

editor's note



IF I ASK YOU TO CLOSE YOUR EYES AND IMAGINE A BRIDGE, MY GUESS IS YOU'LL SEE ONE OF THE NATION'S ICONIC BRIDGES SUCH AS THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE OR THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE. Or if I ask you to picture a current bridge project, you'll likely think of one of the new monumental structures currently underway, with long spans and thousands of cars crossing it every day. The Tappan Zee Bridge in New York. The Stan Musial Veterans Memorial Bridge across the Mississippi. The Gordie Howe International Bridge spanning between Michigan and Ontario.

Most people won't think about the typical 40-to-60-ft crossing in their neighborhood. A short-span bridge over a small creek or roadway. But these smaller projects make up the bulk of the bridges in the U.S. And unfortunately, for the past couple of decades, most of these have been concrete.

But I think the tide is turning—and Pennsylvania seems to be leading the way.

If you were at this year's NASCC: The Steel Conference, you may have seen a presentation on the winners of this year's Prize Bridge Awards (which will be featured in the June issue of *Modern Steel*). My favorite might be the winner in the Short Span category. The Wampum Bridge in Lawrence County, Pa., is the poster child for steel accelerated bridge construction. The goal was to create an attractive, inexpensive and functional structure with minimal disruption to the community. The simple project uses a concrete deck cast onto steel wide-flange girders. The modules are fabricated (with the deck) off-site and are then lifted into place.

For simple crossings, it doesn't get much better than this—unless you're in the mood for something completely different.

Back in September 2009, we wrote about some work Atorod Azizinamini was doing with something called a "folded steel plate girder." It looked like it was a quick, inexpensive and simple solution for short-span bridges. And now seven bridges in Pennsylvania are showing we were right. These fascinating structures are ideal for spans of 20 to 60 ft and skews up to 45°. As with the wide-flange solution, a composite concrete deck is cast on the steel folded plate girders off-site and then the system is lifted into place.

CDR Bridge Systems is spearheading the implementation of these fantastic structures. With both folded steel plate girders and the simple wide-flange structures, it looks like there are truly great solutions in steel for short-span bridges. To see even more solutions, visit www.steelbridges.org.

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