



EDITORIAL

Roads, bridges deplorable in our state

BY DON SHOOPMAN | THE DAILY IBERIAN

Louisiana's rural roads and bridges are in bad shape.

Just how poor their condition is was outlined recently in a report by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group in Washington.

"Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America's Heartland" points out 18 percent of rural Louisiana roads are in poor conditions — the 17th highest rate in the nation — while 20 percent are in mediocre condition. Also, 15 percent of our state's rural bridges are rated structurally deficient — the ninth highest rate in the U.S.

The sad part is there are 2.46 fatalities per 100 million vehicles of travel, the 12th highest rate nationally and more than double the fatality rate on all other roads in the state, on Louisiana non-interstate, rural roads.

That's 2.46 fatalities too many. This is more than troubling because the resources should be earmarked to alleviate the woeful problem.

"Louisiana's roads and bridges are continuing to deteriorate as expected. The lack of additional resources to fund needed repairs and replacements ensures the continuing decline of our basic transportation network," Don Redman, AAA's public affairs specialist, said. "Along with moving up the delinquent list of states' roads and bridges, lives will be lost, commerce impacted and the quality of life lessened as additional resources go wanting. No time is too soon to turn this around and get the resources needed."

At the top of the rural roads in poor condition list is Rhode Island, with 41 percent, followed by Connecticut (39 percent) and California (38 percent). The top three on the structurally deficient rural bridges list are Rhode Island, Iowa and Pennsylvania, all at 22 percent.

It is a disgrace and a shame this great state is in the Top 25. The fault lies squarely on the shoulders of the people we elect to represent us.

Kenneth Perret, president of the Louisiana Good Roads and Transportation Association, agrees when he writes, "It's no coincidence that Louisiana is near the top of the list of deficient roads and bridges in the country and near the bottom of the list in state transportation investment. Until the Louisiana Legislature does its job and adequately funds transportation, these types of reports will only get worse."

"The Legislature in the recently completed session failed to act. With an ASCE grade of "D," Louisiana's roads and bridges will continue to cost state motorists more in lost time, safety issues and insurance costs."

At least one national official praises the efforts of the Trump Administration in response to this issue that drags down the U.S.

"We applaud the president, the new administration and members of Congress for leading the conversation on an issue of critical importance to our 21st century: rebuilding America's infrastructure. The American business community looks forward to developing and implementing a long-term plan that will bring our nation's rural and urban infrastructure up to speed and spur economic growth. Now is the time to take action and to get the job done," said U.S. Chamber of Commerce Executive Director for Transportation Infrastructure Ed Mortimer.

The safety and quality of life for our state's residents and visitors hinges on prompt, decisive action, hopefully soon.

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