Report suggests rural RI roads among worst in nation

By: Miles Montgomery

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (WPRI) --- A new report by TRIP, a national transportation research group, discovered Rhode Island has the highest rate of rural roads in poor condition nationwide.

According to the report, 39% of Rhode Island's rural roads are in poor condition and 31% are in mediocre condition based on data from all 50 states. In addition, 23% of Rhode Island's rural bridges are rated as poor/structurally deficient, the highest in the United States.

“Rural roads play a critical role in supporting the transportation needs of millions of Americans every day,” Kathleen Bower, AAA senior vice president of public affairs and international relations said. “Damaged and deteriorating roadways too often result in deadly crashes, and it is time to act. Making critical safety improvements to rural roads will save thousands of lives each year and help move our economy forward.”

Officials say the report discovered the United States needs to implement transportation improvements that prioritize safety, provide communities with safe and efficient access to support high quality of life and boost economic productivity.

The report found that the rate of traffic fatalities on Rhode Island's non-Interstate, rural roads is the fourth highest in the nation. It is also nearly three times higher than the fatality rate on all other roads in the state.

In response to the report, Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) spokesperson Charles St. Martin said Governor Gina Raimondo's RhodeWorks program has helped the state move forward with repairing the state's roads and bridges.

"Already, RIDOT has preserved or reconstructed 191 bridges and paved 100 miles of roadway under RhodeWorks," St. Martin said in a statement. "This year will be one of our busiest construction seasons ever, with more than $715 million of active construction in 2019."

In April, RIDOT Director Peter Alviti told Eyewitness News there will be 77 active construction projects statewide the entire season.