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Study finds mid-Hudson infrastructure short-changed

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Albany – The state has slighted spending on roads and bridges in the mid-Hudson region in favor of New York City and Long Island, according to a New York University study of infrastructure in the 14-county downstate region.

Since 2000, the overall condition of roads and bridges in Orange, Ulster and other mid-Hudson counties has been steadily deteriorating while remaining stable or improving on Long Island and in the city, according to a new study from NYU's Rudin Center for Transportation Policy and Management.

"These findings suggest the (mid-Hudson) region's needs clearly aren't getting sufficient attention from decision makers," said Assemblyman Ryan Karben, a Rockland County Democrat. "The mid-Hudson region is the fastest growing region of the state, and it also apparently has the most rapidly crumbling infrastructure."

The NYU study, funded in part by the General Contractors Association of New York, concluded that Gov. George Pataki's proposed five-year \$17.4 billion capital plan for state roads and bridges is inadequate. Based on past allocations, that plan would translate to about \$6 billion for the 14 downstate counties, not including Sullivan, according to the study.

A minimum of \$7.3 billion is needed for the region in the next five years just to "hold the line" on the current condition of the region's roads and bridges, the study said.

The study came out just as both houses of the state Legislature are trying to negotiate changes to Pataki's proposal, such as how to spend an additional \$2.9 billion they want to borrow for transportation needs.

"New York bridges and highways, which are already below recommended federal standards, will deteriorate further" under Pataki's plan, said Eliot Sander, the Rudin Center's director.

According to the study, the percentage of mid-Hudson roadways rated fair or poor increased from 20.6 percent in 2000 to 23 percent in 2004. On Long Island, the percentage of roadways rated fair or poor decreased from 22.1 percent to 13.5 percent in the same time period. In New York City, the percentage of roadways rated fair or poor also declined in the past four years, from 40.4 percent to 25.5 percent.

Meanwhile, the percentage of "deficient" bridges in the mid-Hudson region jumped from 22.7 percent to 27.5 percent in the past four years. The percentage of deficient bridges on Long Island's two counties dropped from 23.7 percent in 1994 to 19.4 percent in 2004, with the past four years relatively stable.

In New York City, the percentage of deficient bridges steadily declined from 72.4 percent in 1993 to 51 percent in 2004, according to the study.

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