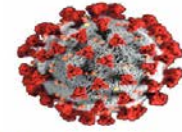


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COVID-19 IN DOUGLAS 4,965 — confirmed cases 82 — confirmed deaths

Report: More funding needed for road and bridge upkeep; Two Douglas bridges rated as 'deficient'

By MICHAEL O'HEARN FOR THE SENTINEL More funding is needed to keep up with repairs and improvements to the county's roads and bridges, according to a report from a national transportation research group.

Douglas County has two of the 40 most deficient bridges in the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) according to a report for the 10-county area from the national Transportation Research Information Program (TRIP) nonprofit.

TRIP conducted the study between December 2019 and February 2020. The organization, which issued similar reports for other regions in the state, examined ARC travel and population trends, road and bridge conditions, traffic safety, congestion, and transportation funding needs.

These reports, as well as interviews with the reports' authors and infographics, can be found online at tripnet.org/reports/moving-georgia-forward-november-2020/.

The report includes a list of the top 40 most deficient bridges in the region. The Douglas County bridges on that list are:

- Burnt Hickory Road over Interstate 20
· Prestley Mill Road over Interstate 20

Both bridges were built in 1962. The report did not indicate whether the defects of these bridges are safety hazards at this time.

Deteriorating bridges such as those found in Douglas County can have several negative impacts on a region, the report says. These include emergency vehicles searching for new routes while responding to calls, and the ability to ship commercial goods to an area because its bridges and roads are not capable of carrying large commercial vehicles.

"Each day, 2.6 million vehicles travel over deficient bridges in the Atlanta region," the report said. "Bridges that are deficient may be posted for lower weight limits, or closed if their condition warrants such action. Deteriorated bridges can have a significant impact on daily life."

There are more than 2,500 bridges in the Atlanta region, and the study said that 6% of these locally and state-maintained bridges are rated as "deficient." That means these bridges either have significant deterioration of a major component, a restriction to carrying only lighter-weight vehicles or have a carrying capacity of 18 tons or less.

The report said that every dollar of road and bridge maintenance that is put off costs an additional \$4 to \$5 in needed future repairs.

"The service life of bridges can be extended by performing routine maintenance such as resurfacing decks, painting surfaces, ensuring that a facility has good drainage and replacing deteriorating components," the report said. "But most bridges will eventually require more costly reconstruction or major rehabilitation to remain operable."

The ARC is composed of Douglas, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties and the city of Atlanta.

TRIP gathered the information for their report using surveys from county government officials and data from federal and state agencies like the Georgia Department of Transportation, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the Federal Highway Administration. The group created 12 regional reports titled "Moving Georgia Forward" with their findings and presented them this month to transportation committee members of the state legislature and the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. The report for the ARC was released Nov. 16.

The report also includes traffic information for the region, which was home to 4.6 million residents in 2018, an increase of 12% since 2010. Vehicle travel within the region totaled 52 billion miles that year, an increase of 7% since 2015.

Each year, \$843 billion in goods are shipped to and from sites across Georgia, mostly by trucks, according to TRIP data. Approximately three-quarters of this freight is shipped by truck, and TRIP says the value of this freight is expected to increase 115% in the next 25 years.

"The life cycle of Georgia's roads is greatly affected by state and local governments' ability to perform timely maintenance and upgrades to ensure that road and highway surfaces last as long as possible," the report said.

TRIP's study found that 24% of county-maintained roads in the Atlanta region are in poor condition, 26% are in fair condition, and half are in good shape. However, the report indicates that current county budgets in the Atlanta region will allow

Thumbnail version of the newspaper page with multiple headlines: 'County begins third recount of the presidential vote', 'Study provides roadmap to cure Villa Rica traffic snarls', 'Douglas County High graduate Bogstie to join Space Force'.

officials to resurface only 14% of the road miles that need repairs. Meanwhile, county leaders can only reconstruct 10% of the miles in need of rehabilitation. The survey also said that county governments will only be able to spend 72% of the total amount needed annually this year to make "significant progress toward achieving a state of good repair" for these roads, bridges, and highways. "Roads rated in poor condition may show signs of deterioration, including rutting, cracks and potholes," the report said. "In some cases, poor roads can be resurfaced but often are too deteriorated and must be reconstructed."