



This is a printer friendly version from the **Democrat and Chronicle**:

January 27, 2005

Area roads get a failing mark

Bridges get a 'D' in national transportation group's report

Diana Louise Carter
Staff writer

Almost half of the major roads in the Rochester area are substandard and just over half of the bridges are in need of repair or replacement, according to a national transportation research group

The report by The Road Information Program gave Rochester an "F" for road conditions and a "D" for bridge conditions. Traffic congestion got a grade of "C minus" and road safety earned a "C."

Among the roads that the group said need improvement are portions of Interstates 490 and 390 as well as the Inner Loop and Mt Hope Avenue in Rochester, Route 590 in Irondequoit, South Washington Street in East Rochester and Route 441 in Penfield.

The nonprofit, Washington-based group said Rochester is competing with Long Island and Tarrytown, Westchester County, for the worst scores in the state. Buffalo, Syracuse and Albany all scored higher than did Rochester.

The Road Information Program is funded in part by the highway construction industry and labor unions representing construction workers.

At a news conference Wednesday, state Assemblyman Joseph Morelle, D-Irondequoit, said that Rochester typically has been shortchanged in transportation spending but that the entire funding mechanism needs to be overhauled.

For more than a decade, Morelle said, the state has sold bonds whenever it launched a roads project, resulting in more than \$1 billion being spent on debt service annually, a figure that dwarfs the actual transportation spending.

"We have to establish priorities," he said. "You can't have an infrastructure that's unsound."

State transportation officials took issue with the report. "New York state's highways are safer than ever. In the last decade, the condition of its bridges and roads has increased dramatically," said Jennifer Post, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Transportation. She said the new report was "riddled with flawed analysis that led to an inaccurate picture."

Bob Brown, business manager of the Laborer's International Union of North America, Local 435, said Pennsylvania was able to turn around its poor road conditions by establishing a dedicated fund to maintain roads.

Former Gov. Mario Cuomo tried to do the same thing with a 5-cent-a-gallon tax on gasoline, but proceeds generated by the tax were derailed from upstate roads by the need to put money into downstate subways, he said.


"So it went into the general fund and never came back out," Brown said "If the state did what it was supposed to do, we wouldn't have this problem "

Among the report's findings was that 4 percent of Rochester-area bridges are structurally deficient, meaning they need repairs to major components such as supports or decking

"It's important to keep in mind that the bridges aren't unsafe just because they're structurally deficient," said Carolyn Bonifas, associate director of research and communication for The Road Information Program. But such findings do underscore the need for greater transportation spending, she said

DCARTER@DemocratandChronicle.com

Back

 <p>MIKE OCIBENE The unbeatable dealer <i>"We sell for less"</i> 1-888-412-7912</p>	 <p>MARINA DODGE Marina Dodge 943 Ridge Road Webster, NY 14580 877-377-6352</p>
---	---

Copyright 2004 Rochester Democrat and Chronicle
Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) (updated 12/18/2002)