

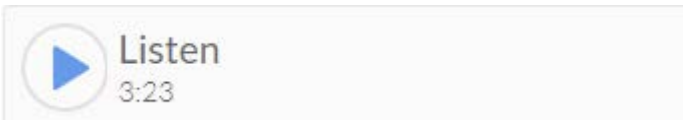
Report: Eight Percent Of Capital Region Bridges Are Deficient

By [Jesse King](#)

[WAMC Northeast Report](#)



The TRIP report says 68 of the 839 bridges in the Capital Region are deficient.



A new report finds 8 percent of bridges in New York's Capital Region are structurally deficient.

The report by the non-profit TRIP, based on Federal Highway Administration data from 2018, identified 68 struggling bridges across Albany, Rensselaer, and Saratoga Counties. TRIP Associate Director of Research and Communication Carolyn Kelly says inspectors checked the decks, substructures, and superstructures of bridges 20 feet and longer.

"These components are assigned a score between zero and nine based on their condition," she explains. "Bridges that receive a score that's below four are deemed to be in poor or structurally deficient condition."

Kelly says those 68 bridges carry roughly 350,000 vehicles a day. Some of the busiest include the four-lane I-90 overpass crossing Broadway in Albany, and the eight-lane I-787 bridge intersecting Hudson Avenue in Green Island. The lowest-scored structure in the Capital Region – Rensselaer's Second Avenue bridge crossing Mill Creek – is closed.

Kelly says all open bridges on the list are safe, and being closely monitored.

"Because of the significant deterioration of the major components of these bridges, they may be posted for lower weight limits or closed if necessary," she says. "Closing these bridges or restricting their weight limits can have a significant impact, and can cause many vehicles, including school buses, emergency response vehicles, farm equipment, and commercial trucks to take costly detours that waste time and money."

Speaking at the state capitol, Kelly is quick to note the deterioration isn't the result of a lack of effort by the state or local DOTs – the problem is lack of funding. The TRIP report says 10 percent of bridges in New York are in poor condition, and the Federal Highway Administration estimates it would cost \$3.6 billion to rehabilitate or replace them all.

Dan Crandell, Commissioner of Public Works for Schoharie County, says many state programs, like the DOT's five-year Capital Plan, are set to expire at the end of the budget year. In other cases, programs lack the funding required of the most serious cases. Crandell recalls one out-of-commission bridge in Schoharie that far surpasses Bridge New York's \$5 million-per-project limit.

"To do a major rehab that would last probably between 10 and 15 years, you're looking at a \$5.5 million project cost," he notes. "To do a total replacement, which would bring it up to current standards so it wouldn't be functionally obsolete, you're looking at about a \$7.5 million project cost."

In a statement, State Senate Transportation Committee Chair Tim Kennedy, a Buffalo-area Democrat, promised to fight for additional funding.

Capital Region Democratic Assemblyman Phil Steck, who is on the Transportation Committee, says a plan is already in place to reinstate a tax on the sale of stocks and bonds – if it can get through the Legislature. He says the Wall Street tax would raise an additional \$13 billion a year for infrastructure programs.

"It's not too much to ask that one-quarter of a percent be allocated to reverse this trend to some extent...because the business of selling stocks and bonds is probably the major industry of this state," says Steck. "I mean, Texas taxes us to bring oil to New York. Why shouldn't we tax Texans who trade in the New York stock market?"

TRIP released a companion report detailing bridge conditions in other areas of the state, like Binghamton, Syracuse, Utica, and the Hudson Valley. You can find more information on the report [here](#).