

Fixing it First

America's infrastructure is showing its age. Our nation's roads, highways and bridges have increasingly received failing scores on maintenance and upkeep. For the nation's bridges, lack of maintenance can result in the sudden closure of a critical transportation link or, far worse, a collapse that results in lost lives and a significant loss in regional economic productivity.

More than 69,000 structurally deficient U.S. bridges span across the federally supported highway system, monuments of our nation's past prosperity and evidence of its misplaced priorities in recent years. Congress needs to declare the repair of these bridges to be an urgent priority, dedicate funding to their repair, and ensure that states are accountable for repairing these vital assets and knocking down the repair backlog. In addition to building shared prosperity for the future, prioritizing bridge repair will add thousands of jobs that our economy needs.

The repair backlog is tremendous. Every minute of every day, an American driver crosses a bridge somewhere in the U.S. that is "structurally deficient" according to government standards. One out of every four bridges in Pennsylvania is likely to be deficient, for a total of 5,906 deficient bridges. An unacceptable 26.5 percent of bridges statewide are rated structurally deficient, compared to 11.5 percent nationwide.

According to 2009 inspection data and costs, Pennsylvania would need \$7.81 billion to bring all of our bridges into a state of good repair. By comparison, Pennsylvania spent \$464 million total on bridge repair and replacement in 2008. There's a clear need for robust investment in repairing and replacing our bridges.

Out of 50 states and the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania ranks worst nationally in terms of the overall condition of the state's bridges.

Prioritizing repair could save billions of dollars in the future while creating thousands of additional jobs today. Past underinvestment in repair and diversion of maintenance funds toward building new highways does more than allow existing roads and bridges to slip into disrepair. It also ultimately costs state and local governments billions more than would the cost of regular, timely repair. Over a 25-year period, deferring maintenance of bridges and highways can cost three times as much as preventative repairs. "Fixing it first" is also a smarter investment for creating jobs: repair work on roads and bridges generates 16 percent more jobs than new bridge and road construction.

Regardless of the amount of wear and tear experienced by a specific bridge, most bridges are designed to last roughly 50 years. The average age of bridges in the U.S. is 42 years old.

Pennsylvania’s bridges are an average of 53 years old. Because of this, the number of “structurally deficient” Pennsylvania bridges is virtually guaranteed to increase in the coming years as a wave of old bridges further overextend their designed lives. More than 11,395 Pennsylvania bridges are already 50 years old or older.

Preserving Pennsylvania’s existing transportation system is crucial to ensuring safety, prosperity and a higher quality of life. The economic costs of neglect are simply too high. It is time for our elected leaders to put Americans to work shoring up our infrastructure and ensuring Americans get the most bang for our transportation buck.

Pennsylvania Counties, sorted by number of deficient bridges

County	Number of Bridges	Number of structurally deficient bridges	Percent of bridges that are structurally deficient
Allegheny	1236	331	26.80%
Montgomery	740	232	31.40%
Washington	615	199	32.40%
Bucks	656	198	30.20%
Lancaster	748	198	26.50%
Westmoreland	588	172	29.30%
Berks	636	168	26.40%
Schuylkill	361	151	41.80%
Philadelphia	583	149	25.60%
Clearfield	286	129	45.10%
Chester	609	129	21.20%
Butler	372	128	34.40%
Fayette	369	127	34.40%
Monroe	297	119	40.10%
York	539	116	21.50%
Luzerne	434	115	26.50%
Lawrence	257	112	43.60%
McKean	216	104	48.10%
Somerset	419	101	24.10%
Bedford	408	100	24.50%
Crawford	388	99	25.50%
Indiana	308	98	31.80%
Lehigh	371	98	26.40%
Bradford	391	98	25.10%
Greene	302	97	32.10%
Mercer	431	95	22.00%
Potter	188	90	47.90%
Armstrong	265	88	33.20%
Beaver	277	88	31.80%

County	Number of Bridges	Number of structurally deficient bridges	Percent of bridges that are structurally deficient
Blair	336	88	26.20%
Susquehanna	265	77	29.10%
Lackawanna	345	77	22.30%
Delaware	355	77	21.70%
Lycoming	460	77	16.70%
Adams	245	75	30.60%
Centre	349	70	20.10%
Tioga	409	69	16.90%
Wayne	246	68	27.60%
Dauphin	435	67	15.40%
Northampton	341	65	19.10%
Franklin	282	63	22.30%
Cambria	282	61	21.60%
Erie	427	61	14.30%
Huntingdon	236	60	25.40%
Cumberland	335	60	17.90%
Warren	212	58	27.40%
Clarion	184	57	31.00%
Juniata	166	55	33.10%
Venango	184	53	28.80%
Columbia	268	53	19.80%
Jefferson	205	52	25.40%
Clinton	199	50	25.10%
Perry	179	48	26.80%
Wyoming	135	47	34.80%
Pike	161	45	28.00%
Lebanon	210	43	20.50%
Carbon	123	39	31.70%
Elk	115	38	33.00%
Mifflin	193	37	19.20%
Sullivan	116	28	24.10%
Northumberland	289	28	9.70%
Union	152	27	17.80%
Fulton	156	27	17.30%
Snyder	157	26	16.60%
Forest	66	21	31.80%
Cameron	56	20	35.70%
Montour	106	10	9.40%