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 41 bridges in Florida is likely to be deficient, for a total of 290 deficient bridges. An unacceptable 2.4 percent of bridges statewide are rated structurally deficient.

According to 2009 inspection data and costs, Florida would need $1.45 billion to bring all of our bridges into a state of good repair. By comparison, Florida spent $179 million total on bridge repair and replacement in 2008. There's a clear need for robust investment in repairing and replacing our 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. Florida's bridges are an average of 33.9 years old. Because of this, the number of "structurally deficient" Florida bridges is virtually guaranteed to increase in the coming years as a wave of old bridges

reach the end of their designed lives. More than 2,411 Florida bridges are already 50 years old or older.

Preserving Florida'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.

Florida Counties, sorted by number of deficient bridges

County	Number of Bridges	Number of structurally deficient bridges	Percent of bridges that are structurally deficient
Holmes	163	25	15.30%
Miami-Dade	948	21	2.20%
Broward	660	20	3.00%
Duval	723	19	2.60%
Escambia	230	14	6.10%
Palm Beach	587	13	2.20%
Baker	87	10	11.50%
Taylor	95	10	10.50%
Hillsborough	771	10	1.30%
Monroe	98	8	8.20%
Washington	93	7	7.50%
Columbia	112	7	6.30%
Okaloosa	163	7	4.30%
Brevard	236	7	3.00%
St. Johns	112	6	5.40%
Gadsden	121	6	5.00%
Orange	710	6	0.80%
Clay	72	5	6.90%
Levy	75	5	6.70%
Nassau	94	5	5.30%
Santa Rosa	190	5	2.60%
Calhoun	48	4	8.30%
Putnam	68	4	5.90%
Liberty	76	4	5.30%
Pinellas	402	4	1.00%
Wakulla	49	3	6.10%
Dixie	55	3	5.50%
DeSoto	56	3	5.40%
Sumter	76	3	3.90%
Indian River	116	3	2.60%
Bay	121	3	2.50%

County	Number of Bridges	Number of structurally deficient bridges	Percent of bridges that are structurally deficient
Manatee	197	3	1.50%
Lafayette	28	2	7.10%
Madison	59	2	3.40%
Bradford	62	2	3.20%
Jefferson	71	2	2.80%
Hendry	75	2	2.70%
Flagler	93	2	2.20%
Leon	148	2	1.40%
Charlotte	190	2	1.10%
Volusia	215	2	0.90%
Polk	345	2	0.60%
Union	28	1	3.60%
Hamilton	61	1	1.60%
Okeechobee	61	1	1.60%
Highlands	63	1	1.60%
Marion	63	1	1.60%
Alachua	108	1	0.90%
Pasco	120	1	0.80%
St. Lucie	145	1	0.70%
Walton	192	1	0.50%
Osceola	224	1	0.40%
Sarasota	279	1	0.40%
Lee	368	1	0.30%
Citrus	40	0	0.00%
Collier	348	0	0.00%
Franklin	50	0	0.00%
Gilchrist	11	0	0.00%
Glades	59	0	0.00%
Gulf	59	0	0.00%
Hardee	95	0	0.00%
Hernando	58	0	0.00%
Jackson	144	0	0.00%
Lake	89	0	0.00%
Martin	123	0	0.00%
Seminole	137	0	0.00%
Suwannee	38	0	0.00%