

Deficient Walker County bridges identified, prioritized for repair or replacement

Although seven bridges in Walker County were named among Northwest Georgia's most deficient, according to a report released Nov. 16, one bridge was repaired as the report was compiled, and another is scheduled for replacement.

No bridges in Catoosa County ranked among the region's most deficient bridges.

The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) provided the list of deficient bridges, and rankings were calculated by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit that issued the report. The report includes a list of the 40 most deficient bridges in the Northwest Georgia region, based on the number of categories in which a bridge ranked deficient and average daily traffic.

"One of the bridges on the TRIP list, East Armuchee, was closed for rehabilitation this spring," Joe Legge, Walker County public relations director, said. "Crews repaired the footer, and the bridge has since reopened. Another bridge on the TRIP list, Euclid Road, is scheduled for replacement by the state in 2026."

The report, "Moving the Northwest Georgia Region Forward: Road and Bridge Conditions, Traffic Safety, Travel Trends and Funding Needs in the Northwest Georgia Region," is one of a series of 12 regional reports that examines travel and population trends, road and bridge conditions, traffic safety, congestion, and transportation funding needs in the Northwest Georgia Region, which is located in the northwest corner of the state and includes the following 15 counties: Bartow, Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Fannin, Floyd, Gilmer, Gordon, Haralson, Murray, Paulding, Pickens, Polk, Walker and Whitfield.

In addition to the bridge on Euclid Road at West Chickamauga Creek, which is slated for replacement, and the bridge at East Armuchee Road at East Armuchee Creek, which has been repaired, the following Walker County bridges were named to the list: Salem Road at Dry Creek, Straight Gut Road at Crawfish Creek, West Cove Road at Mill Creek Tributary, Red Belt Road at West Chickamauga Creek, and Chattanooga Valley Road at Rock Creek.

"There are at least three bridges in Walker County targeted for replacement over the next couple of years, as part of GDOT's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program," Legge said. "They include Old Trion Highway at Dry Creek, US-27 at West Chickamauga Creek, and Hog Jowl Road at Shaw Branch.

"The bridge on Hog Jowl Road at Voiles Creek was replaced earlier this year," he stated. "There is also a bridge on Captain Wood Road currently being replaced."

Chattooga County bridges named to the list are on Lylerly Dam Road at the Chattooga River, Oakhill Road at Mosteller Creek, Oakhill Road at Broomtown Creek and Center Post Road at the Chattooga River. The bridge at Old Cloverdale Road at Lookout Creek was the only Dade County bridge named to the list.

"A robust and reliable transportation system that is maintained in good condition, can accommodate large commercial vehicles, and is reliable and safe is vital to the quality of life of the Northwest Georgia region's residents, the success and growth of businesses, and the positive experience of its visitors," said Dave Kearby, TRIP's executive director.

TRIP surveyed Georgia counties in late 2019 and early 2020 for condition and funding needs of their transportation system. According to results of that

survey, 29% of county-maintained roads in the Northwest Georgia region are in poor condition. Current funding will only allow for 15% of the miles of county-maintained roads in need of resurfacing and 10% of county-maintained roads in need of reconstruction, to be addressed this year. In fact, the amount anticipated to be spent by Northwest Georgia area county governments in 2020 on highways and bridges is only 51% of the total amount needed.

"In 2018, our great team at GDOT finished over 90% of our projects under budget, even as we've seen tremendous political leadership in taking Georgia's transportation infrastructure investment to the next level," GDOT Commissioner Russell McMurry said. "All the same, as one of the fastest growing states in America, we know that our future needs far outstretch the available public resources," McMurry said. "The data in these reports really helps quantify that need in a clear, concise way that will enable us to make wise strategic decisions about future investments."

According to the TRIP report, 15% (257 of 1,748) of locally and state-maintained bridges in the Northwest Georgia region are rated as deficient. Bridges that are rated as deficient meet at least one of the following criteria: significant deterioration of a major component of the bridge, restriction to carrying only lighter-weight vehicles or a carrying capacity of 18 tons or less which restricts larger commercial vehicles.

"We have a very good working relationship with GDOT's Bridge Division," Legge said. "Every other year, GDOT examines all of our bridges with a 20-foot span or longer and inspects those classified as deficient every year. We work diligently to address public safety issues when brought to the county's attention by one of GDOT's inspectors.

"There are several bridges in Walker County that need major work or replaced altogether," he said. "GDOT is actively conducting bridge inspections in the county and their findings will help us prioritize funding for future repairs."

In the Northwest Georgia region, 83 bridges have significant deterioration to one of the major components, 158 bridges have a carrying capacity of 18 tons or less, and 209 bridges are restricted to carrying only lower-weight vehicles.

"Northwest Georgia sits on one of the busiest freight corridors in the Southeast, and as such, we are tremendously grateful for the progress Georgia has made over the last decade," said Jeanne Kruger, president and CEO of the Rome Floyd Chamber.

"Transportation investment, improvement and expansion is a critical component of workforce growth and

economic development success in our community, and we are excited to continue that progress into the future," she said. "That continued success begins with awareness of opportunities for growth, as this report clearly demonstrates."

A total of 726 people were killed in traffic crashes in the Northwest Georgia region from 2014-2018, an average of 145 fatalities per year. The Northwest Georgia region's traffic fatality rate of 1.29 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2018 was higher than the statewide fatality rate of 1.14.

Improving safety on Georgia's roadways can be achieved through further improvements in vehicle safety; improvements in driver, pedestrian and bicyclist behavior; and a variety of improvements in roadway safety features.

Reliable highway access is critical to the economic development of the Northwest Georgia Region. At a time when a significant increase in freight deliveries are forecast for Georgia, the quality of the region's transportation system will have a significant impact on its ability to attract economic development.

Every year, \$843 billion in goods are shipped to and from sites in Georgia, mostly by trucks. Seventy-six percent of freight delivered to or from sites in Georgia are shipped by truck and another 14% are shipped by multiple modes, including trucking. The value of freight shipped to and from sites in Georgia, in inflation-adjusted dollars, is expected to increase 115% by 2045 and by 89% for goods shipped by trucks

But, the ability of the Northwest Georgia region's freight transportation system to efficiently and safely accommodate the growing demand for freight movement could be hampered by deficient roads and bridges, including bridges that are not able to carry large commercial vehicles.

The report is at https://tripnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/TRIP_Moving_Georgia_Forward_Report_Northwest_Georgia_November_2020.pdf.

MOST DEFICIENT BRIDGES (Walker County)

This chart shows the Walker County bridges on a ranking of the 40 most deficient bridges (carrying a minimum of 500 vehicles per day) in the Northwest Georgia region based on the number of categories where the bridge ranked "deficient" (P = Moving Georgia Forward 6 physical condition of deck, superstructure or substructure based on a rating of 4 or below for its deck, substructure or superstructure; C = the carrying capacity of the bridge is 18 tons or less; R = the bridge is restricted to only carrying lighter-weight vehicles), and average daily traffic (ADT). The East Armuchee Road bridge (*) was repaired before the completed report was released.

Deficiency	Rank	Facility Carried	Feature Intersected	Location	Year Built	ADT
PCR	9	East Armuchee Road*	East Armuchee Creek	1.5 mi. south of Villanow	1973	1,365
PCR	10	Salem Road	Dry Creek	Just west of Rossville	1930	1,185
PCR	11	Straight Cut Road	Crawfish Creek	8.9 mi. north of LaFayette	1923	1,185
PCR	28	West Cove Road	Mill Creek Trib.	8.2 mi. west of LaFayette	1934	600
CR	34	Red Belt Road	West Chickamauga Creek	1.6 mi. NE of Chickamauga	1980	3,870
CR	35	Chattanooga Valley	Rock Creek	6.1 mi. NW of Chickamauga	1955	3,360
CR	36	Euclid Road	West Chickamauga Creek	1.3 mi. SE of Chickamauga	1965	3,300