

Report: Middle Georgia roads fare worse than state overall

by Brittany Miller | Friday, November 20, 2020



MACON, Ga. -- A national transportation research non-profit says Middle Georgia's roads and bridges are concerning.

TRIP is an organization that does state-specific and national reports, taking a hard look at a variety of transportation issues.

The group's "Moving the Middle Georgia Region Forward" report examines road and bridge conditions, traffic safety, congestion, travel, and population trends, and transportation funding needs in Baldwin, Crawford, Houston, Jones, Macon-Bibb, Monroe, Peach, Pulaski, Putnam, Twiggs, and Wilkinson Counties.

Carolyn Kelly, TRIP's Director of Communication & Research, says the goal of the report is to make sure elected officials, as well as the public, understands the conditions of their transportation system. They do this by putting actual numbers and percentages to the potholes and traffic congestion that drivers are experiencing.

The report rates 25 percent of county-maintained roads in the Middle Georgia region as in poor condition. Roads rated "poor" show signs of deterioration, including rutting, cracks, and potholes. In some cases, poor roads can be resurfaced but often are too deteriorated and must be reconstructed.

The state average for poor road conditions is 22 percent.

Roads rated to be in fair condition may have significant wear, along with some visible pavement distress. Most pavement in fair condition can be repaired by resurfacing, according to TRIP, but some may need more extensive reconstruction to return them to good condition.

In Middle Georgia, 42 percent are in fair condition, followed by 33 percent in good condition.

The non-profit says the life cycle of Georgia's roads are greatly affected by state and local governments' ability to perform timely maintenance and upgrades.

They estimate that counties only have about seven percent of the necessary funding to resurface roads and four percent of the funding available that would be needed for road reconstructions.

"The counties estimate that of the money that they would need to spend to keep the roads in good repair and to make all the improvements that they would like to do, they've only got 17 percent of the funding available that would be needed to undertake the improvements," Kelly says.

According to the report, companies often consider the quality of a region's transportation system when deciding whether to relocate or expand there. Areas with congested or poorly maintained roads may see less economic growth, as businesses relocate to areas with smoother, more efficient, and even more modern transportation systems.

Kelly says residents may not consciously realize that the quality of their city's transportation system is directly linked to the quality of life in that area.

"Georgia has seen a significant increase in population and in-vehicle travel and in freight movement in the last decade or so and even before that so it's important that the state has a transportation system that can accommodate that growth that the state is seeing and position the state to continue to grow economically and continue to be an attractive place to live and to work and to do business," she says.

Based on data gathered from the Georgia Department of Transportation, TRIP estimates that in Middle Georgia, 319,000 vehicles travel over deficient bridges every day.

The report says a total of eight percent of locally and state-maintained bridges are rated as deficient. TRIP defines a bridge as 20 feet or more in length.

A bridge is called deficient if it meets at least one of the following criteria: physical condition of a bridge deck, superstructure, or substructure is rated a four or below on a scale of nine, it's restricted to carrying only lighter-weight vehicles, or it only has a carrying capacity of 18 tons or less which restricts it from carrying larger commercial vehicles.

"If they're posted for only lower weight vehicles or closed to traffic because they're deficient, that is an enormous inconvenience for the drivers that live there and can be a drag on the local economy," Kelly explains.

Throughout the 11 Middle Georgia counties:

- 22 bridges received a score of 4 or below for the condition of the bridge deck, superstructure, or substructure.
- 41 bridges have a carrying capacity of 18 tons or less
- 55 bridges are restricted to carrying only lower-weight vehicles

Statewide, ten percent of Georgia's locally and state-maintained bridges are rated in deficient condition. A total of 1,551 out of 14,799.

According to the report, it's estimated that roadway features are likely to contribute to one-third of all fatal traffic crashes. Features like the number of lanes, lane widths, lighting, lane markings, rumble strips, shoulders, guard rails, other shielding devices, median barriers, and intersection design. TRIP believes the severity of serious traffic crashes could be reduced through roadway improvements.

A look at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data showed an average of 90 deaths a year on Middle Georgia Roads since 2014.

[The full report can be found here.](#)