

Report: Rural roads are rough, some bridges 'functionally obsolete'

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America's rural roads are in rough shape, with 11% of the nation's rural bridges were rated as structurally deficient and 10% functionally obsolete, a [new report](#) released Tuesday by the non-profit Washington D.C.-based [transportation research group TRIP](#) finds.

Just two years ago, TRIP says 15% of the nation's major rural roads were rated in poor condition and another 39% were rated in mediocre or fair condition.



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The TRIP report says repairs are needed in rural areas to address deficient roads and bridges, high crash rates, and inadequate connectivity and capacity.

"America's rural transportation network plays a key role in the success and quality of life for U.S. farmers and ranchers," said Bob Stallman, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation. "But deteriorated and deficient rural roads and bridges are hindering our nation's agricultural goods from reaching markets at home and abroad and slowing the pace of economic growth in rural America.

"Securing the appropriate resources at the local, state and federal levels will allow for the improvements needed to provide a rural transportation system that will keep goods moving, improve quality of life and quicken the pace of economic growth," Stallman said.

Funding repairs

The federal surface transportation program is a critical source of funding for rural roads, but the current federal surface transportation program is set to expire on May 31, 2015. While the U.S. House of Representatives late on Tuesday voted to extend U.S. Highway Trust Fund authorization, the extension lasts only through July 31.

"The 61 million people who live in America's rural heartland deserve a transportation system that is safe, efficient and reliable," said Kathleen Bower, AAA vice president of public

affairs. "It is up to Congress to pass a fully funded, long-term bill to improve our nation's rural roads before the Highway Trust Fund runs out of money this summer."

The TRIP report finds that the U.S. needs to adopt transportation policies that will improve rural transportation connectivity, safety and conditions to provide the nation's small communities and rural areas with safe and efficient access to support quality of life and enhance economic productivity.

To accomplish this, the report recommends modernizing and extending key routes to accommodate personal and commercial travel, implementing needed roadway safety improvements, improving public transit access to rural areas, and adequately funding the preservation and maintenance of rural transportation assets.

"The safety and quality of life in America's small communities and rural areas and the health of the nation's economy ride on our rural transportation system," said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "But with long-term federal transportation legislation stuck in political gridlock in Washington, economic growth in America's rural communities could be threatened."

Chart: States with the highest rate of rural pavements in poor condition, states with the highest share of structurally deficient rural bridges and those with the highest fatality rates on rural roads.

Rank	STATE	Rural Pavement in Poor Condition	STATE	Structurally Deficient Rural Bridges	STATE	Rural Fatality Rate	Fatality Rate on All Other Roads
1	Michigan	37%	Pennsylvania	25%	Connecticut	3.57	0.59
2	Rhode Island	32%	Rhode Island	23%	South Carolina	3.40	0.69
3	Hawaii	31%	Iowa	22%	Florida	3.20	0.96
4	Idaho	31%	South Dakota	21%	Montana	3.09	0.76
5	Kansas	30%	Oklahoma	19%	Arizona	3.01	1.15
6	West Virginia	29%	Nebraska	18%	California	2.83	0.67
7	Oklahoma	27%	North Dakota	17%	West Virginia	2.61	1.08
8	Maine	26%	Louisiana	16%	Arkansas	2.58	0.77
9	Alaska	25%	Maine	15%	Georgia	2.55	0.77
10	New Mexico	25%	Missouri	15%	Oklahoma	2.52	0.87
11	Connecticut	25%	New Hampshire	14%	Texas	2.48	1.04
12	Vermont	24%	Mississippi	14%	Mississippi	2.42	0.82
13	Mississippi	22%	North Carolina	14%	Tennessee	2.38	1.03
14	Washington	22%	Michigan	13%	North Carolina	2.38	0.67
15	Missouri	21%	New York	13%	Massachusetts	2.32	0.52
16	New Hampshire	20%	West Virginia	13%	Kentucky	2.24	0.7
17	Virginia	19%	Wyoming	13%	Pennsylvania	2.23	0.88
18	Arkansas	19%	New Jersey	13%	North Dakota	2.19	0.47
19	Wisconsin	18%	South Carolina	12%	South Dakota	2.19	0.8
20	Pennsylvania	18%	California	12%	Kansas	2.19	0.55

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