



Bridge Repair Schedule Spanning To A Cliff

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Barring substantive funding changes, Michigan will only be able to replace around 10 bridges a year in Michigan's 4,500 state-owned bridge network come 2029, the state's chief bridge engineer told the House transportation appropriations subcommittee today.

Engineer Rebecca **CURTIS** told the panel that while the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) made record bridge investments during Gov. [Gretchen WHITMER](#)'s Rebuilding Michigan bond program, there isn't the long-term funding – at the moment – to keep it going.

"Even though we are doing all the right things, the funding is not there to help us move the needle enough," Curtis said.

MDOT noted record bridge investments starting in 2021, credited in large part to Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's [Rebuilding Michigan bond program](#), which focused on rebuilding highways and bridges critical to the state's economy and carrying the most traffic. The investment strategy has been successful, focusing on key rebuilding projects, improving both road and bridge conditions along major freeways.

Work remains, however, as the state continues to see declining bridge conditions, and faces the stark reality of bridge closures in just 10 years. Curtis explained that much of MDOT's bridge inventory has far exceeded its intended service life and the department has been forced to focus on identifying locations at high risk of closure over the next 10 and 20 years, as well as identifying what economic impacts may result from those closures.

Considerations for daily commuters, commercial drivers and emergency response times weigh heavily on department officials as they determine the next steps to most efficiently invest dwindling budget dollars. According to [MDOT's Five-Year Transportation Program](#), 2029 is slated to be the lowest bridge investment funding year in more than a decade, with less than \$132 million allocated to bridge improvements.

MDOT estimates the state currently has nearly 280 bridges on the state trunkline system (I, M and US routes) rated poor, with more than 100 at high risk of closure by 2035, a potential impact on the 1.2 million drivers who use these corridors daily. Based on current funding allocated for bridge replacements, the department can rebuild fewer than 10 bridges per year. With a total bridge inventory of just more than 4,500 bridges, MDOT would need to design and build bridges with an average 500-year service life to keep the network in good and fair working order based on today's funding.

While strained bridge funding remains a concern for MDOT officials, pavement conditions for the roads these bridges are located along, and the jobs the industry supports, also remain a concern. With the support of the Rebuilding Michigan bond funds between 2021 and 2025, the MDOT highway capital program supported an annual average of 25,650 jobs while bringing the trunkline network condition to 89 percent good and fair pavement.

The 2026-2030 program provides a different outlook, supporting only 17,000 jobs (a loss of 8,650 jobs supported), and a guarantee that MDOT will lose ground on the recently improved pavement conditions. House transportation subcommittee members gave a breakdown of the fiscal cliff facing MDOT, but from the perspective of the more than 11,000 Michigan bridges.