

National Concrete Bridge Council— Promoting Concrete Bridges for the Industry

by Gregg Freeby, American Segmental Bridge Institute

The National Concrete Bridge Council (NCBC) is a council of allied concrete industry organizations dedicated to expanding the concrete bridge market through promotion of the benefits of concrete bridges. But NCBC's mission goes beyond expanding the market. The organization also promotes quality in concrete bridge construction and preservation by gathering and disseminating information on design, construction, and condition assessment of concrete bridges; establishing and maintaining communication with federal and state departments of transportation, city and county public works departments, consulting engineers, contractors, and material suppliers; and providing information on behalf of the concrete industries to codes and standards groups. NCBC membership is limited to trade associations serving the concrete bridge industry.

NCBC was founded in 1987 by representatives from four industry associations. Their first meeting with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) was on September 15, 1988. This meeting has continued as an annual tradition that enables the concrete bridge industry to collaborate with FHWA on various national initiatives and trends.

Since that first meeting, NCBC membership has grown. The nine current NCBC members and their representatives are as follows:

- American Segmental Bridge Institute, Gregg Freeby (chair)

- Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute, Danielle Kleinhans
- Epoxy Interest Group of CRSI, Pete Fosnough (recording secretary)
- Expanded Shale, Clay and Slate Institute, Ken Harmon
- National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, Brian Killingsworth (vice chair)
- Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute, William Nickas (past chair)
- Post-Tensioning Institute, Tony Johnson (treasurer)
- Silica Fume Association, Jim Wolsiefer
- Wire Reinforcement Institute, Paul Aubee

NCBC provides a unified voice for promoting concrete as the material of choice for all bridges in the United States. Council members work together on common projects to improve the quality, durability, and efficiency of concrete bridges to benefit the industry, taxpayers, and the traveling public. Through its member organizations, NCBC works closely with not only FHWA but also industry groups such as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the American Concrete Institute, ASTM International, and *fib* (International Federation for Structural Concrete).

Concrete Bridge Views

In September 1997, NCBC signed a cooperative agreement with FHWA to assist in the transfer of knowledge and technology related to high-performance concrete (HPC) bridges that were being

developed under the State Highway Research Program. The bimonthly publication *HPC Bridge Views* was one of the products of this agreement. As stated in the first issue (January/February 1999), "The purpose of the agreement is to develop and implement means to enhance the use and quality of concrete materials and bridge systems. This partnership will help us achieve a more cost-effective highway system."

The periodical was published about six times a year from January 1999 through April 2016. Its title was changed to *Concrete Bridge Views* with the January/February 2013 issue to reflect the fact that the use of HPC had become standard practice in many areas of the United States. NCBC maintains a website with all past editions of this periodical (<http://concretebridgeviews.com>), which continues to be an outstanding resource for information on HPC.

Primary Activities of NCBC

The primary activities of the council are intended to address issues at the national level as we collaborate with FHWA, AASHTO, and other organizations to accomplish the following:

- Resolve technical issues.
- Provide training, sponsor research, sponsor conferences, and seminars.
- Maintain and update the library of *Concrete Bridge Views* and other newsletters.
- Advocate for infrastructure funding and legislation that benefit concrete bridges.



The first meeting of the National Concrete Bridge Council and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on September 15, 1988. Back row from left to right: Stan Gordon, Bob Nickerson, and Dr. Walter Podolny, all from FHWA; Dr. Basile Rabbat of the Portland Concrete Association; John Dick from PCI; and Ted Neff of the Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute. Seated: Jim Rossberg from the National Ready Mixed Concrete Association. Photo: National Concrete Bridge Council.

NCBC also maintains a website (<https://nationalconcretebridge.org>), where information about upcoming NCBC events as well as links to resources available from member organizations can be found.

2021: A Turning Point

In November 2021, NCBC member representatives met in Washington, D.C., as they had for the past 34 years. But this meeting was different: there was mutually agreed-upon interest in expanding the mission of NCBC to become a more structured and purposeful organization. As a result, NCBC's Articles of Organization were revised for the first time in many years, a new slate of officers was approved, and the following four primary strategic objectives were adopted:

- Collaboration with AASHTO
- Collaboration with FHWA
- Collaboration with the Concrete Bridge Engineering Institute (CBEI)
- A focus on sustainability and resiliency

Collaboration with AASHTO

In July 2022, with the assistance of PCI, NCBC entered into a collaboration agreement with AASHTO. The objective of this agreement is for NCBC to work closely with the various AASHTO bridge technical committees to develop technical documents related to concrete bridges, including specifications, standards, policies, and other materials. Collectively, these materials will be

cobranding by AASHTO and NCBC and made available through the AASHTO bookstore and the NCBC website. Initially, the following documents are envisioned: *Resources for Concrete Bridge Design and Construction*, *Guide to Post-tensioning for Transportation Structures*, and *Stewardship Guide for Concrete Structures*.

In addition to document development, NCBC is committed to supporting the technical committees of the AASHTO Committee on Bridges and Structures by providing technical support and guidance as needed. This includes supporting the T-4 Construction, T-5 Loads and Load Distribution, T-9 Bridge Preservation, and T-10 Concrete Design committees, as well as the Committee on Materials and Pavements.

Collaboration with FHWA

NCBC is committed to continuing its collaboration with FHWA, which began more than 30 years ago. NCBC will assist FHWA by hosting webinars, communicating the latest industry resources and research studies, and promoting "Every Day Counts" initiatives such as the deployment of ultra-high-performance concrete for bridge preservation and repair.

Collaboration with CBEI

NCBC aims to contribute to the success of CBEI through both financial contributions and the sharing of information on concrete bridge-related topics to identify

mutually beneficial opportunities for the advancement of concrete bridges. More information about CBEI can be found in the Focus article in the Summer 2022 issue of *ASPIRE*® as well as on page 53 in this issue.

Sustainability and Resiliency

Sustainability and resiliency requirements are still emerging for the bridge industry. (See the articles about sustainability efforts in the concrete industry on pages 30 and 46 in this issue of *ASPIRE*.) While both the vertical construction industry and the pavements branch of the transportation industry have already made great strides in this area, the bridge community is very much in need of industry leadership. To that end, NCBC and its member organizations will be collaborating in the very near term with other transportation industry groups to help ensure that proper guidance on sustainability and resiliency is available to bridge practitioners.

NCBC Looks to the Future

In the 35 years since the inception of the National Concrete Bridge Council, there have been many changes in concrete bridges, but one thing remains the same: NCBC's commitment to improving our nation's infrastructure through concrete bridges. As new materials and technologies enter the marketplace, NCBC will continue to help communicate these innovations to bridge professionals. 