

Skagit River Bridge Collapse Investigation

Questions About The Skagit River Bridge Collapse That Still Need To Be Answered

The State of Washington, the transportation industry and the victims of the Skagit River Bridge collapse await the NTSB's final investigation report leaving numerous public safety questions unanswered.

Primary Issues In The Case

- Did the height of the bridge meet federal vertical clearance standards for bridges that are part of the national defense highway system?
- If not, was an exception granted? And why?
- Why were there no signs or safety mechanisms in place to warn truckers and the traveling public of the low-clearance bridge?

Bridge Structure/Design Questions

- If the bridge was safe and structurally sound would it have been able to withstand the impact of the oversized-load?
- Why was the Skagit Bridge not strong enough to absorb the impact?
- Why did the state allow a seemingly insufficient bridge to exist on such a busy stretch of Interstate 5?

Bridge Maintenance Questions

- Was the bridge properly maintained?
- What repairs or improvements had been made to the bridge in the last several years?
- What were the state's plans to repair or replace the bridge?
- The number of bridges the state's transportation department considers structurally deficient has grown nearly 50% in the past six years, according to a 2012 government report. Which begs the question, is Washington State doing enough to maintain the state's bridges and keep them safe for public use?

WSDOT Policy Questions

- Were proper signs posted near the bridge to alert commercial trucks as to the size and weight restrictions of the bridge? Are truckers given proper notice of height and weight restrictions?
- How often was the state inspecting and/or monitoring the bridge's safety? Was the bridge thoroughly inspected?
- Why the trucking company was issued a permit by the state allowing them to take the truck on bridge?
- Why doesn't Washington state define mandatory trucking routes through the state, instead relying on drivers to work out their own path?

- Why hasn't Washington conducted an in-depth assessment of vehicle impacts with bridges and created strict regulations that would reduce the risk of low-clearance accidents?
- Why does Washington State lump bridge strikes and low-clearance accidents into the "stationary object" crashes category,(masking/skewing data) rather than measuring inadequate vertical clearance accidents in a separate category?

Questions For The Trucking Company & Pilot/Escort Vehicle Operator (P/EVO)

- Why didn't the trucking company choose a different route?
- Was the truck driver or pilot car operator using a commercial trucking GPS system? If so, was it a commercial GPS system or a consumer GPS system?
- Had the pilot vehicle operator clearly examined all of the potential obstacles when planning/mapping out the trip route? Had the trip route been planned in advance?
- What communication, if any, transpired between the truck and the 'lead car' before the accident?
- Was the pilot car driver properly trained and certified?
- How experienced was the pilot car driver?
- Was the pilot car driver distracted at the time of the accident (talking on a cell phone)?