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KDOT Officials Discuss Bridge Inspection Requirements

Kansas Department of Transportation officials met with the Brown County Commission today (Monday) to discuss the requirements for the inspection of fracture critical bridges.

Also on hand for the discussion was Atchison County officials.

Under the requirements, inspectors must inspect bridge members from no more than 18 inches away, which will increase the cost to inspect each bridge significantly.

Ron Seitz, chief of local projects with KDOT, said the 2007 collapse of a truss arch bridge on Interstate-35 in Minneapolis has caused the federal government to step up their enforcement of current laws. He said the law hasn't changed as a result of the bridge collapse. Seitz said the regulations for fracture critical bridges have been in place since 1988...(play audio)

Seitz said if the state doesn't comply with the laws, federal monies could be withheld or the federal government could take over the state's bridge inspection program.

Seitz said KDOT is investing \$20 million to do an initial inspection of all fracture critical bridges in the state by 2014.

Commissioners were told the bridges will not have to be inspected annually as had been believed, but can be inspected biannually along with the other bridges in the county.

Brown County has twenty-four fracture critical bridges. However, engineer Tom Bennett with BG Consultants has recommended that five of the bridges be closed.

Commissioners haven't made a decision on the closing of the bridges.