



The FAST Act: Public Bridge Inspection Report Requests

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) provides a means for a State or a political subdivision of a State to obtain a public version of a bridge inspection report generated by a railroad for a bridge located within their respective jurisdiction. A public notice was posted on the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)'s [Federal Register page on February 19th - a Proposed Agency Information Collection update](#). This, on the Bridge Inspection Issue, represents the only action the FRA will likely take pursuant to the FAST Act.

Who can make the request: Officials of a State, city, county, town, municipality or other political subdivision of a State can make a request for a public bridge inspection report.

How to make a request: Officials send, to FRABridgeInspectionReportRequest@dot.gov (and only to this email, as *no paper-copies will be accepted*), [this official FRA "Bridge Inspection Report Public Version Request Form."](#)

Again, according to the [FRA's website for bridge report requests](#), "Requests will only be accepted through this e-mail address with the proper form completely filled out and attached."

Request process notes: The public notice of the launch of this program was effective as of Friday, February 26, 2016, which means that requests can be filed now. The request is made by filling out a "[Bridge Inspection Report Public Version Request Form](#)." The bridge for which the information is requested must be within the jurisdiction of the political subdivision that the requesting public official represents.

It is important that the official certify that they are making the request in their official capacity, for a bridge located within their jurisdiction.

Once the FRA gets a request that they determine is compliant with the law, they request that the railroad responsible for the bridge provide the FRA with a public version of the most recent inspection report. This report should be provided by the railroad to the FRA within 30 days; after which, the FRA will email it back to the requester. This review process should likely take no longer than 45 days after the FRA gets the report.

Also note that the FRA will be sending these reports back to the email from which the reports came, so officials should make sure to monitor these accounts.

What's in a Report? Pursuant to the FAST Act, here's what's required to be in the "public version" bridge reports: the date of the last inspection; the length of bridge; the location of bridge; the type of bridge (superstructure); the type of substructure; any features crossed by the bridge; railroad contact information; and a general statement on the condition of the bridge.

Discoverable: Once the public rail inspection report has been provided to a state official, the public can file a state public records request to obtain access to the report.