

TheJournalNews.com  
Transportation

## Transportation group rates area roads as rough

By GREG CLARY  
THE JOURNAL NEWS  
(Original publication January 27, 2005)

TARRYTOWN — Nearly 70 percent of the roads in the New York City metropolitan area are in poor or mediocre condition, a new study claims, and that number will only get worse unless government starts spending more money on transportation.

The study was conducted by TRIP, a national transportation research group based in Washington, D.C. that is partially funded by the road construction industry.

The northern suburbs, Rockland, Westchester and Putnam counties, were included as part of the metropolitan region for the purposes of the study.

Using U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration databases as well as those of other agencies that monitor traffic and safety, TRIP officials offered the following:

- More than three of every five of the region's bridges are in need of repair or replacement
- Nearly 40 percent of the area's major roadways carry more traffic than they were designed to handle
- Area roads were given an F in the study's grading system, while bridges and congestion were each given a D.

"Further modernization in the New York City metropolitan area is critical," said Paul Haaland, associate director of policy and research for TRIP. "The region's economy literally rides on its transportation system."

Haaland said federal, state and local officials must find money as soon as possible to invest in the region's infrastructure to avoid further deterioration.

Jennifer Post, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Transportation, disputed the findings.

"New York state's highways are safer than ever," Post said, citing statistics that showed the fatal accident rate at an all-time low last year. "In the last decade, the conditions of the state's roads have improved markedly. The number of good or excellent roads has gone to 66 percent from 54 percent and for bridges, 73 percent compared to 69 percent in 1995.

Post said her department had not seen the study, merely the press information provided during a series of study releases across the state, but couldn't verify the poor road conditions or other statistics cited.

Ross Pepe, the president of the Construction Industry Council of Westchester and Hudson Valley, an association that supports TRIP, said road improvements always end up at the bottom of the list of state needs because they don't seem as pressing as other concerns.

"It's clear where the problems are here," Pepe said at a press conference announcing the study at the Hilton Tarrytown. "The Tappan Zee Bridge is a problem. The Palisades Interstate Parkway is a problem. The governor's own report said the (transportation system) is a problem, but what nobody talks about is the financing."

Pepe said the state was paying more than \$1 billion in debt service in the current transportation budget, and had shifted an increasing amount of expenses from the general fund to the state's dedicated highway fund, cutting down on available money for capital improvements.

Scott Reif, a spokesman for the state's budget office, also disputed the notion that the state wasn't spending enough on transportation.

"New Yorkers know that Gov. Pataki is committed to ensuring that New York state continues to have one of the best transportation systems in the world," Reif said. "Since the governor took office, state spending from the Dedicated Highway and Bridge Fund has increased by more than \$1.1 billion, or 165 percent."