

The Herald-Dispatch

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 2021

Report: WV interstate highway bridges, pavement among worst in US

HD Media



Workers with the West Virginia Division of Highways inspect the Chelyan Bridge in this May 2021 file photo. The current bridge was built in 1997, replacing a span first built in 1929. The nearly 7,000 bridges in West Virginia are required to be inspected every two years for safety, according to a news release.

KENNY KEMP | HD Media

CHARLESTON — West Virginia has the most deteriorated interstate highway bridges in the U.S. and ranks among the worst in the country for percentage of interstate pavement in poor condition, a report released Tuesday by a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation research nonprofit organization found.

Released to mark the 65th anniversary of the U.S. interstate system, the report by TRIP found that 13% of interstate bridges in West Virginia are in poor or structurally deficient condition.

It also found that 3% of interstate pavement in West Virginia is in poor condition, tying it for 20th worst in the U.S.

“The U.S. Interstate system has a persistent and growing backlog of physical and operational deficiencies as a result of age, heavy use and deferred reinvestment, and is in need of major reconstruction and modernization,” the report states.

It concludes that in order to adequately maintain the interstate highway system, annual investment should be increased from \$23 billion in 2018 to \$57 billion annually over the next 20 years.

TRIP quotes Mike Clowser, chairman of the West Virginia Business and Industry Council (BIC) and executive director of the Contractors Association of West Virginia, saying, “The state’s businesses require a safe and modern transportation system to move goods and services. Quick passage of a new federal highway bill will allow West Virginia to address its critical transportation infrastructure needs.”

In March, a TRIP report found that 31% of West Virginia’s primary roads are in poor condition and 24% are in mediocre condition, based on an analysis of Federal Highway Administration data. That study concluded that deteriorated, congested, and unsafe roads and bridges cost metro Charleston drivers an average of \$1,280 a year in extra costs for vehicle repairs, wasted fuel and lost time.

For metro Huntington drivers, that annual additional cost is slightly less, averaging \$1,273, the TRIP report determined.

Founded in 1971, TRIP is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit group supported by manufacturing, insurance, construction, labor and engineering organizations. The group’s name is not an acronym.