

STATE TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY RUMBAUGH TAKES PART IN TRIP REPORT PRESENTATION

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MORGANTOWN, W.Va. — The work to improve West Virginia roadways appears to be an ongoing battle that state leaders hope to try and tackle in 2025.

New West Virginia Secretary of Transportation Todd Rumbaugh took part in a presentation of a report issued by national transportation research nonprofit TRIP, where he reaffirmed a “crucial” need to address road and highway infrastructure in the Mountain State. His statement followed the release of details in the report that mentioned that over 30 percent of West Virginia roads, regardless of size, have been determined to be in an insufficient state despite billions of dollars worth of investments.

“It really echoes and shows that the investments we’ve made have, while they have helped, it is not adequate,” said Rumbaugh after the presentation of the TRIP report on Tuesday.

Along with the concern regarding state roads and highways that are considered either below-par or are in a state of desperate repair, Rumbaugh also pointed out data points he considered concerning related to Mountain State bridges. According to the report by TRIP based on data collected at the end of 2024, 19 percent of West Virginia’s approximately 7,200 bridges are in poor or structurally deficient condition. This is despite the State

DOT reporting that 1,231 Roads to Prosperity projects are being completed out of a proposed 1,320 and West Virginia being the recipient of over \$3 billion in federal funding since 2017 and the Roads to Prosperity bond vote, which added an extra \$1.6 billion in funding. While factors such as inflation played a role in having those numbers only slightly improve over the past half decade, Rumbaugh expressed a need for state departments to improve on efficiency moving forward.

“Our goals are to get our good roads level increased and to decrease the poor structures,” said Rumbaugh. “We hope to work over that and concentrate on those areas over the next four years.”

While the main focus of the TRIP report discussed West Virginia roads as a whole, Rumbaugh took the time to point out several infrastructure developments that are expected to take place around the North Central part of the state over the next couple of years. In particular, he pointed out efforts that have been undertaken by the State Department of Highways to address several dozen bridges that were classified as insufficient, particularly around portions of Interstates 79 and 68. With large-scale projects such as the Exit 155 project moving forward at the same time, the North Central region is expected to see a lot of the DOH in the next few years.

“Currently on I-79, from Bridgeport up to Morgantown on I-68, all those bridges along through there, we are working to replace,” said Rumbaugh. “And we’re widening them to six lanes, so that will continue for the next year or two.”

Rumbaugh emphasized a goal for the State Department of Transportation to continue the efforts started back in 2017 as part of the Roads to Prosperity Program implemented by then Governor Jim Justice. This will include the continued use of the remaining bond funds remaining as part of the initial \$1.6 billion bond vote as well as expanded uses of private sector companies to improve on road maintenance approved by the state legislature in recent years. With a new transportation secretary in charge and a continued need to address roads statewide, the State Department of Transportation appears ready to face the ongoing challenges facing Mountain State roads.

“A few areas of the state are growing, and that’s a great thing, but it does create a congestion problem,” said Rumbaugh. “And we realize that we need to work on these areas also to get ahead of the game where we can.”