

w e s t v i r g i n i a

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Over the next ten years, West Virginia's transportation system will face a nearly \$5 billion funding deficit. The West Virginia Department of Transportation estimates that \$9.75 billion will be needed through 2018 to improve road and bridge conditions, enhance economic development, provide needed safety measures and relieve traffic congestion, but only \$5 billion will be available during that time.

More than one-third of West Virginia's roads are in poor or mediocre condition, 37 percent of the state's bridges are deficient, and its traffic fatality rate is the third highest in the nation according to a new report titled "Future Mobility in West Virginia: Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility" released in July by The Road Information Program (TRIP). The report was released on July 8 during a press conference held at the I-64 Kanawha River Bridge currently being built by Brayman Construction Corporation, Saxonburg, PA.

According to TRIP, a Washington, DC, based nonprofit organization that researches, evaluates and distributes information on highway transportation issues, eight percent of West Virginia's roads are in poor condition and an additional 29 percent are in mediocre

condition. Driving on roads in need of repair costs each West Virginia motorist an average of \$280 annually - \$371 million statewide - in the form of accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. The report contains a list of needed roadway repair and reconstruction projects throughout the state that currently lack adequate funding to proceed.

Fifteen percent of the state's bridges (20 feet or longer) are structurally deficient and another 22 percent are functionally obsolete. The TRIP report contains a list of the 25 bridges in the state with the lowest sufficiency rating, for which repairs are not scheduled through 2009.

The report found that West Virginia's traffic fatality rate of 2.10 fatalities per 100 million miles of travel is the third highest in the U.S. and 54 percent higher than the national average.

"This report shows that West Virginia has enormous deficiencies in road and bridge funding which translates into a dangerous transportation system for the traveling public," said West Virginians for Better Transportation Chairman Joe Deneault. "The federal stimulus package will not make as big

of an impact as we had hoped. And with a projected deficit of \$5 billion in surface transportation needs over the next 10 years, we believe it is critically important for the Governor, legislature and Department of Transportation to come together and develop a long-term funding solution for our roads, bridges and highways."

In addition to the \$4.2 billion that West Virginia received from 1998 to 2008 in federal funding for road, highway, bridge and public transit improvements, the state recently received approximately \$211 million in federal stimulus funding for highway and bridge improvements and \$19 million for public transit improvements.

According to the TRIP report, even with the inclusion of federal stimulus funds, the state does not have adequate funding to proceed with the projects needed to modernize the surface transportation system.

"The federal stimulus funding will serve as a down payment on needed road, highway, bridge and transit improvements, but it is not sufficient to allow the state to proceed with numerous projects needed to modernize its surface transportation system," said Carolyn Bonifas, TRIP's



A new report titled "Future Mobility in West Virginia: Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," was released in July. Pictured are Carolyn Bonifas, TRIP's associate director of research and communications, George Manahan and Joe Deneault, chairman of West Virginians for Better Transportation, at the I-64 Kanawha River Bridge currently being built by CAWW member Brayman Construction Corporation, Saxonburg, PA.

associate director of research and communications.

Needed projects that cannot proceed without additional transportation funding include the widening of I-81, I-64 and I-79 to six lanes to ease congestion in the Martinsburg, St. Albans and Fairmont areas; replacement of the Dick Henderson Bridge in St. Albans; widening of US 119 in Charleston from Oakwood Road to Jefferson Road; installation of high-tension guardrails on numerous sections of I-77 to reduce run-off-the-road collisions; and construction of a fly over ramp from I-64 to US 119 southbound in Kanawha County to reduce collisions. A full list of projects requiring additional funding to proceed is included in the report.

The current federal transportation program, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), expires on September 30, 2009, requiring Congress to authorize a new federal surface transportation program or extend the current program to allow federal highway dollars to continue to be provided to West Virginia.

Recent declines in federal surface transportation revenues, as well as significant increases in the cost of transportation construction materials, will make it more difficult for Congress to authorize new, adequately-funded federal surface transportation legislation.

"West Virginia has benefited tremendously from the federal transportation program," said William M. Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "While the state has put its combination of federal and state funds to good use in the past, in the coming years, many additional needed projects will remain on the drawing board because of insufficient funding. It is critical that the state adequately funds its transportation system and that Congress produces a timely and adequately funded federal surface transportation program this year."

Federal funding for highways and transit in West Virginia may be cut significantly starting on October 1, 2009 (the beginning of FY 2010) as the result of inadequate revenue collections for the Federal Highway Trust Fund which finances federal highway and transit programs. The

Congressional Budget Office estimates that West Virginia's federal highway dollars will be cut by 35 percent in 2010 unless the shortfall is eliminated in the Federal Highway Trust Fund.

Combining recent declining federal surface transportation revenues with significant increases in the cost of transportation construction materials will likely make it more difficult for Congress to authorize a new federal surface transportation program that adequately funds needed improvements to the nation's roads, highways, bridges and public transit systems.

"Unless West Virginia can address this funding gap, many sorely needed transportation projects will remain unfunded," said Deneault. "There is no silver bullet or white knight from Washington that is going to fix the funding deficit we are facing. The West Virginia Department of Transportation does a great job with what they are given, but in order to meet the state's transportation needs, we need to debate how to best fund the road program."

Two congressionally appointed commissions and a national organization representing state transportation departments have recommended a broad overhaul of the Federal Surface Transportation Program to improve mobility, safety and the physical condition of the nation's surface transportation system by significantly boosting funding, consolidating the program into fewer categories, speeding up project delivery and requiring greater accountability in project selection.

The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission (NSTPRSC) and the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission (NSTIFC) were created by Congress to examine the current condition and future funding needs of the nation's surface transportation program, develop a plan to ensure the nation's surface transportation system meets America's future mobility needs and to recommend future funding



According to the TRIP report, even with the inclusion of federal stimulus funds, the state does not have adequate funding to proceed with the projects needed to modernize the surface transportation system. Driving on roads and bridges in need of repair, such as the Dick Henderson Bridge in Nitro, costs West Virginia's motorists an average of \$280 annually in accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

mechanisms to pay for the preservation and improvement of the nation's roads, highways, bridges and public transit systems.

The NSTPRSC concluded that it is critical to the future quality of life of Americans that the nation create and sustain the preeminent surface transportation system in the world, one that is well-maintained, safe and reliable. The NSTIFC found that the U.S. faces a \$2.3 trillion funding shortfall over the next 25 years in maintaining and making needed improvements to the nation's surface transportation system. The NSTIFC also found that the use of motor fuel fees is not sustainable as a primary source of funding for the nation's surface transportation system because of the shift to a variety of fuel sources and more fuel efficient vehicles.

"As vehicles become more fuel efficient and alternative energy sources become more prevalent in the transportation industry the gasoline tax will no longer be an adequate funding source for road and bridge maintenance and repair," Deneault noted.

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) proposal for authorization of the federal surface transportation program calls for approval of a program that would be accountable for results, would make investments based on community needs and would deliver projects on time and on budget. The AASHTO proposal calls for a federal surface transportation program that is based on state-driven performance measures and is focused on six objectives of national interest: preservation and renewal, interstate commerce, safety, congestion reduction and connectivity for urban and rural areas, system operations, and environmental protection.

"The transportation system in West Virginia is imperative for economic development," Deneault said. "A business cannot locate in an area without an adequate and modern system of roads and bridges. West Virginian's need to know that our state's transportation system is deteriorating at a rapid rate and understand the value that a modern and safe transportation system brings

to an area. Investing in the needed improvements to West Virginia's roads, highways and bridges provides a significant boost to the Mountain State's economy by creating jobs in the short-term and stimulating long-term economic growth as a result of enhanced mobility and access."

As West Virginia looks to enhance and build a thriving, growing and dynamic state, it will be critical that it is able to provide a 21st Century network of roads, highways and bridges that can accommodate the mobility demands of a modern society.

Approval of the federal stimulus package has provided a helpful down payment for the improvement of West Virginia's transportation system. However, without a substantial boost in federal, state and local highway funding, numerous projects to improve the condition and expand the capacity of West Virginia's roads, bridges and highways will not be able to proceed, hampering the state's ability to improve the condition of its surface transportation system and to enhance economic development opportunities in the state.

"Our transportation system is deteriorating at a rapid rate and we must do something about it," Deneault urged. "It is not going to be easy and not everyone will be happy, but the conversations must happen and our state's leaders must have the difficult conversations that will lead to a long-term funding solution for our roads, bridges and highways."

The full TRIP report, "Future Mobility in West Virginia: Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," is available by visiting [www.tripnet.org](http://www.tripnet.org) or [www.cawv.org](http://www.cawv.org). The report contains lists of the roads and bridges in West Virginia that are in need of repair or rehabilitation but without funding.

*West Virginians for Better Transportation is a coalition of businesses working to raise awareness about the state's need for a safe and modern transportation system. For more information on the group, visit [www.keepwvmoving.org](http://www.keepwvmoving.org).*