

# The Times-Tribune

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## Local bridges generally in better condition but more funding needed, research group says

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This bridge on Elm Street in Scranton connects West Side to South Side and goes over the Lackawanna River. CHAD SEBRING/STAFF PHOTO

Structural conditions of bridges in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area have generally improved over the past decade from increased federal and state funding for repair and replacement projects, mirroring statewide trends, according to a **report released Thursday** by a national nonprofit transportation research organization.

But future funding would have to increase and keep pace with inflation to maintain and build on progress, the report by a Washington, D.C.-based organization called **TRIP** says.

"The health and future growth of Pennsylvania's economy is riding on its transportation system," the report says. Freight moved annually by trucks in Pennsylvania from 2022 to 2050 is expected to increase 57% by weight and 98% by value, which would be the 14th largest projected increase in the nation, according to the report.

Based on **Federal Highway Administration** data on bridges, the TRIP report's findings include:

- Bridge conditions in Pennsylvania have improved steadily from 2013-2023, with the number of poor bridges decreasing 42% as a result of increased state and federal funding.
- Pennsylvania's share of bridges in poor condition in the nation decreased from 23% in 2013 — the highest in the U.S. at that time — to 13% in 2023, the sixth highest.
- That 13% (2,835 of 22,043) of Pennsylvania's locally and state-maintained bridges rated in poor condition represents "a significant

improvement" from 23% in 2013. However, 13% of bridges in poor condition is nearly double the national average of 7%.

- Of 962 bridges in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area, 215 are in poor condition (22%), 418 are in fair condition (43%) and 329 are in good condition (34%).
- 1.35 million vehicles travel daily over bridges in poor condition in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area.

- The 22% of bridges in poor condition in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area is far higher than 13% statewide and percentages in other metro areas: Erie, Harrisburg, Lehigh Valley, each 10%; Pittsburgh, 12%; and Philadelphia, 14%.

### Busiest local bridges in poor condition

Luzerne County has four of the top five most-heavily-traveled bridges that are in poor condition in the two NEPA counties. All five remain open to traffic. The following includes: county; road carried; feature intersected; location; year built; number of lanes; and average daily traffic.

1. Luzerne: Route 309 Cross Valley; Toby Creek; Courtdale; 1963; four lanes; 37,437.
2. Luzerne: Route 309 Cross Valley; Toby Creek; Courtdale; 1963; four lanes; 34,437. (Route 309 Cross Valley goes over winding Toby Creek in several locations.)
3. Lackawanna: Route 6006; over Route 11; Scranton; 1963; two lanes; 34,701.
4. Luzerne: Route 309; Toby Creek; Kingston; 1928; four lanes; 31,449.
5. Luzerne: Route 309; Ramp A/Route 8039; Luzerne borough; 1980; four lanes; 29,899.

### Local bridges with the worst conditions

Among the two counties, Lackawanna has three of the five bridges with the lowest average structural rating for deck, substructure and superstructure, and carrying at least 500 vehicles a day:

1. Luzerne: North Washington Street; Luzerne and Susquehanna RR; 100 feet NE of East Chestnut Street; built in 1929; two lanes; 1,000 ADT; bridge is closed.
2. Lackawanna: Elm Street; Lackawanna River; 500 feet NW of South Washington

Avenue; 1958; two lanes; 11,900; weight limit posted.

3. Lackawanna: West Lackawanna Avenue; Norfolk Southern and Delaware-Lackawanna RR; 500 feet NW of Seventh Avenue; 1972; four lanes; 10,700; weight-limit posted.
4. Lackawanna: Parker Street; Lackawanna River; 900 feet east of North Main Avenue; 1964; one lane; 2,110; weight-limit posted; currently under demolition and reconstruction.
5. Luzerne: Water Street; Susquehanna River/Luzerne and Susquehanna RR; Pittston/West Pittston; 1914; two lanes; 8,665; closed.

Dan DeBone, president and CEO of the Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce, who was a speaker in TRIP's news conference held via Zoom to release the report, called for support of Gov. Josh Shapiro's transit funding plan. Structurally deficient bridges having weight limits could hamper economic development efforts by deterring business or industry, DeBone said. TRIP researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues. TRIP is sponsored by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, distributors and suppliers; businesses involved in highway and transit engineering and construction; labor unions; and organizations concerned with efficient and safe surface transportation. For information, see [tripnet.org](http://tripnet.org).

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This bridge on Elm Street in Scranton connects West Side to South Side and goes over the Lackawanna River. CHAD SEBRING/STAFF PHOTO



The Parker Street bridge in Scranton is currently having work done. CHAD SEBRING/STAFF PHOTO



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I-84 twin bridges on Interstate 84 in Lackawanna County on April 5, 2022, amid a replacement project. TIMES TRIBUNE FILE  
JASON FARMER



A bridge carrying Suscon Road over Interstate 81 in Pittston Twp. under construction on Jan. 26, 2023. TIMES-TRIBUNE FILE  
JOSE MARCANO