Modernization Needed to Improve Condition of Rural Roads

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Rural America is home to nearly 50 million people, but a new Rural Connections report from TRIP, a non-profit transportation research group, shows the U.S. rural transportation system has significant deficiencies and fatality rates. Seanica Otterby has the story.

National transportation research group TRIP recently released a report on the challenges and opportunities regarding America’s rural roads. TRIP Director of Policy and Research Rocky Moretti says the federal government is a critical source of rural transportation funding.

The Highway Trust Fund is essentially so low on cash that by August 1st, states are going to start to see some of that money cut back. So, it’s absolutely critical that Congress put in place a long-term program that continues the important role that the federal government plays in providing funding for rural transportation.

Increases in agriculture and energy extraction are putting more demands on rural roads, Moretti says.

Twelve percent of them have structurally deficient bridges, and 15 percent of the major rural roads have pavements in poor conditions. This is the highest rate of deterioration, and it’s consistent with the increasing travel and use of rural roads, and these are absolutely vital to the economy of rural America.

State and local transportation agencies understand what types of repairs are needed to prepare rural roads for increased travel, but Moretti says cost-effective safety measures must be put in place, too.

Adding features like rumble strips, paving shoulders, making sure there’s an absence of pavement drop-off. These very cost-effective improvements can go a long way to keeping rural Americans, and anyone traveling on rural roads, safer as they go about their daily lives.

Visit TRIP net dot org (www.tripnet.org) to view the report. Seanica Otterby, Washington.