



**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
COST ESTIMATE**

September 18, 2008

**H.R. 3999
National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act of 2008**

*As ordered reported by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
on September 17, 2008*

SUMMARY

H.R. 3999 would expand the national program to inspect bridges and authorize appropriations for replacing and rehabilitating highway bridges. The act also would require the Department of Transportation (DOT) to complete several reports on the status of bridges nationwide and to increase its efforts to train bridge inspectors. Assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts, CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would cost \$976 million over the 2009-2013 period. Enacting H.R. 3999 would not affect direct spending or revenues.

H.R. 3999 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

ESTIMATED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The estimated budgetary impact of H.R. 3999 is shown in the following table. The costs of this legislation fall within budget function 400 (transportation).

	By Fiscal Year, in Millions of Dollars					2009- 2013
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION						
Expansion of the Bridge Program						
Authorization Level ^a	1,000	0	0	0	0	1,000
Estimated Outlays	270	410	160	50	40	930
New Requirements for Federal Agencies that Own Bridges						
Estimated Authorization Level	15	0	0	0	0	15
Estimated Outlays	4	6	2	1	1	14
Other Specified Programs						
Authorization Level	9	0	0	0	0	9
Outlays	3	4	2	0	0	9
Reports, Guidance, and Assessments						
Estimated Authorization Level	5	5	5	5	5	25
Estimated Outlays	3	5	5	5	5	23
Total Changes						
Estimated Authorization Level	1,029	5	5	5	5	1,049
Estimated Outlays	280	425	169	56	46	976

a. Public Law 109-59 provides contract authority, a mandatory form of budget authority, of \$4.5 billion in 2009 for the Bridge Program codified in section 144, title 23, U.S. Code. Spending of those amounts is controlled by obligation limitations contained in appropriation acts.

BASIS OF ESTIMATE

For this estimate, CBO assumes that H.R. 3999 will be enacted near the start of fiscal year 2009, that the authorized amounts will be appropriated each year, and that outlays will follow the historical rate of spending for these programs.

The act would authorize the appropriation of just over \$1 billion for fiscal year 2009. In addition, CBO estimates that appropriations of \$40 million over the 2009-2013 period would be needed to implement the legislation. CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would cost \$976 million over the 2009-2013 period, assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts.

Expansion of the Bridge Program

Under current law, states receive about \$4 billion annually in contract authority (a mandatory form of budget authority) for repairing, rehabilitating, and replacing bridges on public roadways. Spending of those amounts, however, is typically controlled by limits on annual obligations set in appropriation acts (known as obligation limitations). H.R. 3999 would authorize the appropriation of an additional \$1 billion in fiscal year 2009 for that program. CBO estimates that implementing this provision would cost about \$930 million over the 2009-2013 period.

The appropriation of additional funds for DOT's bridge program could result in an increase in the contract authority available to states because of DOT's equity bonus program. That program adjusts the amount of contract authority available to a state based on a variety of factors, including that state's contributions to the Highway Account of the Highway Trust Fund and the amount it received under the previous authorization for highway programs. Any additional contract authority due to the equity bonus program would be provided by a subsequent appropriation act; thus, CBO has not estimated any increase in contract authority as a result of implementing H.R. 3999.

Increased Requirements on Federal Agencies that Own Bridges

H.R. 3999 would increase the frequency of inspections of federally owned bridges and would increase the training requirements for inspectors of those bridges. Current regulations require that federal agencies that own and operate bridges on public roads comply with all safety requirements established under DOT's bridge program. There are about 9,000 such bridges nationwide, mostly owned by the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and the Interior. Based on information from DOT, CBO estimates that implementing this provision would cost \$14 million over the 2009-2013 period.

Other Programs

CBO estimates that other provisions of the bill would cost \$32 million over the 2009-2013 period, including:

- Almost \$5 million annually for DOT to train more state bridge inspectors, increase oversight of state plans to address bridge safety, and produce several reports on the safety of the nation's bridges;

- \$5 million for grants to states to use certain advanced technologies to assess the safety of bridges;
- \$2 million for the National Academy of Sciences to report on DOT's process in assessing the risk of bridge failure; and
- \$2 million for DOT to make information contained in that National Bridge Inventory more readily available to the public.

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND PRIVATE-SECTOR IMPACT

H.R. 3999 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA. The bill would require recipients of federal highway funds to inspect and manage highway bridges and tunnels. The bill also would establish a grant program for five states to test the effectiveness of certain technology in bridge inspections. Any costs to state, local, or tribal governments would result from complying with conditions of federal assistance.

PREVIOUS CBO ESTIMATE

On December 3, 2007, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 3999 as ordered reported by the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on October 31, 2007. That version of the legislation authorized the appropriation of \$1 billion for the bridge program in fiscal year 2008 and did not authorize a grant program to use certain advanced technologies to assess the safety of bridges. The CBO cost estimates reflect those differences.

On September 8, 2008, CBO transmitted a cost estimate for H.R. 3999 as passed by the House of Representatives. This cost estimate is identical to our estimate for the House-passed legislation.

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