

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2019

Group says dozens of region's bridges deficient, including bridges in Clifton Park, Ballston

Federal and state funding programs to expire in the next year

Stephen Williams | @gazettesteve | September 19, 2019



Traffic on the Northway near Saratoga Springs in May. The Sitterly Road bridge over the Northway in Clifton Park was cited.

Photographer: Erica Miller/Daily Gazette Photographer

The Bridge Street bridge stretching 300 feet over the Schoharie Creek in Schoharie was built in 1938, and has been slowly deteriorating for years.

In the near future, it will need to have a posted weight limit, unless millions of dollars are found to repair or replace it, said Schoharie County Public Works Commissioner Dan Crandell.

That makes the bridge like dozens across the Capital Region, which are in poor or structurally deficient condition, according to a [new report](#) released Wednesday at the State Capitol in Albany. According to TRIP, a national non-profit transportation research group, some 68 state or local bridges in the region -- about eight percent of all the region's bridges -- are either structurally deficient or in poor condition.

"We all struggle with the number of bridges built in the 1930s and 1940s," said Crandell, who also serves as co-chair of the legislative committee of the state Association of County Highway Superintendents.

Like TRIP, Crandell said more money is needed for road and bridge repairs, with current transportation infrastructure programs, including the five-year federal transportation bill, due to expire in the next year. Multi-year state funding programs are also due for renewal in the coming year.

The federal FAST Act, a five-year, \$305 billion federal transportation funding bill Congress approved in 2015, expires in 2020, and it isn't yet known what will replace it, as Congress must wrestle with the nation's many transportation needs. For planning purposes, state and local officials would prefer another long-term bill.

"We need a new five-year capital plan, as a minimum," Crandell said. Carolyn Bonifas Kelly, TRIP's associate director of research and communication and author of the report, said state and local departments due a great job maintaining bridges with the funding

they have, but more money is needed. She said "deficient" bridges are safe to travel, but need significant repair or replacement.

Statewide, Kelly said, 10 percent of bridges are considered deficient, a percentage which has stayed pretty steady in recent years. She said 57 percent of the region's 839 bridges are rated as "fair," meaning they are in sound condition but have some deterioration.

In a 2017 report, the Federal Highway Administration estimated that upgrading all of New York state's deficient bridges would cost \$3.6 billion. "New York as a whole has the same problem a lot of states have, which is a funding shortfall," she said.

Heavily-traveled poor or structurally deficient bridges

Municipality	Location	Vehicles per day
Albany	I-90 over Broadway	54,431
Green Island	I-787 over Hudson Ave.	50,508
Coeymans	I-87 over railroad tracks	49,476
East Greenbush	Route 4 over I-90	23,817
Ballston	Route 67 over Mourningkill	16,187
Colonie	Route 7 over I-87	15,510
Clifton Park	Sitterly Rd. over Northway	15,272
Albany	Henry Johnson Blvd. over Sherman St.	15,138
Nassau	I-90 over Route 203	13,274
Troy	Campbell Ave. over Wyantskill	11,405

In a statement, state Senate Transportation Committee Chairman Sen. Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, agreed more funding is needed.

"Taxpayer dollars must be put to work to improve out local communities," Kennedy said. "I will continue to work with local stakeholders and continue to fight for additional funding to improve our roads and bridges."

Based on an analysis that combined both a bridge's rating and the number of vehicles it carries, TRIP said the Capital Region bridge with the greatest need is the Interstate-90 bridge over Broadway in Albany, which carries more than 54,000 vehicles per day.

Also in the list of top deficient and heavily traveled bridges in the region were the state Route 67 bridge over the Mourningkill and under a railroad bridge in Ballston and the Sitterly Road bridge over the Northway in Clifton Park.

Kelly said the list was developed using bridge-rating information compiled to the Federal Highway Administration, based on regular inspections of the bridges.

Good roads and bridges are important to commerce, with 72 percent of all goods in the state being moved by truck, said John Evers, director of government affairs for the Business Council of New York State.

Reach Gazette reporter Stephen Williams at 518-395-3086, swilliams@dailygazette.net or [@gazettesteve](#) on Twitter.