specific designs for see-through bridge rails. This publication serves as the latest design guide for aesthetic bridge barrier design and all bridge railings on structures in Wisconsin shall comply with the guidance therein.

The aforementioned tests and studies done on aesthetic features will be considered still applicable under MASH barring further tests or studies.

The application of aesthetics on bridge railings on structures in Wisconsin with a design speed exceeding 45 mph shall comply with the following guidance:

1. All Traffic Railings shall meet the crash testing guidelines outlined in [30.1](#).



2. The top surface of concrete parapets shall be continuous without raised features (pilasters, pedestals, etc.) that potentially serve as snag points for vehicles or blunt ends for impacts. Any raised feature that could serve as a blunt end or snag point shall be placed as follows:

Minimum of 2'-3" behind the front face toe of the parapet when used with single slope parapets ("32SS", "36SS", "42SS", or "56SS").

Minimum of 2'-6" behind the front face toe of the parapet when used with sloped face parapets ("LF" or "HF").

Minimum of 2'-0" behind the front face of the parapet when used with vertical face parapets ("A").

3. Any railing placed on top of a concrete parapet shall be continuous over the full extents of the bridge.
4. Any concrete parapet placed directly on the deck may contain patterns or textures of any shape and length inset into the front face with the exception noted in #5. The maximum pattern or texture recess into the face of the barrier shall be 1/2". Note that the typical aesthetic form liner patterns shown on the Standard for Formliner Details are not acceptable for use on the front face of vehicle barriers.

WisDOT highly recommends the use of smooth front faces of Traffic Railings; especially in high speed applications where the aesthetic features will be negligible to the traveling public. In addition to the increased risk of vehicle snagging, aesthetic treatments on the front face of traffic railings are exposed to vehicle impacts, snowplow scrapes, and exposure to deicing chemicals. Due to these increased risks, future maintenance costs will increase.

5. No patterns with a repeating upward sloping edge or rim in the direction of vehicle traffic shall be permitted.
6. Staining should not be applied to the roadway side face of concrete traffic railings.

The application of aesthetics on bridge railings on structures in Wisconsin with a roadway design speed of 45 mph or less shall comply with the following guidance (see Chapter 4 – Aesthetics for CSS funding implications):

1. All Traffic Railings shall meet the crash testing guidelines outlined in 30.1.
2. The top surface of concrete parapets shall be continuous without raised features (pilasters, pedestals, etc.) that potentially serve as snag points for vehicles or blunt ends for impacts. Any raised feature that could serve as a blunt end or snag point shall be placed a minimum of 1'-0" behind the front face toe of the parapet.
3. Any railing placed on top of a concrete parapet shall be continuous over the full extents of the bridge.



4. Any concrete parapet placed directly on the deck or Combination Railing on a raised sidewalk may contain geometric patterns inset into the front face. The maximum recess into the face of the barrier shall be 1” and shall be placed concurrently with a 45° or flatter chamfered or beveled edge. See Standards for Combination Railings Type ‘C1-C6’ and Combination Railing Details for one example of this type of aesthetic modification.

WisDOT highly recommends the use of smooth front faces of Traffic Railings and Combination Railings.

5. Any concrete parapet placed directly on the deck or Combination Railing on a raised sidewalk may contain textures of any shape and length inset into the front face. The maximum depth of the texture shall be ½”. Note that the typical aesthetic form liner patterns shown in the Standard Detail for Formliner Details are not acceptable for use on the front face of vehicle barriers.

WisDOT highly recommends the use of smooth front faces of Traffic Railings and Combination Railings.

6. No patterns with a repeating upward sloping edge or rim in the direction of vehicle traffic shall be permitted.
7. Staining should not be applied to the roadway side face of concrete traffic railings. Staining is allowed on concrete surfaces of Combination Railings placed on a raised sidewalk.



30.5 Objects Mounted On Parapets

When light poles are mounted on top of parapets and the design speed exceeds 45 mph, the light pole must be located behind the back edge of the parapet. See Standards for Light Standard and Junction Box For Parapets and Conduit Details and Notes for typical light pole detail and conduit information. The poles should also be placed over the piers unless there is an expansion joint at that location. If an expansion joint is present, place 4 feet away.

See 6.3.3.7 for more information regarding bench mark disks.



30.6 Protective Screening

Protective screening is a special type of fence constructed on the sides of an overpass to discourage and/or prevent people from dropping or throwing objects onto vehicles passing underneath the structure. Protective screening is generally chain link type fencing attached to steel posts mounted on top of a Traffic Railing (part of a Combination Railing) or on a sidewalk surface (Pedestrian Railing). The top of the protective screening may be bent inward toward the roadway, if mounted on a Traffic Railing and on a raised sidewalk, to prevent objects from being thrown off the overpass structure. The top of the protective screening may also be bent inward toward the sidewalk, if mounted directly to the deck when it is protected by a Traffic Railing between the roadway and a sidewalk at grade. Aesthetics are enhanced by using a colored protective screening which can be coordinated with the color of the structure. See Chapter 30 and Chapter 37 Standard Details for protective screening detail information.

Examples of situations that warrant consideration of protective screening are:

1. Location with a history of, or instances of, objects being dropped or thrown from an existing overpass.
2. All new overpasses if there have been instances of objects being dropped or thrown at other existing overpasses in the area.
3. Overpasses near schools, playgrounds, residential areas or any other locations where the overpass may be used by children who are not accompanied by an adult.

In addition, all pedestrian overpasses should have protective screening on both sides.

Protective screening is not always warranted. An example of when it may not be warranted is on an overpass without sidewalks where pedestrians do not have safe or convenient access to either side because of high traffic volumes and/or the number of traffic lanes that must be crossed.

When protective screening is warranted, the minimum design should require screening on the side of the structure with sidewalk. Designers can call for protective screening on sides without sidewalks if those sides are readily accessible to pedestrians.

Designers should ensure that where protective screening is called for, it does not interfere with sight distances between the overpass and any ramps connecting it with the road below. This is especially important on cloverleaf and partial cloverleaf type interchanges.

Protective screening (or Pedestrian Railing) may be required for particular structures based on the safety requirements of the users on the structure and those below. Roadway designers, bridge designers, and project managers should coordinate this need and relay the information to communities involved when aesthetic details are being formalized.

See FDM 11-35-1.8 for additional guidance pertaining to protective screening usage requirements.



Occasionally, access to light poles behind protective screening is required or the screening may need repair. To gain access, attach fence stretchers to the fencing and remove one vertical wire by threading or cutting. To repair, attach fence stretchers and thread a vertical wire in place of the one removed by either reusing the one in place or using a new one.

Fence repair should follow this same process except the damaged fencing would be removed and replaced with new fencing.

See [30.3](#) for additional guidance with regards to snooper truck access, screening height, and straight vs. bent fencing.



30.7 Medians

The typical height of any required median curb is 6 inches. This will prevent normal crossovers and reduce vaulting on low speed roadways without excessive dead load being applied to the superstructure. On structure rehabilitations, the height of median may increase up to 8” to match the existing median at the bridge approaches. Contact the Bureau of Structures Development Section if median heights in excess of 8 inches are desired. See Standard for Median and Raised Sidewalk Details for typical raised median detail information.



30.8 Railing Rehabilitation

The FHWA, in its implementation plan for MASH, requires that bridge railings on the NHS shall meet the requirements of MASH or NCHRP Report 350. In addition, FHWA states that “Agencies are encouraged to upgrade existing highway safety hardware that has not been accepted under MASH or NCHRP Report 350 during reconstruction projects, during 3R (Resurfacing, Restoration, Rehabilitation), or when the railing system is damaged beyond repair”.

WisDOT requirements for the treatment of existing railings for various project classifications are outlined in [Table 30.8-1](#):

Project Classification	Railing Rehabilitation
<p>Preventative Maintenance* (Resurfacing, Restoration)</p> <p><i>For letting dates after December 31, 2019: The compliance document will be MASH 2016 Edition</i></p>	<p>Replacement of bridge railing not in compliance with MASH or NCHRP Report 350 is recommended but not required.</p> <p>Existing railings – both in compliance and not in compliance – with MASH, NCHRP Report 350, and NCHRP Report 230 may be altered to improve the performance of the existing railings where it is not feasible to install an approved railing. Coordination with BOS and BPD is required.</p> <p><u>NHS Structures</u>: It is strongly encouraged that existing railing that does not comply with MASH, NCHRP Report 350, or NCHRP Report 230 be upgraded to comply with MASH or NCHRP Report 350.</p> <p><u>Non-NHS Structures</u>: It is strongly encouraged that existing railing that does not comply with MASH, NCHRP Report 350, or NCHRP Report 230 be upgraded to comply with MASH or NCHRP Report 350.</p>



<p>3R** (Resurfacing, Restoration, Rehabilitation)</p> <p><u>For letting dates after December 31, 2019:</u> The compliance document will be MASH 2016 Edition</p>	<p>If rehabilitation work, as part of the 3R project, is scheduled or performed which does not widen the structure nor affect the existing railing.</p>	<p>Replacement of bridge railing not in compliance with MASH or NCHRP Report 350 is recommended but not required provided the minimum rail height requirement is met. (Minimum rail height shall be 27" for roadway design speed of 45 mph or less and 32" for roadway design speed exceeding 45 mph.)</p> <p>Existing railings – both in compliance and not in compliance – with MASH, NCHRP Report 350, and NCHRP Report 230 may be altered to improve the performance of the existing railings (i.e., raised to meet the minimum rail height requirement) where it is not feasible to install an approved railing. Coordination with BOS and BPD is required.</p> <p><u>NHS Structures:</u> Existing railing that does not comply with MASH, NCHRP Report 350, or NCHRP Report 230 and does not meet the minimum rail height requirement shall be upgraded to comply with MASH or NCHRP Report 350.</p> <p><u>Non-NHS Structures:</u> It is strongly encouraged that existing railing that does not comply with MASH, NCHRP Report 350, or NCHRP Report 230 and does not meet the minimum rail height requirement be upgraded to comply with MASH or NCHRP Report 350.</p>
	<p>If rehabilitation work, as part of the 3R project, is scheduled or performed which widens the structure to either side, redecks (full-depth) any complete span of the structure, or if any work affecting the rail is done to the existing structure.</p>	<p>All railing on the structure must comply with MASH or NCHRP Report 350.</p> <p>Limited project by project exceptions may be granted based on coordination and input by the Bureau of Structures and the Wisconsin Division of FHWA Structures Engineer.</p>
<p>4R (Resurfacing, Restoration, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction)</p> <p><u>For letting dates after December 31, 2019:</u> The compliance document will be MASH 2016 Edition</p>		<p>All railing on the structure must comply with MASH or NCHRP Report 350.</p> <p>Limited project by project exceptions may be granted based on coordination and input by the Bureau of Structures and the Wisconsin Division of FHWA Structures Engineer.</p>

Table 30.8-1

WisDOT Requirements for Retrofitting/Upgrading Bridge Railings to Current Standards

* Examples of Preventative Maintenance projects include, but are not limited to:



1. Bridge deck work: Concrete deck repair, patching, and concrete overlays; asphaltic overlays; epoxy and polymer overlays; expansion joint replacement when done in conjunction with an overlay or expansion joint elimination; chloride extraction; installation of a cathodic protection system.
2. Superstructure and substructure work: Steel structure cleaning and repainting, including complete repainting, zone painting, and spot painting with overcoat; structural repairs (except vehicle impact damage); bearing repair or replacement.

** Examples of 3R projects include, but are not limited to:

1. Bridge deck work: Bridge deck widenings and re-decks; expansion joint replacement when done in conjunction with an overlay or expansion joint elimination; approach slab replacement.
2. Superstructure and substructure work: Wing wall replacement; emergency bridge repair; structural repairs to railings based on vehicle impact damage;

The minimum railing height shall be measured from the top inside face of the railing to the top of the roadway surface at the toe of railing.

For all railing rehabilitations that require upgrades to comply with MASH or NCHRP Report 350, railings shall be employed as discussed in [30.2](#).

The following is a list of typical railing types that are in service on structures in Wisconsin. The underlined railings comply with MASH, NCHRP Report 350, or NCHRP Report 230 and may remain in service within rehabilitation projects. The *italicized* railings shall be removed from service within rehabilitation projects.

1. Single slope parapet "32SS", "36SS", "42SS", "56SS". See [30.2](#).
2. Sloped face parapet "LF". Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects. Meets TL-3 under MASH.
3. Sloped face parapet "HF". Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects. Meets TL-3 under MASH.
4. Vertical face parapet "A". Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects. See [30.2](#).
5. Aesthetic parapet "TX". Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects. Meets TL-2 under MASH.
6. Type "PF" tubular railing. Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects. Meets TL-2 under MASH. Standard Details are in Chapter 40.
7. Type "H" railing. Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects. Meets TL-3 under MASH.



8. Timber Railing. Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects if not on the NHS. Timber railings have not been tested according to MASH.
9. Type "W" railing. Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects on non-NHS structures only. Meets TL-2 under MASH.
10. Type "M" railing. Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects. Meets TL-2 under MASH.
11. Type "NY3/NY4" steel railings. Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects. Meets TL-2 under MASH.
12. Type "F" railing. Railing may not be used for rehabilitation projects. Standard Details in Chapter 40 are for informational purposes only.
13. Sloped face parapet "B". Railing may be used for rehabilitation projects. Meets TL-3 under MASH.

The region shall contact the Bureau of Structures Development Section to determine the sufficiency of existing railings not listed above.

Rehabilitation or improvement projects to historically significant bridges require special attention. Typically, if the original railing is present on a historic bridge, it will likely not meet current crash testing requirements. In some cases, the original railing will not meet current minimum height and opening requirements. There are generally two different options for upgrading railings on historically significant bridges – install a crash-tested Traffic Railing to the interior side of the existing railing and leave the existing railing in place or replace the existing railing with a crash-tested Traffic Railing. Other alternatives may be available but consultation with the Bureau of Structures Development Section is required.



30.9 Railing Guidance for Railroad Structures

Per an April 2013 memorandum written by M. Myint Lwin, Director of the FHWA Office of Bridge Technology, bridge parapets, railings, and fencing shall conform to the following requirements when used in the design and construction of grade separated highway structures over railroads:

1. For NHS bridges over railroad:

Bridge railings shall comply with AASHTO standards. For Federal-aid highway projects, the designer shall follow normal bridge railing specifications, design standards, and guidelines.

However, railings for use on NHS bridges over railroads shall be governed by the railroad’s standards, regardless of whether the bridge is owned by the railroad or WisDOT. For the case where an NHS bridge crosses over railroads operated by multiple authorities with conflicting parapet, railing, or fencing requirements, standards as agreed by the various railroad authorities and as approved by WisDOT shall be used.

2. For non-NHS bridges over railroad:

Bridge railings shall comply with the policies outlined within this chapter. For Federal-aid highway projects, the designer shall follow normal bridge railing specifications, design standards, and guidelines.

All federally funded non-NHS bridges including those over railroads shall be governed by WisDOT’s policies outlined above, even if they differ from the railroad’s standards.



30.10 References

1. American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. *AASHTO LRFD Bridge Design Specifications*.
2. American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. *Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware*.
3. National Cooperative Highway Research Program. *NCHRP Report 554 – Aesthetic Concrete Barrier Design*.
4. State of California, Department of Transportation. *Crash Testing of Various Textured Barriers*.
5. National Cooperative Highway Research Program. *NCHRP Report 350 – Recommended Procedures for the Safety Performance Evaluation of Highway Features*.
6. State of Wisconsin, Department of Transportation. *Facilities Development Manual*.
7. State of Wisconsin, Department of Transportation. *Wisconsin Bicycle Facility Design Handbook*.
8. State of Wisconsin, Department of Transportation. *Memorandum of Understanding between Wisconsin Department of Transportation, Wisconsin County Highway Association, and Transportation Builders Association*.



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