

Business

State's roads, bridges reported in poor shape

Engineers find '03 status little changed

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The Courier-Journal

Kentucky's roads and bridges are in "poor" condition and have shown little or no improvement since 2003, while school buildings and systems carrying drinking water and disposing of waste are in better shape, according to an excerpt from a new engineering report.

The report card, released Thursday by the American Society of Civil Engineers' Kentucky section, is the first statewide assessment of infrastructure since 2003.

It assigned the state a "fair," or "C," rating, up slightly from "C-" in 2003. The national grade during the latest national study, in 2009, was "D," or "poor."

"Overall we are making slow progress. It is a huge effort, but it is something that is essential to our community," said Thomas D. Rockaway, a civil engineering professor at the University of Louisville who chaired the report-card project.

The full report, which includes specific recommendations and detailed results by county, is expected later in February.

"I believe that the individuals involved in maintaining these infrastructures are doing the best job that they can," Rockaway said. "It's when we run into staffing problems and financial restrictions that

the hard choices have to be made."

The report card used data from the Federal Highway Administration's national bridge inventory to assess the state's bridges, said David Ratterman, a Louisville attorney involved in the study.

The state's roads and bridges were rated in poor condition and received the report's lowest grade. Researchers determined that replacing or repairing the deficient bridges in Kentucky would cost more than \$1.2 billion, and that bringing those spans up to the national average would require at least \$283 million.

In 2003, 29.7 percent of the state's bridges were deemed deficient, while the national average was 27.6 percent, according to the report. Kentucky's rate has since risen to 32.2 percent, while the na-

tional rate fell to 24.8 percent.

A bridge is generally considered "structurally deficient" if at least one of the major elements — the roadway; the superstructure that supports traffic; or the substructure, such as piers and abutments — received a "poor" rating or worse during its most recent inspection.

The highest grade for the state — "B," or "good" — went to solid-waste and drinking-water systems. Kentucky's public school facilities were rated "B-," climbing from "D+" in 2003.

The American Society of Civil Engineers was founded in 1852 and represents more than 140,000 civil engineering professionals.

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