

Lansing State Journal

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

21%
of Lansing's major roads are rated in poor condition

35%
of Lansing's major roads air in good condition. A desirable goal for state and local organizations responsible for road maintenance is 75 percent

15%
of bridges in the Lansing area are rated structurally deficient, showing significant deterioration to decks and other major components.

18%
of bridges in the area are functionally obsolete. These bridges no longer meet design standards for safety features.

Source: The Road Information Program

Lansing-area roads get failing grades Report cites crumbling pavement, aging bridges



(ROD SANFORD/Lansing State Journal)
Popular byway: Traffic moves Monday on Hagadorn Road over the Red Cedar River in East Lansing. Some 27,600 vehicles per day pass over this bridge, which is rated one of the most structurally deficient in the Lansing area. The bridge was built in 1930.

By Chris Andrews
Lansing State Journal

The Lansing area is in a rut when it comes to its roads.

The region's highways and byways scored a big fat F in a study released Monday by The Road Information Project (TRIP), a Washington-based nonprofit organization that studies the nation's roads.

Here's why Lansing flunked: too many cracks and potholes along Interstate 496, Saginaw Highway and other streets that rattle teeth, pop tires and ruin alignments.

Thomas Smith of Lansing doesn't need a fancy study to tell him about the rocky roads, which he says are atrocious. The General Motors Corp. retiree has found navigating Lake Lansing Road to his dentist's office to be a jarring experience.

"The road is so bad, I could almost feel it in my teeth every time we hit some crack," said

Smith, 78. "I'm going to have to find another way to the dentist."

According to the TRIP study, 21 percent of the major roads in the Lansing area are in poor condition, and another 28 percent were rated mediocre.

In comparison, 14 percent of Michigan's roads were in poor condition and 24 percent rated average. TRIP graded the state roads a D. In Detroit, both roads and bridges received F grades; Grand Rapids' roads were rated F while the city's bridges received a grade of C.

Bridges are substandard

Frank Moretti, TRIP's director of policy and research, said the state is doing a good job with the resources it has but doesn't have enough money to get the roads to where they need to be. The state spends about \$1.4 billion annually for road and bridge repair on its major trunklines.

Residents end up paying more for not fixing roads because they damage their cars and need to replace them sooner, Moretti said.

"The worse shape your roads are, the more quickly your car will deteriorate," he said.

The area's bridges were rated a D minus. Fifteen percent were rated structurally deficient, meaning they showed significant deterioration. Another 18 percent were deemed functionally obsolete, meaning they no longer meet modern design standards for safety.

Traffic jams not so bad

Bad roads are costly news for businesses that depend on moving their products, said Bill

Sepic, executive director of the Lansing Regional Chamber of Commerce.

"We can't tolerate or continue a Band-Aid approach to road repair," he said.

The TRIP report wasn't all gloom and doom for mid-Michigan.

The Lansing area rated a B for congestion, with about 11 percent of urban arterial roads congested during rush hour. Still, the report warns, that's likely to get worse with a projected 25 percent increase in vehicle travel by 2020.

Area report card

TRIP has assigned the following letter grades to components of the mid-Michigan highways and byways.

Roads: Grade F

► In 2004 — the latest year for which data is available — 21 percent of major roads in the Lansing area were rated in poor condition and an additional 28 percent were deemed mediocre.

Bridges: Grade D-

► One-third of bridges 20 feet or longer in the Lansing area are in substandard condition. Fifteen percent are rated as structurally deficient, and 18 percent are functionally obsolete.

Congestion: Grade B

► About 11 percent of urban arterial roads are considered congested because they often experience rush-hour delays. With a 25 percent increase in vehicle travel anticipated in the state by 2020, traffic congestion will likely worsen unless the state does something.