

New Study: SD Roads, Bridges In Need Of Repair

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SIOUX FALLS, S.D. - Transportation funding is one of the most highly debated topics in the South Dakota legislature. Lawmakers now have a study that backs up the need for more funding in the state. A study by a national transportation research group called TRIP says our roads and bridges are in need of repair.

Like many states, South Dakota faces challenges in maintaining and funding our transportation system. A new report highlights how much we're struggling to keep up.

TRIP Research and Policy Director Rocky Moretti said, "The local system is, really has some significant and immediate challenges and the state system is falling into the same conditions."

The report says 39 percent of county roads and 28 percent of township roads in the state are in poor condition. Only two percent of state roads are in bad shape, but if funding stays as it is, that number will increase to 25 percent in the next decade.

Moretti said, "It's an economy in South Dakota that's very reliant on a good transportation system and when you start to see that system fail, it starts to have some significant economic impacts."

According to the report, bridges throughout South Dakota are even worse. One in five bridges in the state are considered structurally deficient, the fourth highest in the nation.

"The inspectors have found significant damage in terms of corrosion. They're seeing significant wear and tear on those bridges," said Moretti.

The report also says bad road conditions contributed to one-third of all fatality crashes in the state.

Moretti said, "You don't have things like paved shoulders, you don't have rumble strips, you don't have guard rails where they're needed."

In order to make significant improvements, the report says we would have to double our current budget to nearly \$58 million over a 10-year-period.

Sioux Falls Area Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Evan Nolte said, "Right now, we see some of the issues and challenges, it's only going to get worse unless we start addressing it."

South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard proposed a transportation plan that would raise \$50 million for roads and bridges through increases in fuel taxes and fees. The House and Senate have come up with modified versions.