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Report card shows improvement in state's infrastructure

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Kentucky's bridges and roads need improvement, but the state's infrastructure overall exceeds its peers nationally, according to a new report card scheduled for release today.

The report card was issued by the Kentucky section of the American Society of Civil Engineers. A group of 27 engineers gathered data on 12 categories of infrastructure, such as aviation, dams, en-

ergy and drinking water.

Kentucky's overall grade was C, compared with a national grade of D, which was awarded by the ASCE in its 2009 nationwide study.

"With a few exceptions, Kentucky is moving in the right direction," said Tom Rockaway, director of the Center for Infrastructure Research at the University of Louisville and chairman of the report card project.

REPORT CARD | P31



Wastewater category rose from D- to C because of federal Clean Water Act

REPORT CARD | FROM P1

"Infrastructure assets really are the lifeblood of a community," he said. "If we don't take care of them, it affects our day-to-day lives as well as our business development possibilities."

Regulations, funded strategies paved way for biggest gains

The 2011 infrastructure report updates Kentucky's initial study, which was performed in 2003.

Greg Heitzman, president and CEO of Louisville Water Co. Inc.



Heitzman

and a member of the report card committee, said the categories with the biggest gains since 2003 had two common threads. Either state or federal regulations forced improvements or policy leaders laid out a strategy and provided the money to execute.

The wastewater category, for example, rose from a D- to a C, largely because of enforcement of the federal Clean Water Act, Heitzman said.

"Where there has been a regulatory order, there has been improvement," he said.

And in schools, where the state jumped from a D- to a B-, state leaders have made a commitment, Heitzman said.

"The state has made improving education and school buildings a priority," he said. "Because of that investment, we see problems addressed."

Policy leaders will determine next steps

David Ratterman, a trained engineer, attorney with Louisville-based Stites & Harbison PLLC law firm and a member of the committee, said the group tried to avoid a political agenda when presenting its findings.

"It was important to our credibility that we just report on the conditions and leave it in the hands of public policy leaders to determine how to address it," he said.

Rockaway said he hopes the report lays out a realistic picture of the state's infrastructure.

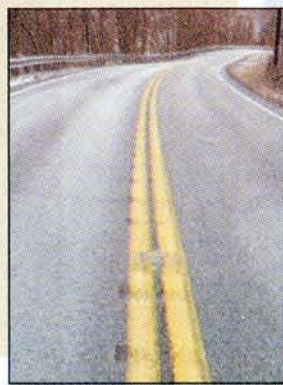
"We will be talking with stakeholders to get the word out on this," he said. "When we have a plan and we follow it, we can make some big changes." |

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ROADS

D

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet has a list of more than \$40 billion in road projects that are in various stages of planning and design but have not secured a funding source. The report estimates that if current paving plans and funding stay the same, between 30 percent and 40 percent of pavements will be rated "poor" within the next three years.



Kentucky: D
2003 grade: D
U.S., 2009: D-

BRIDGES

D

This grade doesn't reflect bridges that are unsafe, the report said. Rather, it indicates the bridges' abilities to handle current commerce and personal-travel

demands. Nationally, about 25 percent of bridges are deficient, compared with 32 percent in Kentucky. The cost to bring the state's bridges up to the national average would be \$283.4 million. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet has budgeted \$98 million for bridge repair and replacement this year.



Kentucky: D
2003 grade: C-
U.S., 2009: C

AVIATION

C+

The state's seven commercial-service airports and 53 general-aviation airports remain underfunded relative to their needs, the report found. And airports also might not be able to accommodate larger aircraft such as the Airbus A-380 and the Boeing 747-800. Still, the group found that commercial airports continue to maintain facilities that support economic development.

Kentucky: C+
2003 grade: C+
U.S., 2009: D



SCHOOL FACILITIES

B-

Kentucky's biggest improvement is its school facilities grade. It jumped from a D to a B- because of state officials making facilities a priority. About 12 percent of Kentucky's schools need major renovation or replacement, compared with 33 percent nationally. The state spends about 94 percent of its education budget on pupil expenditures, compared with 86 percent nationally. The Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Facilities Management spends \$300 million to \$350 million annually on school construction.

Kentucky: B-
2003 grade: D+
U.S., 2009: D



ENERGY

B-

Kentucky's transmission grid is sufficient for the state's current power needs, the report found. But coal is used to generate 92 percent of the state's electricity, and proposed federal rules might require more scrubbers and design changes to fly-ash disposal landfills.

Kentucky: B-
2003 grade: B-
U.S.: D+



TRANSIT AND RAIL

C-

Louisville was cited as a positive example of progress in this category, with its Louisville Loop project, a paved trail of 100 miles for bikes and pedestrians around the community. A proposal in the 2003 report for a statewide transit fund has not been addressed.

Kentucky: C-
2003 grade: D
U.S., 2009: Transit D, Rail C-

WASTEWATER

C-

The state's 17 communities that operate and maintain sewer systems frequently exceed their capacity in wet weather, the report found. An estimated \$312 million will be needed to correct overflow and related problems across the state. Enforcement of

the federal Clean Water Act has improved since 2003 in Kentucky's larger communities.

Kentucky: C-
2003 grade: D-
U.S.: D-

DRINKING WATER

B



During the past decade, the state legislature has allotted \$806 million for more than 2,100 drinking water projects. Since 2000, the state has expanded water service from 37,000 miles of water main to 56,500 miles. Potable water is available to 97 percent of the state, with a goal of reaching 100 percent by 2020.

Kentucky: B
2003 grade: C
U.S., 2009: D-

DAMS

D+

Kentucky has more than 1,000 active dams. The report found a lack of funding for maintenance during the past 30 years a "major concern." Kentucky also would need 40 dam regulators to

meet the recommendation by the Association of State Dam Safety Officials. Currently, the state employs six.

Kentucky: D+
2003 grade: C-
U.S., 2009: D

LEVEES

D+

This was the first report to evaluate the state's levees. Of Kentucky's 29 flood-protection systems, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rated five as acceptable, five as unacceptable and 19 as minimally acceptable. Most of the state's pump

stations were built in the 1940s and 1950s and are in need of upgrades.

Kentucky: D+
2003 grade: Not assigned
U.S., 2009: D-

HAZARDOUS WASTE

C

In Kentucky, 17 of 20 hazardous-waste sites identified on a federal priorities list either have a remediation plan in place or have been closed. But hundreds more sites not on the federal list require cleanup at a cost of about \$80 million. Tax credits are available to assist with cleanup by property owners who are not responsible for the contamination.

Kentucky: C
2003 grade: D+
U.S., 2009: D

