

Bridge Weight Rating Compliance Procedures

It has recently come to our attention at GaDOE that the Georgia Department of Transportation (DOT) has changed the direction they provide regarding school bus weight requirements when crossing posted bridges. **The 10 ton standard that has been in effect for decades is no longer acceptable to them.** The new language provided by DOT in their *Posting Summary for <Name> County* report is, **“It is the responsibly of the driver of the school bus, as with all Commercial Driver’s License (CDL) holders, to abide by all applicable laws regarding load restrictions on any bridge structure.”** Therefore, past practice is no longer acceptable.

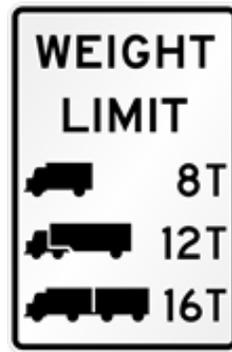
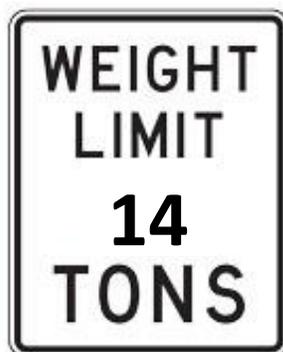
Without question, **you cannot leave it up to your bus drivers to know what to do, so school districts must take a close look at posted bridges within their school district to make route adjustments, and provide driver guidance** to ensure compliance with the new DOT direction.

1. **Determine who, on the Board of Commissioners side of county government, has ownership of the *Posting Summary for <Name> County* report**, released every 2 years, that identifies bridges requiring posting (un-posted bridges do not have weight restrictions). This could be the director of public works, head traffic engineer, etc. This report is no longer routinely provided to your Board of Education by DOT. It must come to you through your county contact, who is your lifeline for this information.
 - a. **Meet with that individual** and obtain a copy of the latest *Posting Summary for <Name> County* report of bridges that require posting in your county. CITY school systems must obtain bridge weight rating information from the COUNTY in which you are located.
 - b. Know that **some of the tonnage weight information on the report may or may not be current.** Some bridges may have been upgraded & some may have been downgraded since the report was issued. Rely on the county individual and on your in-field verification to solidify your certainty of bridge weight rating restrictions.
2. Utilize the information obtained above to **identify all posted bridges that are on driver deadhead travel** (getting to or from when empty) **and current bus routes.**
 - a. Evaluate all bus routes and identify what bridges requiring posting come into play with driver deadhead and/or with actual bus routes.
3. **Identify specific issues** with posted bridges.
 - a. **See the *Curb Weight Maximum* and *Average Weight – CDC Health Statistics 2012*** documents posted on this web site for dependable data that you can utilize. Carefully read and understand all information in each document.

- b. **Calculate the Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) for a specific designed capacity and passenger load for routing across posted bridges with students. GVW formula = curb weight + passenger load weight (# of passengers x average student weight) + driver/monitor average weight.** You should also consider the additional weight of other cargo (books, band equipment, etc.).
- i. Example for a **72 design capacity Blue Bird with a full load of elementary students (3 to a seat): 21,000** curb weight + passenger load weight (72 students x 72 average elementary pounds = **5,184**) + **182** driver average weight = **26,366 or 14 ton minimum bridge posting needed, with a real life maximum load of elementary students.**
 - ii. Example for the same **72 design capacity Blue Bird with a full load of middle school students: 21,000** curb weight + passenger load weight (How heavy do you load your middle school buses? You know you cannot get 3 middle school students to a seat. Can you average 2.0, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, etc. per seat? For this example, let's say you can average 2.1 per seat. A 72 capacity bus has 24 seats [see table below] so, 2.1/seat x 24 seats = 50 middle school students max. [50 students x 127 average middle school pounds = **6,350**]) + **182** driver average weight = **27,532 or 14 ton minimum bridge posting needed, with a real life maximum load of middle school students.**
 - iii. Example for the same **72 design capacity Blue Bird with a full load of high school students: 21,000** curb weight + passenger load weight (How heavy do you load your high school buses? Your professional knowledge likely directs that you cannot get more than 2 high school students to a seat. Can you average 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 2.0, etc. per seat? For this example, let's say you can average 1.7 per seat. A 72 capacity bus has 24 seats [see table below] so, 1.7/seat x 24 seats = 41 high school students max. [41 students x 155 average high school pounds = **6,355**]) + **182** driver average weight = **27,537 or 14 ton minimum bridge posting needed, with a real life maximum load of high school students.**

DESIGN CAPACITY	NUMBER OF SEATS
36	12
48	16
54	18
60	20
66	22
72	24
84	28
90	30

- iv. Note that the elementary, middle and high school examples above are for explanation purposes ONLY, and do not cover combination routes and a variety of other type routes, design capacities, etc. **It is up to the individual school district to determine the procedures you will utilize to ensure driver compliance with bridge weight ratings.**
- c. “b i.,” “b ii.” & “b iii.” above are examples of possible maximum student loads. You may also **utilize strategies to calculate GVW for routing across posted bridges for driver deadhead when empty and for routing with partial student loads.**
- d. **You may choose to utilize the vehicle’s fixed Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) instead of calculating Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) in “3a”, “3b” & “3c” above.** GVWR is the maximum operating weight rating of a vehicle as specified by the manufacturer (the vehicle maximum weight design). But, be advised that GVWR will always be a higher value and could prevent you from serving students who you might otherwise be able to serve by performing the GVW calculations using “3a”, “3b” & “3c”.
- e. See the two bridge weight rating sign examples below. On signage with truck icons, you must use the **top box truck 2 axle icon** for school buses.



4. **Address specific issues** with posted bridges. This could require educating your bus drivers, notifying parents of changes to bus routes, working with the appropriate local authority (could be county or city with jurisdiction over affected bridges) concerning bridge upgrades, etc.
 - a. Work with county or city contact(s) to **ensure all bridges are posted correctly.**
 - i. Sometimes a crew may post the wrong sign on a bridge, etc.
 - b. **Develop a rank order priority list of bridges needing weight limit upgrades**, to provide to the county or city(ies), based on the number of buses needing to cross, critical location near a school, etc.
 - c. **Communicate and pursue rank order upgrades** with county or city funding source contacts.
 - i. Although your primary contact to obtain the *Posting Summary for <Name> County* report is at the county level, **some bridges needing upgrade may be within a city with jurisdiction** over posting and maintenance.
 - d. **Educate and provide direction to bus drivers** when
 - i. On deadhead to and from routes when empty.
 - ii. On assigned routes.
 - iii. On extracurricular trips.
 - e. **Create a list of in-district NO CROSS bridges** or bridges REQUIRING SPECIAL CONSIDERATION.
 - f. **Modify affected bus routes.**
 - g. **Communicate route changes** to parents.
 - h. **Etc.**
5. **Determine when your next *Posting Summary for <Name> County* report is due** and follow up with your county contact to ensure you receive the report in a timely manner.
6. **Etc.**

Contact your GaDOE Pupil Transportation Division Consultant if you need assistance or have questions.