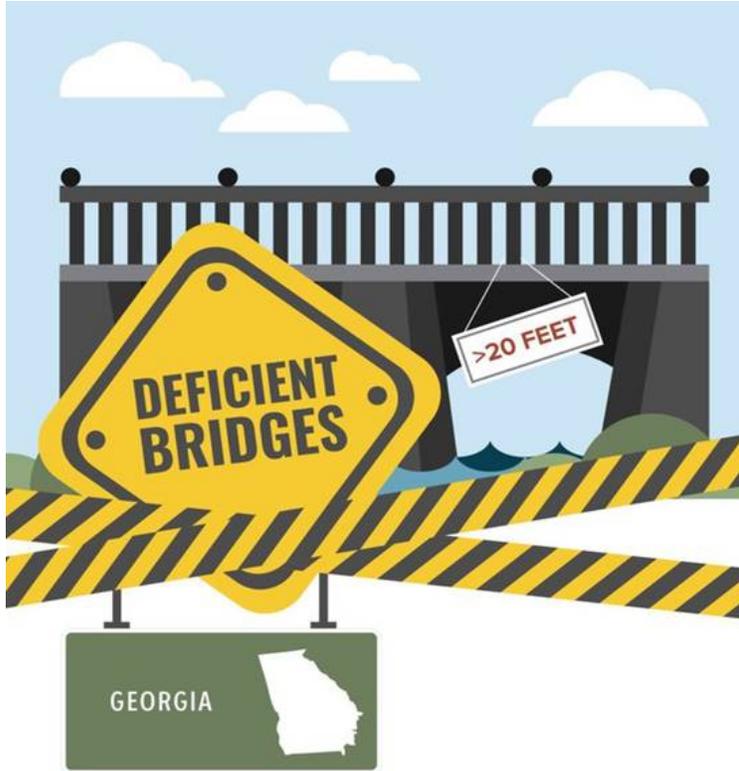


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Report: Six Newton bridges among 20 most deficient in NE Georgia

Officials say county government already working on replacements for most



Graphic provided by TRIP



Tom Spigolon

COVINGTON, Ga. — A national transportation research group has rated six Newton County bridges among the 20 most deficient in northeast Georgia based on condition and usage.

However, Newton County officials say they already are in various stages of working to replace most of the bridges on the list.

Two of the listed Newton County bridges are on Brown Bridge Road and are rated the county's worst because they are classified as deficient and have comparatively high traffic counts.

The remaining Newton County bridges are spread throughout the county and have average traffic counts ranging from 4,000 to 1,700 vehicles per day.

The report is by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that provides and evaluates data on surface transportation issues to help decision-makers and the public to establish funding policies that enhance safety and promote economic development.

TRIP compiled the ratings using a GDOT list of deficient bridges. It then ranked them according to their daily traffic counts, said spokeswoman Carolyn Bonifas Kelly.

Bridges rated as deficient either have significant deterioration of a major component; are restricted to carrying only lighter-

weight vehicles; or have a carrying capacity of 18 tons or less which restricts larger commercial vehicles, the report stated. The most deficient Newton County bridges — and third and fourth worst in the 12-county region — was Brown Bridge Road's bridges over the Yellow River and Snapping Shoals Creek.

The 59-year-old bridge over the Yellow River is 2.5 miles west of Covington and carries an average of 14,220 vehicles per day, according to the report.

Brown Bridge Road's Snapping Shoals Creek bridge is in western Newton County and was built in 1963. It carries an average of 10,410 vehicles per day, the report stated.

However, Newton County government is in the process of acquiring right of way land for replacement bridges for both, said county spokesman Bryan Fazio.

Construction is set to begin on both in 2021, with funding coming from federal and 2007 SPLOST funds, he said.

Others in the top 10 in Newton County are a 61-year-old bridge on Bethany Road at Snapping Shoals Creek; and a 55-year-old structure on Henderson Mill Road crossing Bear Creek one mile north of the Jasper County line.

The Bethany Road bridge was built in 1959 and crosses Snapping Shoals Creek. It carries 4,155 vehicles per day.

The replacement bridge is being designed and will be funded under GDOT's Low Impact Bridge Program, Fazio said.

Projects in the program must meet low impact criteria such as no geometry or grade changes and have low environmental impacts, according to GDOT.

County officials are working on a plan for replacement of Henderson Mill Road's bridge, Fazio said.

GDOT also recently awarded a construction contract on another Newton County bridge listed among the top 20 most deficient bridges.

The County Road 213 bridge over West Bear Creek west of Mansfield will be replaced with a structure 0.256 of a mile in length.

Williams Contracting Co. received the \$1.258 million contract to replace the 64-year-old bridge which is crossed by 1,770 vehicles daily.

Completion is expected by September 2021 and also will be replaced under GDOT's Low Impact Bridge Program.

The county also recommended in a 2018 action plan that the 50-year-old Dial Mill Road bridge over Little Haynes Creek at the Rockdale County line be replaced within the next few years.

The bridge, which is also on the TRIP list, can only handle a maximum of seven tons and "should be an immediate priority due to the traffic volumes experienced on that roadway," the county's plan stated. It carries almost 2,000 vehicles per day.

TRIP's top 10 Northeast Georgia list also included the Jersey-Social Circle Road bridge over the Alcovy River northwest of Social Circle in Walton County; three Clarke County bridges inside the city of Athens; and two Barrow County bridges.