

Louisiana's rural roads rated 15th worst in nation, according to new report



Vehicles travel on LA 43 near the Greensburg corporate limit, Wednesday, May 27, 2020 in St. Helena Parish, La.

STAFF PHOTO BY HILARY SCHEINUK

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One out of three of Louisiana's rural roads are in "mediocre" or "poor" condition, according to a report from a Washington, D.C., nonprofit that studies surface transportation.

The [report](#), issued by research outfit TRIP, rated 15% of Louisiana's rural roads as poor, the 15th highest in the nation. About 21% of Louisiana's rural roads received a mediocre rating.

The state's rural bridges didn't fare much better: 14% of them were rated "poor" or "structurally deficient."

The report from TRIP, a nonprofit sponsored by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, distributors, labor unions and other organizations that advocate for reliable roads, comes as billions in federal and state dollars are being aimed at roads and other transportation infrastructure.

Funds from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act — about \$6 billion of which are expected to flow to Louisiana — could help relieve the state's \$14 billion backlog of road and bridge projects, the report notes.

About \$1 billion is marked to upgrade the state's more than 12,000 bridges. About \$270 million of that will be used to upgrade bridges owned by parishes or municipalities.

"The lack of funding from the past is catching up with us today," said Rodney Mallett, a spokesman for the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development. The federal funds combined with some from the Legislature are sorely needed, he said.

"We are starting to see improvements in those areas now," Mallett said.

Poor roads in rural areas have detrimental impacts on key supply chains, including agriculture and manufacturing, the report notes.

"The health of the nation's economy and the safety and quality of life in America's small communities and rural areas ride on our rural transportation system," said Dave Kearby, TRIP executive director.

The report, which was based on a number of government and industry reports and data, also notes that Louisiana's rural roads see twice as many [fatality crashes](#) as non-rural roads in the state. According to the report, there were 341 fatalities on Louisiana's non-interstate rural roads in 2020.

Roads in rural areas frequently have more hazards like narrow lanes, sharp curves and pavement drop-offs than roads in urban areas, the report notes.