

Follow-Up on WSDOT's Long-Term Estimates of Bridge Preservation Needs

2019 JLARC STUDY

In 2015, JLARC staff found that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) could not reliably estimate its funding needs for preserving the state's bridge network. This follow up study reviews WSDOT's efforts since then.

WSDOT has taken steps to improve its long-term bridge preservation estimates

It has:

Acquired a bridge management system.

Maintained extensive data on bridge conditions.

Identified the highest-priority hazards affecting bridges.

More work is needed to provide complete and reliable estimates

WSDOT does not yet:

Use deterioration models to forecast the condition of bridge elements.

Analyze life cycle costs when estimating long-term bridge preservation needs for the bridge network.

Evaluate how funding scenarios affect bridge conditions.

WSDOT continues to communicate an incomplete picture of its long-term bridge preservation needs

In 2019, WSDOT reported that it needed \$2.7 billion over the next 10 years to preserve the state's bridge network.

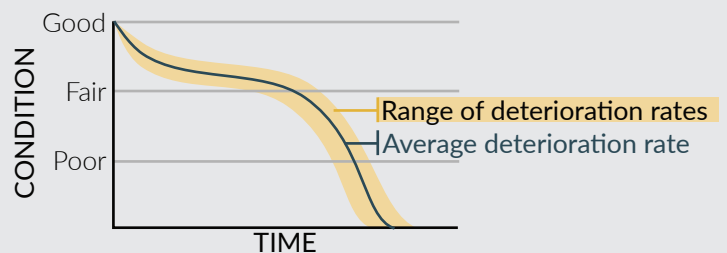
This estimate is:

Incomplete. It does not include long-term estimates for border bridges, moveable bridge components, and seismic retrofits.

Out of date. This estimate was created in 2016. Since then, estimates for some preservation categories have increased by hundreds of millions. Estimates for most categories have not been updated.

WSDOT's reports have not acknowledged these limitations. Stakeholders may have an unrealistically low impression of long-term costs based on WSDOT's recent reports.

Example of deterioration model



LEGISLATIVE AUDITOR'S RECOMMENDATION

1. WSDOT should report to the Legislature on its progress with implementing its bridge management system.
2. WSDOT and OFM should develop and implement a plan to communicate long-term bridge preservation needs accurately, reliably, and transparently.

