

STATE ROADS IN WORSE CONDITION THAN U.S. AVERAGE

By Stephanie Mlot, News-Post Staff

Maryland's roads are among the poorest in the country, according to a new report.

The 2008 "Future Mobility in Maryland: Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility" data reveal that 44 percent of major roads in the state were rated in poor or mediocre condition, reported by TRIP, a national transportation research group based in Washington.

"It's actually quite high," said Carolyn Bonifas, associate director of research and communications for TRIP.

The national average -- 13 percent in poor condition, 19 percent in mediocre condition -- is lower than Maryland's 26 percent and 18 percent, respectively, based on data from the Federal Highway Administration.

The major roads studied by TRIP are interstates, freeways, expressways -- basically any roads someone takes after leaving their neighborhood, Bonifas said.

Roads rated in poor condition, as defined by TRIP, show signs of deterioration, including cracks and potholes. Some can be resurfaced, but most must be completely reconstructed. Roads in mediocre condition have significant wear and may have visible pavement distress, but most can be resurfaced. Some may need more extensive rebuilding.

The report did not cover separate counties in the state, Bonifas said, and couldn't provide specific Frederick roads considered in poor or mediocre condition. TRIP used a random sampling of roads on the National Highway System, some maintained by the state, others county- and city-owned.

The Maryland State Highway Administration has its own local projects, including resurfacing U.S. 40 Alternate at Beechtree Drive and Willow Drive and resurfacing eastbound I-70 from west of Ridge Road to west of I-270, said spokesman David Buck.

TRIP's February survey emphasized the need for the state to improve its system of roads, bridges and public transportation.

"Making needed improvements to Maryland's roads, highways, bridges and transit could provide a significant boost to the state's economy by creating jobs and stimulating long-term economic growth as a result of enhanced mobility and access," the report stated.

One of the roadblocks to funding is being deliberated by Congress as they determine the future of the Federal Highway Administration's long-range Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act -- A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

The six-year plan was originally set to expire Sept. 30, 2009, before Congress instituted a

series of six short-term extensions. It is now set to end March 4.

"They will likely (implement) another short-term extension," Bonifas said. But it is not out of the question for Congress to create a long-term bill, she said.

A much-needed boost in funding could help push a number of state projects forward, if the government agrees. Until final word is given, states have no idea how much money they could receive, according to Bonifas.

"It is hard to say what action Congress will take" once the program expires next month, she said.

Without a long-term plan, it will become increasingly difficult for states to plan for the future, the associate director said.

"We are hopeful a bill will be passed that provides sufficient federal funding for future projects," Buck wrote in an e-mail. The more funding available, he said, the more projects can be constructed.

Federal money provides 28 percent of revenue used by the Maryland Department of Transportation for construction, repairs and maintenance, the report stated.

In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided Maryland with about \$566 million for transportation needs, what TRIP's report called a down payment on needed improvements. Without further funding, the state will not be able to improve and maintain its transportation system, TRIP said.

Some of those improvements include the widening of portions of I-70 and I-695, implementing new transit lines, and installing pedestrian and bike trails throughout the state.

As vehicle travel increases, roads become worse for wear. Between 1990 and 2008, Maryland's traffic volume grew 36 percent, from 40.5 billion vehicle miles traveled to 55 billion. TRIP projects a 30 percent increase by 2025.

FRONT PAGE

LAYOFFS HELP TO CLOSE BUDGET GAP

By Patti S. Boman

News-Post Staff

fredericknewspost.com



Frederick County announced more layoffs and two departmental reorganizations effective Friday.

Young has called for the county and the Frederick County Board of Education each to come up with \$20 million in savings to offset the county's deficit. He said he will present a balanced budget without raising taxes, and will fully fund the county retirement system as planned.

At the county's department heads explore ways to save, commissioners have asked them to consolidate and streamline services for the good of the public who use them.

Priddy's announcement described two reorganizations, with one being the creation of a new Community Development Division that will contain the Planning, Economic Development and Permitting and Development Review divisions and the Office of Environmental Sustainability.

MAN LAMENTS LOSING DOGS IN CRUELTY CASE

By KATE LARSEN

News-Post Staff

fredericknewspost.com

Animal Control officers removed a pair of Australian cattle dogs from a Thurmont residence after the dogs were found chained outdoors to trees in December without access to water or shelter, according to court records.

James Edward Christensen, 41, has been ordered to appear March 1 in Frederick County District Court on charges of restraining a dog without access to water and shelter and two

(See CRUELTY A-2)

WALKING THE DOG



Madison Niles, 4, walks her dog, Tucker, from the pet grooming shop on East Palomar Street in Brunswick after a bath and a clipping.

MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ATTEMPTED MURDER

By KATE LARSEN

News-Post Staff

fredericknewspost.com

A Frederick man pleaded guilty Friday to attempted second-degree murder in an April robbery a judge said nearly cost a 29-year-old Frederick man his life.

In a hastily arranged hearing Friday in Frederick County Circuit Court, William Hester, 29, agreed to plead guilty to four charges, including attempted second-degree murder, instead of facing a possible life sentence if convicted of attempted first-degree murder next week at trial, said his defense attorney, Dana S. Parnis Jr.

Committees on charges of armed

(See CRUELTY A-2)

STATE ROADS IN WORSE CONDITION THAN U.S. AVERAGE

By STEPHANIE MLOT

News-Post Staff

fredericknewspost.com



The widening of I-70 is one of the potential state projects that could be completed in the future, with the help of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act -- A Legacy for Users. Currently under deliberation in Congress, the program is set to expire in March.

The major roads studied by TRIP are interstates, freeways, expressways -- basically any road someone takes after leaving their neighborhood, Bonifas said.

Washburn said TRIP's report showed signs of deterioration, including cracks and potholes. Some can be resurfaced, but most must be completely reconstructed. Roads in mediocre condition have significant wear and may have visible pavement distress, but most can be resurfaced. Some may need more extensive rebuilding.

County changes plowing procedure to cut overtime

By STEPHANIE MLOT

News-Post Staff

fredericknewspost.com

Due to budget concerns, crews with the Office of Highway Operations will plow two lanes on all roads, six cars on one, to help cut overtime costs.

Frederick County is changing the way crews remove snow to cut back on overtime.

Due to budget concerns, crews with the Office of Highway Operations will plow two lanes on all roads, six cars on one, to help cut overtime costs.

Usually when we're out there

(See PLOWING A-2)

DEAL OF THE DAY
SEE TODAY'S DEAL - A-2

Good morning!
A hospital bed in a parked lot with the meter running.
CONCRETE MARK

38°
27°
Today: A little rain; a cool breeze early.
Tonight: Partly cloudy
WEATHER: B-B

HOT TOPIC
THE OWNERSHIP AND USE OF FREEDOMS HAS BEEN THROST INTO THE FOREGROUND OF PUBLIC DEBATE
COMING SOON

INDEX
Automotive C-1-4
Business B-7
Classified C-5-4
Comics C-10
Editorial letters A-8
Fire & Police Matter A-6
Local A-5-7
Letters A-6
Obituaries A-9
Real Estate D-1-4
Religion & Ethics D-5-7
Sports D-1-4
TV Listings D-8
Weather D-8

Updating the state's roads and bridges could help about the annual \$7 billion bill drivers are saddled with because of vehicle crashes and congestion-related delays, according to TRIP.

The research group estimated that extra vehicle operating costs also account for \$1.6 billion statewide, about \$422 per motorist.

"As it looks to enhance and build a thriving, growing and dynamic state," the TRIP report stated, "it will be essential that Maryland is able to provide a 21st century network of roads, highways, bridges and public transit that can accommodate the mobility demands of a modern society."