

# Should It Stay or Should It Go? The Old Hwy 85 Railroad Bridge's Future

The Weston County Commissioners (County) have requested the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) assess the Old Highway 85 BNSF Railroad Bridge located on County Road 1A, approximately 3 miles south of the town of Newcastle at RM 3.49. The County has asked WYDOT to determine the cost of replacing or removing the existing structure utilizing the FHWA BROS program.



**Your opinion matters, therefore the County and WYDOT are providing information explaining the two options, and then asking for the communities input as to how to move forward.**



## Historical Background

The existing structure is a five span wide flange steel girder bridge constructed in 1929. In 1949 US Hwy 85 was realigned from the bridge heading south. The realignment widened and straightened the road meeting new road design standards established as part of the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1944 which provided funding for the interstate highway system and a secondary system of principal secondary and feeder roads. In 1963 the portion of US Hwy 85 from Newcastle to just south of the bridge was realigned to the west bypassing the bridge and WYDOT transferred, via Quit Claim Deed, the original US HWY 85 (old 85) to Weston County in 1967.

This route is one of two accesses to the local landfill.

The County is in the process of acquiring land to move the landfill in two years. When this move happens, the current landfill will be closed, therefore reducing the amount of traffic that would utilize this portion of CR 1A/ Old US Hwy 85 and the railroad bridge.

## Existing Conditions:

The existing bridge is approximately 90 years old, has a low rating, and is in deteriorating condition. Therefore, the existing bridge will either be removed and replaced with a new structure meeting current design and functional standards. If replaced, the new structure will be designed for an HL-93 live load, and it will have a 26' clear roadway with 2" wide curbs. It is anticipated that a new structure would be a multiple span steel girder bridge, which will allow BNSF to add track capacity in the future. An at-grade crossing will not be considered.

## Looking Forward:

The County is looking at two options for this project.

**OPTION ONE** is to replace the existing structure with a new structure meeting current design and functional standards. If the structure is replaced, roadway work on this project will involve reconstruction within the vicinity of the bridge ends.

The horizontal alignment will be in the same approximate location as the existing alignment. If the bridge is replaced, a grade raise will be necessary to obtain the desired vertical clearance of 23.5' from the bottom of the superstructure to the existing tracks.

**Estimated Costs:** (includes inflation)

### Option 1

Design	~\$ 618,000
Construction	~\$ 3,200,000
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>~ \$3,800,000</b>

**Option Two** is to remove the bridge which will require re-grading the roadway in the vicinity of the bridge ends and installing roadblocks.

**Estimated Costs:** (includes inflation)

### Option 2

Design	~\$ 238,000
Construction	~\$ 601,000
<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>~\$ 839,000</b>

## What is BROS?

BROS is an acronym for the Federal Highway Administrations Bridge Replacement Off-System program. The purpose of BROS is to replace eligible bridges that demonstrate structural deficiencies, physical deterioration, and/or functional obsolescence. This program applies to structures not on the federal-aid system.

The BROS program is a federally-funded bridge replacement program intended to reduce the number of deficient off-system bridges within the State. This program applies to bridges under the jurisdiction of a public authority, located on a non-federal aid roadway and open to the public. This includes city, town, and county-owned bridges meeting the qualifications.

To be considered for replacement in the FHWA BROS program, the sponsoring or jurisdiction – in this case, Weston County – must submit to WYDOT's State Bridge Engineer a request identifying the structure, which they did on June 4, 2018.

The BROS program offers approximately a 90-10 match, meaning the project would be 90% federally funded and 10% locally funded.

WYDOT is responsible for administration and management of all BROS projects.

**Now that you know what the options are, the County would like to hear from you.**

**Your opinion matters  
Please access the  
Weston County website at**

<https://www.westongov.com/>

**to take a short Survey**

**The Survey will be open to the public from  
April 9 to April 19**

**Results will be shared with the Weston County Commission and WYDOT and a decision will be shared with the public after the May 5 Commission Meeting.**

**Thank you for your participation.**



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