

Missouri rural roads and bridges rank poorly, structurally deficient in national report

by Jasmyn Willis | Tuesday, May 12, 2020



America faces \$211 billion backlog in funding needed for repairs and improvements in rural areas according to a press release. (FILE)

MISSOURI — America faces a \$211 billion backlog in funding needed for repairs and improvements in rural areas. This a backlog has taken an incredible hit to Missouri, a state that not only ranked 13th in the nation for having rural pavements in poor condition but also ranked 14th in the nation for poor or structurally deficient rural bridges.

Poor/structurally deficient bridges mean there is significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge. These bridges are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including agricultural equipment, commercial trucks, school buses and emergency services vehicles.

According to a National Transportation Research Nonprofit report (TRIP), the nonprofit addresses deficient roads and bridges, high crash rates, and inadequate connectivity to improve the safety and condition of Missouri's rural roads and bridges.

Improving and modernizing the nation's rural transportation system will require addressing the significant reduction in state transportation revenues,

including motor fuel taxes and tolls. The significant reduction of travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic causes a decrease in fuel taxes and tolls.

State transportation revenues will be reduced by at least 30 percent because of the pandemic. The current federal surface transportation program expires on September 30. It is essential that funding levels are adequate and reliable moving forward.

Associated General Contractors of America CEO Stephen E. Sandherr said the coronavirus has shown how vital roads and bridges are in society.

The report said the rural transportation system is the first and last link in the supply chain from farm to market, connects manufacturers to their customers, supports the tourism industry, and enables the production of energy, food and fiber.

However, in Missouri, 21 percent of rural pavements are in poor condition.

“You cannot stock grocery stores, resupply medical facilities and rebuild our economy on the backs of broken roads and aging bridges. Without new federal funding, we will miss this unique opportunity, with traffic at record lows, to repair our rural roads, protect countless construction jobs and restart our stalled economy,” Sandherr said.

The TRIP report finds that traffic crashes and fatalities on rural non-Interstate roads are disproportionately high, occurring at a rate more than double that on all other roads.

The report said rural Americans are more reliant on the quality of their transportation system than their urban counterparts.