

More than a tenth of ND bridges are considered poor condition



By [Julie Martin](#) | May 13, 2020

A report from the National Transportation Research Nonprofit shows North Dakota rural roads are not meeting standards.

According to the report, 11% of rural bridges in the state are considered in poor condition.

The Department of Transportation says the weight of farm equipment, and other commodity trucking wears down on the roads and bridges that make them structurally deficient.

Every road and bridge in state is given a life expectancy when constructed.

"If you design a road with a 20 year design life, and if there's more traffic than you anticipated and the weight of the truck are a little more than you anticipated than that shortens the life span of that 20 years," said Wayde Swenson, director of operation for the DOT.

Of the 5,000 bridges in the state, 1,800 of them are a part of the state system, the remaining are owned by cities and counties.

If bridges cannot be fixed right away, other adjustments are made.

"Owners will lower the weight limit on the bridge and then over time they continually lower that weight limit until it reaches a point where the bridge really isn't functioning and then a decision needs to be made of closing, removing or replacing the bridge," said Swenson.

Which affects the use of the roads.

"In rural areas this may mean that larger vehicles such as agricultural equipment, school buses, or emergency response vehicles may need to re-route adding valuable time to their trips," said Carolyn Kelly, director of communication and reach for TRIP.

With less motorists on the roadways, funding for projects from the gas tax is taking a hit.

"The lower traffic numbers that were seeing out there, that is a reflection of the monies that do come in for transportation," said Swenson.

But many of the projects around the state are funded by the \$300 million in federal aid North Dakota receives every year.

Swenson said May is the beginning of construction season for the DOT.

He says the DOT will complete nearly 200 projects, and \$400 million worth of work.

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