

Saginaw bridge among those declared 'structurally deficient'

County hopes grant funding can correct 'scouring' at bridge's base

BY JON STINNETT
The Cottage Grove Sentinel

About half of the bridges in the state of Oregon are maintained by county governments, and about seven percent of those bridges can be classified as "structurally deficient," according to a recent report from the Association of Oregon Counties.

Analysis from the AOC indicates that "249 county bridges in this state are structurally deficient, which is more than seven percent of the bridges maintained by counties."

According to a recent release, the 2014 analysis pointed to the need for "an additional \$505 million in annual funding to keep up with maintenance, preservation and capital needs" of Oregon's roads.

"County bridges represent one of the largest shares of this unmet funding need, with a \$105 million annual deficit for bridge replacement, repair and construction," the release stated.

"Failure to adequately fund county bridges in Oregon will result in costly detours for businesses trucking goods to market and employees commuting to work. We must act soon to prevent these significant economic burdens on our already struggling rural economies," noted Emily Ackland, County Road Program Manager.

Here in Lane County, five bridges can be qualified as structurally deficient, according to Brad Lemhouse, an engineer with the County's public works department. Lemhouse said the County applied in July for grant funding to repair three of the bridges and is awaiting word on the outcome of those applications.

The County's bridges are inspected every two years, Lemhouse said, and recent inspections have pointed out the deficiencies in the Belknap Covered Bridge and the bridge over Salt Creek at

Kitchen Springs near Oakridge, which has experienced "a lot of scouring," or the washing away of the riverbed at the bridge's pylons, below the water surface.

Scouring is also to blame for deficiencies at the bridge that spans the Coast Fork of the Willamette River in Saginaw, Lemhouse said, which was also the subject of a county grant application.

"The bridge starts digging out from its supports, and there is some exposed rebar. Some of the walls are also showing issues," he said, adding that the "super-structure" of the bridge nevertheless remains strong.

Many of the County's bridges were replaced in the 1970s and 80s, when "our Road Fund was more flush," according to Lemhouse.

"We find ourselves more dependent on federal funding now and will continue to monitor our bridges through the inspection process and take action as needed," he said.

The AOC echoed concerns about a shortage in funding to repair the state's bridges.

"While Oregon's counties continue to prioritize the repair and maintenance of roads and bridges, insufficient revenues have made it impossible to meet the outstanding need," they stated. "At this point, one in every 14 county bridges is structurally deficient. Without additional funding, this situation will only get worse."

The application for grant funding includes an estimate of just over \$1.1 million to shore up the East Saginaw bridge.

Lemhouse said the County also inspected bridges at Sharps Creek and Brice Creek, though those bridges didn't warrant action at this time.

All of Oregon's counties are in the mix for grant funding, Lemhouse said, and Lane County likely won't know if its bridges have been funded for another year.



photo by Jon Stinnett

While stating that the "super-structure" of this bridge in Saginaw is sound, county officials hope grant funding can correct scouring at its base.

LORANE COUNTRY NEWS

BY LIL THOMPSON
For the Sentinel

This Saturday, Oct. 10 brings the Rural Arts Council dinner and movie night's start to the 2015-2016 season. Both meat and veggie soups will be served. It's family night, so everyone is invited to attend and enjoy.

The Crow Booster Auction on Saturday, Oct. 24 is at Crow High School. Classes in grades K-12 will participate with projects, and the middle/high school will have themed baskets for auction. At the half-day art classes this Thursday, Oct. 8, they will be making costumes with theater artist Alyssa Shepherd. Helpers are wanted to assist in teaching the classes, and those interested can contact ruralartcenter@gmail.com or call

Shepherd at 541-556-8151.

Applegate Elementary has begun an after-school program for its students from 3:25-5 p.m. Space is limited, so those interested are asked to check with the office at 541-686-5140.

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