

Report: Pittsburgh-area roads, bridges need more funding to improve conditions, safety



By WPXI.com News Staff

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PITTSBURGH — A new report from a Washington, D.C.-based transportation research nonprofit found that Pittsburgh-area roads and bridges need more funding in order to improve conditions and safety.

TRIP's report, entitled "Pennsylvania's Local Roads & Bridges: Providing a Modern, Sustainable Local Transportation System in the Keystone State," looks at pavement and bridge conditions, as well as traffic fatality rates

on Pennsylvania's local roads.

Local roads in the report are defined as any roads that aren't part of the National Highway System.

"Pennsylvania's local roads and bridges are the backbone of the state's transportation network and will require adequate, sustained investment and improvements in order to continue providing mobility and economic opportunity for Pennsylvania's residents and businesses," said TRIP Executive Director Dave Kearby.

TRIP's report projects that a lack of transportation funding, increasing construction costs and changing transportation demands will cause local roads to decline and hurt the economy.

Gas-tax revenues continue to decline as cars get more efficient and more people choose to drive electric vehicles. Thus, the report says that conditions will decline on all state-owned roads and bridges, especially local bridges.

As PennDOT gives more resources to maintaining NHS routes to federally mandated standards, the local state-owned roadways will continue to suffer, the report says.

Due to highway construction inflation, Pennsylvania's motor fuel tax does not have the impact it once did, the report adds.

But driving rates in Pennsylvania haven't slowed down, with the annual vehicle miles traveled in the state increasing 3% from 2023 to 2024, reaching 103 million miles.

TRIP's report says that 38% of local roads are in poor condition in the Pittsburgh area, which includes Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Lawrence, Washington and Westmoreland counties. Another 23% are in fair condition, 24% in good condition and 15% in excellent condition.

In the same area, 15% of bridges maintained by PennDOT and local governments are in poor/structurally deficient condition. Another 50% are in fair condition and the remaining 34% are in good condition.

A poor/structurally deficient rating means there's significant deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components, the report says. These bridges may be posted for lower weight limits or closed, significantly impacting traffic.

A total of 5,808 people were killed in traffic crashes in Pennsylvania between 2019 and 2023, TRIP's report says. In Pittsburgh, the traffic fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled was 1.33.

Bettering safety on Pennsylvania's roads can be done through vehicle safety enhancements, behavioral improvements and the addition of appropriate roadway safety features, the report says.