

THE NEWS-ENTERPRISE

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2018

Report: Half of area roads need work

MARY ALFORD, The News-Enterprise

Half the roads in an 11-county region covered by Transportation Cabinet's District 4 highway office are in need of some sort of work, including 22 percent that need resurfacing, according to a report.

Prepared by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation organization, the report said 19 percent of roads in District 4 are in poor condition and another 9 percent need to be reconstructed.

Judge-executives from the region met Tuesday afternoon at the Hardin County Government Building to hear a report examining the conditions of local roads and bridges, traffic safety and fatalities. It also reviewed most pressing transportation needs in District 4, which covers Hardin, LaRue, Breckinridge, Grayson, Green, Hart, Marion, Meade, Nelson, Taylor and Washington counties and has 2,902.93 miles of county-maintained roads.

"We certainly all know the importance of information like this. It helps us make our case to our friends in Frankfort for more funding," Hardin County Judge-Executive Harry Berry said.

Rocky Moretti of TRIP said the group calculated the share of county-maintained roads in poor, fair or good condition in each of the state's 12 highway districts. Twenty-six percent of the roads in District 4 were in fair condition and 52 percent were in good condition.

"That's important because roads in poor condition cost a whole lot more money to fix," Moretti said. "In an ideal world, you don't want things to fall to poor condition when they are so much more to deal with.

"The challenge, of course, is to not let those numbers get worse and try to improve them," he added.

Although 9 percent of District 4's county-maintained roads are in need of reconstruction, the report said current funding only allows for the reconstruction of one percent of county-maintained roads, Moretti said.

"Transportation agencies are doing what they do across the country which is triaging the existing funding and trying to do the best they can with those resources," he said.

TRIP's reports, Moretti said, also examined bridge conditions in each of the state's highway districts, including the share of bridges in each district that are structurally deficient. Those troubled spans have significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components.

The survey said District 4 has 1,092 bridges that are at least 20 feet long and are included in the Federal Highway Administration's National Bridge Inventory.

According to the inventory data, in 2016, 67 of these bridges — 6 percent — were rated structurally deficient. Thirty-one of the 67 structurally deficient bridges in District 4 are posted with weight restrictions, which could cause safety concerns, Moretti said.

"The region is grappling with those bridge challenges," he said.

Hardin County had 12 of the 25 most heavily traveled, structurally deficient bridges in District 4.

"We hope the release of these reports will help everyone understand that everyone in Kentucky throughout the state is part of this challenge but can be part of the solution as well," said Moretti, who is in Frankfort today to present the report.

Sources of information for the report included a survey of county governments by the Kentucky Magistrates and Commissioners Association, the Kentucky Office of Highway Safety and the Federal Highway Administration.

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