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Transportation group says 10% of NY bridges rated deficient in some way

Ten percent of bridges in New York state are rated in poor or structurally deficient condition, according to an analysis by a transportation non-profit group that draws attention to public spending on transportation infrastructure.

The report is by TRIP, a Washington-based non-profit organization. Founded in 1971, TRIP says it's a nonprofit organization that researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues. TRIP is sponsored by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, distributors and suppliers; businesses involved in highway and transit engineering and construction; labor unions; and organizations concerned with efficient and safe surface transportation.

"Poor bridge condition ratings negatively impact functionality, time of travel, safety, the local economy and the overall experience of the traveling public," said Dennis Davis, Oneida County commissioner of public works and president of the New York State County Highway Superintendents Association, in a statement from TRIP.

"With many aging bridges more than 70 years old, not to mention tens of thousands of culverts also requiring immediate reconstruction or replacement, we face a situation in desperate need of increased public investment and a concerted effort on the part of all levels of government to address the funding demands of our aging and ailing transportation systems."

TRIP drew bridge condition data in its report is from the Federal Highway Administration's National Bridge Inventory, which was released on Dec. 31. It noted that specific conditions of bridges may have changed as a result of recent work. In the report, bridges and their major components get a numerical rating of zero, for failed, to 9, for excellent. If the lowest rating for one of the four components is less than or equal to four, the

bridge is rated poor or structurally deficient. Five is fair; seven or more is good. A poor or structurally deficient rating means there's significant deterioration of the deck, supports or other major components. Bridges might be posted for lower weight limits or closed if warranted.

The state Department of Transportation says classification as poor does not mean a bridge is unsafe and said bridges are inspected at least every two years.

"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 DOT's communication office said in a statement.

"Four of the DOT bridges cited in the report are scheduled for replacement in the near future, one bridge has been replaced or rehabilitated within the past two years, and one bridge is part of an ongoing two-year contract. 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."

TRIP put the percentage of 487 inventoried bridges in Oneida County — defined as the Utica area — as rated poor or structurally deficient at 11 percent. Other areas ranged from 1 percent on Long Island, to 7 or 8 percent in Albany, Binghamton, Buffalo and New York City, to 10 to 13 percent in Rochester, Syracuse and the Hudson Valley.

In the area, it listed these bridges as the most heavily traveled with a part rated 4 or less:

Interstate 90, also known as the Thruway, over an abandoned railroad route near exit 32 in Westmoreland, built in 1954 and carrying 28,725 vehicles a day;

Route 8 over Route 921 in New Hartford, built in 1967 and carrying 28,519 vehicles.

The Thruway over Route 69 in Whitesboro three miles west of exit 31, built in 1954 and carrying 23,699 vehicles daily;

Route 8 over Route 5 in Utica, built in 1960 and carrying 22,020 vehicles daily. Route 365 over the Thruway in Verona, built in 1954 and carrying 19,283 vehicles daily;

In Rome, the Dominick Street bridge over the Mohawk River was given an average rating of 4.5, for its substructure and 5 for its superstructure. Built in 1929, it carries 12,333 vehicles a day on average, according to TRIP;

Railroad Street's crossing over the Mohawk was also noted by TRIP. Built in 1900, it got a 4.33 overall rating but a 3 for its deck, or surface. It carries 681 vehicles a day;

Among the 25 most heavily used bridges in Oneida County, TRIP listed several as posted with weight limits:

Center Street over the old Erie Canal at Durhamville in Verona, a two-lane bridge built in 1927 carrying 1,237 vehicles daily on average with its superstructure and substructure rated 4;

Main Street over the old Erie Canal in New London, a two-lane bridge built in 1925 carrying 1,324 vehicles daily, its superstructure rated 4;

Brewer Road over Fish Creek 1 mile south of Camden, a two-lane bridge built in 1963 carrying 812 vehicles a day, with its deck and superstructure rated 4;

Germany Road over the old Erie Canal in Verona, a two-lane bridge built in 1927 and carrying 717 vehicles a day, with its deck and superstructure rated 4;

Old Poland Road over Cincinnati Creek in Trenton, a two-lane road built in 1930 and carrying 513 vehicles a day, with its deck rated 4.