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## WEST VIRGINIA'S BRIDGES RANK 8<sup>TH</sup> WORST IN COUNTRY

***Repair backlog leaves bridges in dangerous condition,  
Federal support needed to maintain safety and limit emergency repair costs of state's 5700+ bridges***

**Charleston WV** – A new report released today shows that **WEST VIRGINIA ranks 8<sup>th</sup> worst nationally in terms of the overall condition of the state's bridges.** *"The Fix We're In: The State of WEST VIRGINIA's Bridges"* finds that drivers in WEST VIRGINIA are regularly traveling across heavily trafficked bridges with "poor" ratings – bridges that could become dangerous or closed without repair.

**Today, one out of every six bridges that motorists in WEST VIRGINIA cross each day are likely to be deteriorating to some degree;** and 16.7 percent of bridges statewide are rated "structurally deficient" according to government standards, compared to 11.5 percent nationwide.

Nearly 70,000 bridges nationwide are classified as "structurally deficient," according to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). According to FHWA, transportation agencies would need \$70.9 billion to overcome the current backlog of deficient bridges. **Without significant federal support, the poor condition of bridges across the country has major implications for safety, mobility and economic activity.**

*"Times are tough, but the safest and most economical approach we can take to WEST VIRGINIA's infrastructure is protecting the investments we've already made with needed safety and structural upgrades,"* said Gary Zuckett, Executive Director of WV Citizen Action. *"Allowing roads and bridges to slip into disrepair ultimately costs state and local governments billions more in replacement costs than the cost of regular, timely repair. Deferring maintenance of bridges and highways can cost three times as much as preventative repairs. This backlog also increases safety risks, hinders job creation and, in the long run, significantly burdens taxpayers."*

Regardless of the amount of wear and tear experienced, most bridges are designed to last roughly 50 years, yet more than 185,000 highway bridges nationwide (out of 600,000 total) are 50 years old or older. By 2030, that number could double without substantial bridge replacement, and it has the potential to triple by 2050. WEST VIRGINIA's average is 44.2 years old.

*"In addition to safety, investing in the construction, expansion and repair of our nation's transportation infrastructure creates jobs while laying the foundation for long-term economic prosperity. Repair work on roads and bridges generates 16 percent more jobs than new bridge and road construction,"* said Zuckett. *"Given the turbulent economic situation in America, the federal government should reward states that prioritize fix-it-first projects."*

Congress has repeatedly declared the condition and safety of our bridges to be of national significance. However, the current federal program is not designed to ensure that transportation agencies have enough money and accountability to get the job done. *"With Representatives Capito and Rahall both serving as senior members on the House Transportation Committee, our state is well positioned to have a positive impact in the crafting of new federal transportation priorities,"* commented Zuckett. *"We look forward to working with them both to ensure the infrastructure needs of West Virginia are well considered."*

WEST VIRGINIA's bridges will continue to display the effects of wear and age, suffering the results of underinvestment: WEST VIRGINIA has 24 out of 55 counties where the average bridge condition is worse than the statewide average. Without a change in federal support, WEST VIRGINIA will need \$578 from each driver to fix all of the structurally deficient bridges.

*“Preserving WEST VIRGINIA’s existing transportation system is crucial to ensuring regional prosperity, safety and a higher quality of life,”* said James Corless, director of Transportation for America. *“The economic and social cost of neglect is simply too high. It is time for our policymakers to shore up our infrastructure and ensure Americans get the most bang for our transportation buck.”*

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**Transportation for America (T4 America)** is the largest, most diverse coalition working on transportation reform today. Our nation’s transportation network is based on a policy that has not been significantly updated since the 1950’s. We believe it is time for a bold new vision — transportation that guarantees our freedom to move however we choose and leads to a stronger economy, greater energy security, cleaner environment and healthier America for all of us. We’re calling for more responsible investment of our federal tax dollars to create a safer, cleaner, smarter transportation system that works for everyone.

**West Virginia Citizen Action Group (WV-CAG)** since 1974, has advocated for consumer protection and good government issues. WV-CAG is a state partner of T4America.