LA’s aging infrastructure: Nearly 2,000 structurally deficient bridges, no money for repairs

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NEW ORLEANS (WVUE) - Louisiana’s infrastructure is aging, and there are nearly 2,000 bridges in the state that are structurally deficient. Experts say the funding isn’t there to repair them.

Kam Movassaghi is a member of the American Society of Civil Engineers and a former secretary of the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. He has concerns about the state’s infrastructure.

“I’m not going to alarm you and say that these bridges are going to fail. I don’t know, and I hope they never fail. But, they’re getting older, and I hope we close those bridges before it gets to the point of becoming dangerous that the public cannot travel on it, and that’s what the DOTD is doing - they’re closing those bridges,” Movassaghi said.

According to data from the U.S. Department of Transportation, there are more than 1,800 structurally deficient bridges in Louisiana.

“We’ve looked at bridge conditions all across the state of Louisiana and found that in the New Orleans area, there are 88 bridges that are structurally deficient,” said Carolyn Bonifas Kelly with The National Transportation Research Group, or TRIP.

TRIP said many of the bridges are structurally deficient because there simply isn’t enough funding available to make the needed repairs.

“Given the aging nature of the state’s transportation system, we will continue to see increased deterioration and a higher number of structurally deficient bridges if the state isn’t able to adequately invest in the transportation system,” Kelly said.

“We have the fourth-largest bridge deck area in the country, and so to do the bridge work I have to spend more money than what my counterparts might have to spend, not to mention that they have increased their revenue and this state hasn’t,” said Wilson.

The expert we spoke with agreed Louisiana needs additional funding to replace the bridges he said have reached the end of their lives.

“We are one of the highest structurally deficient bridges in the country, and that is certainly some concern and we need to start addressing that. We absolutely need to start addressing that because this is something that, as these bridges get older and get to the end of their life, they require a lot more attention, and God forbid if that attention suddenly is not there, then you know disaster could occur,” said Movassaghi.