Earlier this year, the FHWA established a Bridge Preservation Expert Task Group or BPETG, comprised of representatives from state highway agencies (AASHTO), FHWA, Academia, and Industry. This forum is intended to generate timely input and coordination among stakeholders in the bridge community on strategies, practices and research needs pertaining to preservation in the overall management of the national inventory of publicly owned highway bridges. Going forward, this group has committed to work closely with the AASHTO TSP-2 Bridge Preservation effort by providing complementary technical input in support of advancing of the state of the practice.

The BPETG continues to refine action items associated with its 2010-2012 Strategic Plan which is constructed around nine strategic objectives. One of these objectives is to “Promote the development and implementation of clear and consistent bridge preservation terminology”. To that end, the BPETG has completed an intensive effort to develop and gain consensus on a “working definition” of bridge preservation which it is now proposing for consideration and adoption by AASHTO as the nationally accepted definition for inclusion in the AASHTO Glossary of Terms. Additionally, the BPETG has developed a commentary to provide needed amplification of this definition, and which is being proposed for inclusion in appropriate bridge and maintenance manuals and guides produced by the AASHTO Subcommittees on Bridges and Structures and Maintenance. Comments from the bridge community and other interested stakeholders on the proposed definition and commentary were requested in November 2010. Seventeen comments were received, most of which were positive and supported the definition and commentary. Comments suggesting changes focused on the following issues:

1. Use a different word for “Good” condition.
2. Change the word "structures" to “bridges”.
3. Change the phrase "extend useful bridge service life" to "achieve the maximum useful life".
4. Emphasize that “preservation” has a focus on “long term network strategies”.
5. Clarify "restore the function".
6. Simplify to "Bridge Preservation Extends bridge service life".

The FHWA BPETG reviewed all the comments in December and agreed to move forward with the following definition and commentary. Individual responses to all those who made comments are being prepared.

**Next Steps:**

The definition below has been forwarded to the AASHTO SCOBS Technical Committee on Bridge Preservation for consideration for SCOBS endorsement at the May 2011 meeting in Virginia. It has also been forwarded to SCOM for consideration of endorsement.

**FHWA BPETG Working Definition of Bridge Preservation as of October 15, 2010**

**Bridge Preservation**

*Actions or strategies that prevent, delay or reduce deterioration of bridges or bridge elements, restore the function of existing bridges, keep bridges in good condition and extend their useful life. Preservation actions may be preventive or condition-driven.*

**Commentary:**

Effective bridge preservation actions are intended to address bridges while they are still in good or fair condition and before the onset of serious deterioration.
An effective bridge preservation program: 1) employs long-term network strategies and practices that are aimed to preserve the condition of bridges and extends their useful life; 2) has sustained and adequate funding sources; 3) has adequate tools and processes to ensure that the appropriate treatments are applied at the appropriate time.

An effective bridge preservation program may include, but is not limited to, the following components:

1. Qualifying parameters for bridge types and related conditions, i.e. bridge elements or components that are in fair to good condition such as concrete decks, coated steel elements, substructure elements in a marine environment, etc.
2. Appropriate treatments such as cleaning, installation of deck overlays, coating of steel elements, installation of cathodic protection and prevention systems, etc.
3. Regular needs assessment to identify, prioritize, and estimate the cost of planned work.