

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 12 bridges in Wisconsin is likely to be deficient, for a total of 1,142 deficient 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 Wisconsin's bridges are an average of 34.7 years old. Because of this, the number of "structurally deficient" Wisconsin 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 3,310 Wisconsin bridges are already 50 years old or older.

Preserving Wisconsin'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.

Wisconsin Counties, sorted by number of deficient bridges

County	Number of Bridges	Number of structurally deficient bridges	Percent of bridges that are structurally deficient
Milwaukee	853	86	10.10%
Dane	536	56	10.40%
Buffalo	249	41	16.50%
Marathon	533	41	7.70%
Grant	379	35	9.20%
Clark	295	31	10.50%
Rock	281	30	10.70%
Taylor	179	29	16.20%
Vernon	332	29	8.70%
Wood	226	28	12.40%
Manitowoc	261	27	10.30%
Columbia	180	25	13.90%
Sheboygan	239	25	10.50%
Green	244	25	10.20%
Waukesha	341	25	7.30%
Monroe	369	25	6.80%
Fond du Lac	242	23	9.50%
Chippewa	361	23	6.40%
Lafayette	219	21	9.60%
Douglas	155	20	12.90%
Dunn	244	20	8.20%
Outagamie	261	19	7.30%
St. Croix	286	19	6.60%
Barron	313	19	6.10%
Langlade	79	18	22.80%
Crawford	204	18	8.80%
Brown	424	18	4.20%
Walworth	205	17	8.30%
Sauk	242	17	7.00%
Rusk	151	16	10.60%
lowa	197	16	8.10%
Sawyer	94	15	16.00%
Trempealeau	259	14	5.40%
Richland	297	14	4.70%
Jackson	212	13	6.10%
Racine	133	12	9.00%
Oconto	146	12	8.20%
Eau Claire	239	12	5.00%

County	Number of Bridges	Number of structurally deficient bridges	Percent of bridges that are structurally deficient
Winnebago	250	12	4.80%
Marinette	138	11	8.00%
Washington	155	11	7.10%
Pierce	247	11	4.50%
La Crosse	248	11	4.40%
Lincoln	159	10	6.30%
Shawano	159	10	6.30%
Dodge	203	10	4.90%
Jefferson	145	9	6.20%
Iron	44	8	18.20%
Price	95	8	8.40%
Waupaca	160	8	5.00%
Calumet	64	7	10.90%
Bayfield	95	7	7.40%
Portage	170	7	4.10%
Forest	47	6	12.80%
Ozaukee	102	6	5.90%
Door	29	5	17.20%
Green Lake	48	5	10.40%
Polk	71	5	7.00%
Ashland	84	5	6.00%
Juneau	168	5	3.00%
Menominee	21	4	19.00%
Kewaunee	92	4	4.30%
Kenosha	93	4	4.30%
Vilas	27	3	11.10%
Washburn	44	3	6.80%
Waushara	48	3	6.30%
Oneida	56	3	5.40%
Marquette	80	3	3.80%
Adams	40	2	5.00%
Burnett	64	2	3.10%
Florence	20	0	0.00%
Pepin	56	0	0.00%