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New report identifies Tonawanda bridge in list of spans in need of repair or replacement

According to a report by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation research nonprofit organization, 8% of bridges — 20 feet or longer — in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition, including a bridge in the City of Tonawanda.

TRIP says a bridge is rated poor/structurally deficient if there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. The report, named “Preserving Buffalo-Niagara Falls Bridges: The Condition and Funding Needs of Buffalo Niagara Falls Aging Bridge System,” finds that in the Buffalo Niagara Falls area, 91 of the 1,164 bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition. These bridges carry approximately half a million or 501,684 vehicles per day.

Poor/structurally deficient bridges may be posted for lower weight limits or closed if their condition warrants such action. According to the report, deteriorated bridges can have a significant impact on daily life. Restrictions on vehicle weight may cause many vehicles — especially emergency vehicles, commercial trucks, school buses and farm equipment — to use alternate routes to avoid weight-restricted bridges. Redirected trips also lengthen travel time, waste fuel and reduce the efficiency of the local economy, TRIP says.

The bridge that crosses over the Erie Canal on Route 265 in the City of Tonawanda ranked seventh in the list of the 10 most heavily traveled poor/structurally deficient bridges in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area. It was built in 1956.

The report also states that 45%, or 525 bridges of 1,164 locally and state-maintained bridges in the Buffalo-Niagara Falls area have been rated in fair condition. A fair rating indicates that a bridge’s structural elements are sound, but minor deterioration has occurred to the bridge’s deck,

substructure or superstructure. The remaining 47% or 548 of the area’s bridges are rated in good condition.

Statewide, the report states that 10% or 1,757 of 17,521 bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient, while 53% or 9,364 bridges are rated in fair condition. The remaining 37% or 6,400 bridges are in good condition.

“Economic development does not happen without well-designed, well-maintained and well-funded infrastructure,” said Dottie Gallagher, president and CEO of the Buffalo Niagara Partnership. “As the regional chamber of commerce, we know the safe and efficient movement of goods, services and people is at the core of our economy. Buffalo Niagara Partnership members continue to identify the lack of resources to adequately address our infrastructure needs now — and in the future — as a major impediment to economic growth and investment in Buffalo Niagara.”

Each major component of a bridge is rated on a scale of zero to nine, with a score of four or below indicating poor condition. If a bridge receives a rating of four or below for its deck, substructure or superstructure, it is rated as poor/structurally deficient.

“Maintaining safe and stable infrastructure is critically important to all New Yorkers. Every day, thousands of people travel through our state on what are often poor and structurally deficient roads and bridges,” said state Sen. Tim Kennedy, chairman of the New York State Senate Committee on Transportation.

“Now more than ever, we need to ensure that we’re dedicating resources to local infrastructure that is desperately in need of repair and maintenance. Taxpayer dollars must be put to work to improve our local community. I will continue to work with local stakeholders and continue to fight for additional funding to improve our roads and bridges.”