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Roads, bridges faulted in report

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If you're driving around metropolitan Buffalo, there's a good chance you are traveling along troubled highways and byways, according to a national transportation research group

TRIP - The Road Information Project - has graded local roads and bridges a "C-minus" in its annual condition assessment. Road congestion earned a "B-minus."

The report found that 40 percent of major roads in the metropolitan Buffalo area are in poor or mediocre condition.

Lack of adequate funding for road improvement and maintenance projects was seen as the biggest impediment to boosting travel conditions, according to TRIP Executive Director William M. Wilkins.

The nonprofit organization's annual review found 17 percent of the Buffalo area's major roadways are in "poor" condition, while another 23 percent were rated "mediocre."

Four percent of local bridges fell into the "structurally deficient" category, with an additional 38 percent classified as "functionally obsolete."

In terms of safety, the study pegged the Buffalo area's traffic fatality rate at 7.5 deaths per 100,000 people, above the statewide level of 5.1 per 100,000, but below the national fatality rate of 8 per 100,000 people.

The organization released its New York transportation system report card on Wednesday via a series of press conferences across the state. In Buffalo, the findings were released in conjunction with the Buffalo Niagara Partnership.

The organization's assessment included a "Top 10" list of local roads with the most serious deterioration problems, making suggestions for reconstruction and widening. That list includes:

- Route 78/Transit Road (Cheektowaga/Lancaster/Clarence/Amherst) - the 12-mile stretch from Aero Drive to Main Street;
- Route 5 (Hamburg/Lackawanna) - 2.7 miles between Milestrip and Ridge roads;
- Route 20 (Hamburg/Orchard Park) - 7.9 miles between Amsdell Road and Routes 240/277;
- Route 62 (Wheatfield) - 1 mile between the North Tonawanda cityline and Nash Road;
- Wehrle Drive (Amherst) - 2.3 miles between Ellicott Creek and Transit Roads;
- Route 240 (Cheektowaga) - 1.6 miles between Genesee Street and Saratoga Boulevard;
- Route 5/Main Street (Cheektowaga) - 1.6 miles between the Scajaquada Expressway and Hertel Avenue;
- Sweet Home Road (Amherst) - 1 mile between Maple Street and Ellicott Creek Road;
- Route 384 (Niagara Falls) - 3.1 miles between Tenth Street and the I-190;
- Route 104 (Niagara Falls) - 1.8 miles between Ontario Street and North City Line.

The report also cited the Buffalo area's worst bridges, a list that includes: the Route 400 bridge over Route 240 in West Seneca; the I-190 bridge over Lockport Road and the CSX railroad tracks in Niagara Falls; and the Route 20 bridge over Cazenovia Creek in West Seneca.

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