



**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE  
COST ESTIMATE**

December 3, 2007

**H.R. 3999**

**National Highway Bridge Reconstruction and Inspection Act of 2007**

*As ordered reported by the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
on October 31, 2007*

**SUMMARY**

H.R. 3999 would expand the national program to inspect bridges and authorize appropriations for replacing and rehabilitating highway bridges. The bill would also require the Department of Transportation (DOT) to complete several reports on the status of bridges nationwide and to increase training for bridge inspectors. Assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts, CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would cost nearly \$1.9 billion over the 2008-2012 period. Enacting H.R. 3999 would not affect revenues or direct spending.

The bill contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA).

**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				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>CHANGES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION</b>					
Expansion of the Bridge Program					
Authorization Level <sup>a</sup>	1,000	1,000	0	0	0
Estimated Outlays	150	550	610	340	170
Increased Requirements on Federal Agencies that Own Bridges					
Estimated Authorization Level	15	15	0	0	0
Estimated Outlays	2	8	9	5	3
Reports, Assessments, and Guidance					
Estimated Authorization Level	7	5	5	5	5
Estimated Outlays	3	5	5	5	5
Total Changes					
Estimated Authorization Level	1,024	1,020	5	5	5
Estimated Outlays	155	564	625	350	178

a. Public Law 109-59 provides contract authority, a mandatory form of budget authority, for the Bridge Program codified in section 144, title 23, U.S. Code, of \$4.4 billion in 2008 and \$4.5 billion in 2009. Spending of those amounts is controlled by obligation limitations contained in appropriation acts. A full-year 2008 appropriation for DOT has not yet been enacted.

## **BASIS OF ESTIMATE**

For this estimate, CBO assumes that H.R. 3999 will be enacted near the start of calendar year 2008, that the authorized amounts will be appropriated each year, and that outlays will follow the historical rate of spending for similar programs.

H.R. 3999 would add new requirements for inspecting bridges by state inspectors and federal agencies that own bridges, increase oversight of those inspections by DOT, and require DOT to complete several reports on the status of bridges and bridge safety nationwide. In total, the bill would authorize the appropriation of just over \$1 billion in each of fiscal years 2008 and 2009 and \$5 million per year for 2010 through 2012. CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would cost nearly \$1.9 billion over the 2008-2012 period.

## **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 each of fiscal years 2008 and 2009 for that program. CBO estimates that implementing those provisions would cost about \$1.8 billion over the 2008-2012 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 result from 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 bridge inspections and increase 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 the bridge program. There are about 9,000 such bridges nationwide mostly owned by the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and the Interior. Assuming appropriation of the amounts estimated to be necessary, CBO estimates that implementing this provision would cost \$27 million over the 2008-2012 period.

## **Reports, Assessments, and Guidance**

H.R. 3999 would authorize \$2 million in 2008 for the National Academy of Sciences to report on DOT's process for assessing the risk of bridge failure and how bridge reconstruction and rehabilitation is prioritized. Other provisions of the bill would require DOT to produce several reports on the safety of the nation's bridges, make certain data about bridges more accessible to the public, train more state bridge inspectors, and increase DOT's oversight of state plans to address bridge safety.

Based on information from DOT and assuming appropriation of the necessary amounts, CBO estimates that implementing those provisions would cost \$23 million over the 2008-2012 period.

## **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. Any costs to state, local, or tribal governments would result from complying with conditions of federal assistance.

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