

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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April 17, 2018

Gary M. Jackson
Assistant City Manager
City of Deer Park
P.O. Box 700
Deer Park, TX 77536

Re: *Proposed repair, replacement, or demolition of Pratt Truss bridge on Battleground Golf Course, Deer Park, Harris County, Texas*

Dear Mr. Jackson,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the above-referenced project. This letter serves as comment from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the Executive Director of the Texas Historical Commission (THC).

As indicated in your letter, the Pratt truss bridge currently on the Battleground Golf Course in the City of Deer Park was moved to that location in 1995. Originally located in Coryell County within an area that became Mother Neff State Park, the bridge was previously moved to County Road 322 at the Leon River, still within Coryell County. When replacement of the bridge was proposed in the 1990s, it was found eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and its relocation an adverse effect pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The resulting Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among the Federal Highway Administration, SHPO, Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation required that the City of Deer Park enter into preservation and maintenance agreement prior to relocating the bridge. Though light on the details of required maintenance, the bridge acquisition agreement among TxDOT, Coryell County, and the City of Deer Park requires that the City “preserve and maintain the Bridge and the features that give it its historic significance, adhering to the provisions of the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.” No separate maintenance agreement has been located to date, and neither the MOA nor the acquisition agreement stipulate ongoing oversight by our office.

Despite major maintenance work performed in 2012, we understand that the bridge is in deteriorated condition. Significant section loss necessitates full replacement of at least 25% of the truss members and strengthening of an additional 25-50% of the members based on a recent structural engineering analysis. Nevertheless, of the three options under consideration by the City of Deer Park—repair of the historic truss structure, replacement with a similar structure, or removal of the bridge—the Texas Historical Commission’s preference is in-kind repair of the existing historic truss bridge, as the City of Deer Park committed to do in the bridge acquisition agreement.

However, recognizing that this decision rests with the City, we offer the following comments on the replacement or removal options. Since the bridge was documented prior to relocation and given its current level of deterioration, we do not recommend additional documentation at this time. Instead, we encourage placing copies of the 1990s documentation at local libraries or archives in Deer Park and Coryell County. Should a new bridge be desired, rather than construction of a replica of this bridge we encourage consideration of a historic truss bridge marketed by TxDOT, as that could save another significant bridge from demolition. Finally, we encourage salvaging bridge members that remain in good condition for interpretive efforts at the site or for use in repair of other similar truss bridges.



Retaining the Official Texas Historical Marker describing the engineering significance and relocation of this bridge would not be appropriate if the bridge is removed or replaced. Please coordinate return of the marker to the Harris County Historical Commission by emailing HistoricalCommissionMarkers@hctx.net.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project. **If you have any questions or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Elizabeth Brummett at 512/463-6167.**

Sincerely,



A. Elizabeth Brummett, State Coordinator for Project Review
Mark Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer

MW/aeb

Cc: Bruce Jensen, Director, Cultural Resources Management, Environmental Affairs Division, TxDOT
Kitty Henderson, Historic Bridge Foundation
Janet Wagner, Chair, Harris County Historical Commission