NEARLY HALF OF SYRACUSE ROADS ARE IN POOR OR MEDIocre CONDITION, ALMOST TWO-FIFTHS OF SYRACUSE BRIDGES ARE DEFICIENT OR DO NOT MEET MODERN DESIGN STANDARDS. CONDITIONS AND SAFETY WILL WORSEn WITHOUT INCREASED FUNDING

Eds.: In addition to statewide information, the report includes regional pavement and bridge condition and highway safety data for Albany, Buffalo, New York City, Rochester and Syracuse.

Syracuse, NY – Nearly half of major roads in Syracuse are in poor or mediocre condition, while almost two-fifths of the area’s bridges are deficient or do not meet modern design standards, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a Washington, DC based national transportation organization. Increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels could improve road and bridge conditions, enhance safety, relieve traffic congestion and support long-term economic growth in New York.

The TRIP report, “Conditions and Safety of New York’s Roads and Bridges,” examines road and bridge conditions, traffic safety, economic development and transportation funding in New York State. In addition to statewide information, the report also provides regional pavement and bridge condition and highway safety data for Albany, Buffalo, New York City, Rochester and Syracuse.

According to the TRIP report, throughout the state 37 percent of major locally and state-maintained urban roads and highways are in poor condition. An additional 43 percent of the state’s major urban roads have pavements in mediocre or fair condition, and the remaining 20 percent are in good condition. In the Syracuse urban area, 28 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor condition, 17 percent are in mediocre condition, 15 percent are rated in fair condition and the remaining 40 percent are in good condition. Driving on rough roads costs all New York State motorists a total of $6.3 billion annually in extra vehicle operating costs (VOC). The average driver in the Syracuse urban area loses $477 each year as a result of driving on rough roads. Costs include accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

More than one-third – 39 percent -- of locally and state-maintained bridges (20 feet or longer) in New York show significant deterioration or do not meet current design standards often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment. Twelve percent of New York’s bridges are structurally deficient. A bridge is structurally deficient if there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Structurally deficient bridges are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or
redirecting large vehicles, including commercial trucks and emergency services vehicles. Twenty-seven percent of the state’s bridges are functionally obsolete. Bridges that are functionally obsolete no longer meet current highway design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment. In the Syracuse urban area, 14 percent of bridges are structurally deficient and 25 percent are functionally obsolete.

New York State’s overall traffic fatality rate of 0.92 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is lower than the national average of 1.09. Traffic crashes in New York claimed the lives of 5,892 people between 2009 and 2013, an average of 1,178 fatalities each year. From 2011 to 2013, an average of 28 traffic fatalities occurred annually in the Syracuse urban area. Where appropriate, roadway improvements can reduce traffic fatalities and crashes while improving traffic flow to help relieve congestion. Such improvements include removing or shielding obstacles; adding or improving medians; improved lighting; adding rumble strips, wider lanes, wider and paved shoulders; upgrading roads from two lanes to four lanes; and better road markings and traffic signals.

“New York’s infrastructure crisis – especially Upstate – is undeniable and must be addressed immediately,” said Greg Biryla, executive director of Unshackle Upstate. “New York’s aging roads and bridges pose a threat to the safety of the public and our economy. It is critical that New York State dedicate resources to strengthening roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure across every region of the state.”

The efficiency and condition of New York’s transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state’s economy. Annually, $550 billion in goods are shipped from sites in New York and another $597 billion in goods are shipped to sites in the state, mostly by truck.

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that each dollar spent on road, highway and bridge improvements results in an average benefit of $5.20 in the form of reduced vehicle maintenance costs, reduced delays, reduced fuel consumption, improved safety, reduced road and bridge maintenance costs and reduced emissions as a result of improved traffic flow.

“These conditions are only going to get worse if greater funding is not made available at the local, state and federal levels,” said Will Wilkins, TRIP’s executive director. “Without additional transportation funds, the state’s pavement and bridge conditions will continue to decline, needed safety improvements will not be made, congestion will worsen and the state will lose out on opportunities for economic growth.”

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