

Report: More than 100 Rochester area bridges deteriorating, need immediate repairs

by Antoinette DelBel



According to a recent report, more than 100 bridges in the Rochester area are rated in poor and structurally deficient condition. The nonprofit fears drivers could be at risk if repairs aren't made soon. (WHAM photo)

Monroe County, N.Y. (WHAM) - Bridge conditions were the focus of a new report that found more than one million cars drive on poor or structurally deficient bridges in Rochester each day.

The report released by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit, looked at bridges 20 feet and longer in Monroe, Livingston, Ontario, Orleans, Wayne and Yates counties. Many of the heavily traveled bridges that need repair or replacement are in Monroe County.

TRIP Policy & Research Director Rocky Moretti said they looked at the conditions of bridges across the state and their safety levels.

"The State of New York and Rochester fall behind the national average with 10 percent of their bridges rated structurally deficient," Moretti said. "The national average is eight percent. Any of those numbers are far too high."

Moretti said of the 1,238 bridges in the Rochester area, 122 need of immediate significant repairs, or could otherwise face weight restrictions or closure.

"Once that happens, that's a significant challenge for a community," he said. "That means you can't get freight, large trucks across. More critically, you can't get fire trucks and large emergency vehicles across. As bridges deteriorate and if that's not arrested soon, then you start to see the local region

choke because these highways and bridges are the backbone of the region's economy."

The deteriorating bridges are a concern for drivers.

Every day, Benita Harper of Rochester drives over a bridge in Brighton that carries 590 over South Clinton Avenue.

"We go over this bridge all the time," Harper said. "Who wants to drive over something that needs major repair? That's crazy."

That Brighton bridge has the highest number of drivers traveling on it every day with an average of 80,929.

"I won't go back over this bridge," said Harper. "I guarantee you, I will take another route."

Cracked concrete and rust can be seen on the side of the bridge that carries 490 over the Erie Canal in Perinton.

Bayleigh Freid, 11, said she rides her bike under the bridge all the time and can see it when she's playing on the basketball court at Kreag Road Park.

"It's honestly really scary looking," Freid said. "It's just really old, and it looks really rusty. It's kind of scary to think if you're driving over it and something bad can happen."

In a statement a DOT spokesperson said safety is a top priority.

The statement reads, "Safety is our top priority and the State Department of Transportation has an aggressive bridge inspection program that requires bridges to be inspected at least once every two years by licensed professional engineers. The majority of the structures featured in the recent report for the Rochester region have been either repaired or replaced in the last two years, are currently under construction or are programmed for repairs. The fact a bridge is categorized as poor condition in the report does not mean that it is unsafe. If a bridge is deemed unsafe as a result of a rigorous inspection, it will be closed to traffic."

Rocky Moretti of TRIP said local, state and federal governments need to adequately fund the bridges and maintain them, so that they don't fall into disrepair and become even more costly to fix.