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Report: Funding falls short for region's road fixes

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The Turner McCall Bridge over the Etowah River, originally built in 1956, is set for replacement with bidding in 2022. The project is estimated to cost about \$9 million, according to GDOT official Albert Shelby during a Rome Floyd Chamber business breakfast in Wednesday, Sept. 18, 2019.

Katelyn Adams, File

Two of Gordon County's bridges made the top 40 list of the worst in Northwest Georgia in a new report released by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit.

["Moving the Northwest Georgia Region Forward"](#) is one of 12 regional reports that examines travel and population trends, road and bridge conditions, traffic safety, congestion, and transportation funding needs in Georgia.

Every bridge in the region that's 20 feet long or longer is rated as deficient, according to the report.

While Bartow County has just two on the top 40 worst list, the Sugar Valley Road bridge across Nancy Creek in Cartersville holds the top spot.

Polk County also has two; four bridges each in Floyd and Chattooga counties made the list; and Walker County has seven. The other counties in the region are Catoosa, Dade, Fannin, Gilmer, Haralson, Murray, Paulding, Pickens and Whitfield.

"What I like about TRIP is they utilize a lot of data sets," Georgia Transportation Commissioner Russell McMurry told members of the state board last week.

"They do a very good job ... (the report) is something we rely on as well," he said.

TRIP conducted its survey in late 2019 and early 2020 and determined 29% of the county-maintained roads are in poor condition. However, there's only enough funding programmed this year to address 15% of the miles that need to be resurfaced and 10% of the roads in need of reconstruction.

"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," a Nov. 16 news release states.

Of the 1,748 local and state bridges surveyed in the region, 257 are rated as deficient in their physical condition or carrying

capacity. TRIP calculated its rankings based on the number of areas a bridge is deficient and the average daily traffic.

◆ Gordon County's two bridges are in the lower half of the list. The Battle Road structure over Rocky Creek, near the Floyd County line, came in at No. 23. Built in 1960, it has physical as well as capacity deficiencies, but it only sees an average of 735 vehicles a day.

The bridge on U.S. 41 over Lynn Creek, south of Calhoun, carries an estimated 11,070 cars a day and is restricted to only lighter-weight vehicles. It was built in 1949 and is listed at No. 30.

◆ Floyd County has two in the top 10. The Walnut Avenue bridge over the Norfolk Southern tracks came in at No. 4. It was built in 1974 and carries an average of 4,815 vehicles a day. The Plainville Road bridge over Woodward Creek near Shannon is No. 8.

Lower on the list, and with less traffic, are the Gaines Loop and Bells Ferry Road bridges over Woodward Creek. All four bridges have physical issues as well as weight limitations.

◆ Polk County's College Street bridge over the CSX tracks in South Cedartown, built in 1918, comes in at No. 3. It carries an average of 5,175 vehicles a day.

The North College Street bridge over a Cedar Creek tributary in North Cedartown is listed as No. 33. Its issue is carrying capacity, with over 5,600 vehicles crossing each day.

◆ Chattooga County's four bridges are in the top half of the list. Two are on Oak Hill Road near Lyerly, over Mosteller Creek and Broomtown Creek.

Bridges over the Chattooga River, on Lyerly Dam Road and on Center Post Road near Trion also are among the region's most deficient.

◆ In Bartow County, the Station Road bridge over Oothkalooga Creek in Adairsville has carrying capacity issues and is rated 37th out of the 40 on the list. The Sugar Valley Road bridge, which gets an average of 9,480 vehicles a day, also has a low rating for its physical condition.

◆ Walker County comes in 9th, 10th and 11th, with bridges on East Armuchee Road near Villanow, Salem Road near Rossville and Straight Cut Road over Crawfish Creek north of LaFayette. Lower down are bridges on West Cove Road west of LaFayette and — near Chickamauga — Red Belt Road, Chattanooga Valley and Euclid Road.

The report notes that, at a time when Georgia is expecting a significant increase in freight deliveries, the quality of the region's transportation system will affect its ability to attract economic development.

A 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, in the release.