

Quechee Gorge Bridge Rehabilitation Project



The Quechee Gorge Bridge Project team is finalizing the bridge design elements and specifications. The team is on target to meet the rehabilitation project schedule, planning to go out to bid in the fall, with construction beginning in the spring of 2021.

At the most recent public information meeting on October 3, 2019, the team presented the preliminary design. A community member raised concern about the proposed 8-inch space between the

steel spindles on the upper section of the pedestrian safety rail.

While American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) standards exist for the lower section of pedestrian rail – the rail must not have an opening wider than 4 inches – there is no similar design guidance about maximum width between spindles of rail that extend above the 42-inch height.

The team noted this concern and committed to further consideration to determine if an 8-inch opening would provide the safety and deterrence level the Agency and public desires. Project staff researched AASHTO, FHWA, and International Building Code (IBC) for guidance and standards for safety fence components higher than 42 inches above a sidewalk or walkway and found no available standards.

After considerable research in the United States and abroad, the team learned the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has set a 6-inch standard for width opening on upper sections (higher than 42 inches) of pedestrian bridge rail. MnDOT recently completed the construction of a bridge with this design. The project team has not identified any recently completed designs around the country with upper spindle spacings significantly greater than 6 inches. VTrans believes this is a reasonable standard and will apply it to the Quechee Gorge Bridge Project.

Below is a comparison of the pedestrian rail design illustrating both 8-inch and 6-inch openings between the spindles. We believe each offers good views of the gorge, with the 6-inch design providing increased safety and deterrence.

8-inch opening between upper spindles, 4-inch opening between lower spindles



6-inch opening between upper spindles, 4-inch opening between lower spindles



The project team is moving forward with the 6-inch safety rail and is eager to complete the design so the improvements to the Quechee Gorge Bridge, including aesthetic pedestrian safety railing, wider and extended sidewalks, new signage, rehabilitation of painting of the bridge steel and other structural elements, will begin next year.

Please check the project [website](#) periodically for updates. Forward questions or concerns to the project team and we'll get back to you.

[Project Website](#)

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