

NEWS Release

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Does Kentuckiana's Infrastructure Make the Grade?

New report assigns grades to region's bridges, dams, roads and transit

Louisville, Ky. –Kentuckiana residents are spending more time stuck in traffic and less time at home with their families, a daily reminder that the state of our region's infrastructure directly affects our economy and quality of life. Today, members of the Louisville and Southwest Indiana branches of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) released the first-ever *Kentuckiana Infrastructure Report Card*, which assigned the region's infrastructure a cumulative grade of C.

The 2010 *Kentuckiana Infrastructure Report Card* evaluated 11 vital infrastructure categories: aviation, bridges, dams, drinking water, energy, flood protection/flood plain management, inland waterways, roads, solid waste, transit and wastewater.

"Infrastructure is vital to every community and knowing how the Louisville area is doing will help us set funding priorities," said Ted Niemann, *Kentuckiana Infrastructure Report Card* Committee Chairman. "Knowing where we are will help us to focus our resources to maintain and improve our region's quality of life."

The Kentuckiana study area included the Indiana counties of Clark, Floyd, Harrison, Scott and Washington, and the Kentucky counties of Bullitt, Henry, Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer and Trimble.

Dams, which was assigned a D, received one of the lowest grades on the Report Card. The total cost to rehabilitate Indiana's 241 high hazard dams is estimated at more than \$200 million, while it is estimated to cost more than \$160 million to rehabilitate Kentucky's high hazard dams, 20 of which are included in the study area.

Joining dams with a dismal grade of D are the region's bridges and roads. More than 8 percent of the 2,020 bridges in the Kentuckiana region are structurally deficient, meaning the bridge may be closed or have speed and/or weight limits applied. More than 27 % of the area bridges are functionally obsolete, a "functionally deficient bridge" has "older design features and geometrics, and though not unsafe, cannot accommodate current traffic volumes, vehicle sizes and weights."

Similarly, roads received a D due to the \$3.1 billion and \$64.1 billion in unfunded projects in the Kentucky and Indiana counties in the study area, respectively. Each traveler experienced a delay of 32 hours per year more in 2003 than in 1982. The total yearly cost of congestion was estimated at \$336 million in 2003 according to the Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency (KIPDA).

Fairing slightly better was the region's transit infrastructure, which received a grade of D+. As the population ages and congestion on the roadways increases, more people are expected to rely on public transportation. Sixty-two buses, or one-fourth of the Transit Authority of River City's active fleet, are older than their designed useful life, generally considered 12 years for a conventional bus. A total of \$83 million is needed to replace the 178 buses in the fleet that currently need to be replaced. Rural transit systems also need additional funding to meet the needs of the increasing disabled and elderly population.

Coming in with a grade of C- was the region's wastewater infrastructure. Indiana and Kentucky have a total of \$5.9 billion and \$2.8 billion in wastewater improvement needs statewide, respectively. Wastewater utilities in both states struggle to balance reinvesting in existing infrastructure while still meeting the demands of expanding the system.

Kentuckiana's drinking water and solid systems were assigned a grade of C+. As of December 2008, nearly 98 percent of the population in the study area was served by a potable drinking water supply system. A total of \$230 million in funding needs have been identified in the Kentuckiana region. Meanwhile, Kentuckiana produces nearly 1.5 million tons of municipal solid waste, in 2007. Both Indiana and Kentucky have grant programs to encourage recycling programs; however Indiana temporarily suspended their grant program due to state budget restrictions. At the same time, illegal dumps are still prevalent in the region. Litter in the Kentucky counties studied cost taxpayers \$3 million to clean up in 2007.

Joining drinking water and solid waste with a C+ grade are the region's flood protection/flood plain management systems. Four of the seven flood control projects in the region are more than 55 years old and are characterized as minimally acceptable by the Army Corp of Engineers. There is inadequate funding for repairs related to tree removal, concrete wall crack repair and wall joint repair. Louisville-Jefferson County is the only county in the Kentuckiana region that participates in the voluntary National Flood Insurance Program Community Rating System. Participation in the program would lower flood plain insurance premiums reflecting the lower the risk of flooding resulting from the communities actions.

Fairing slightly better, energy and aviation infrastructure received a B-. On both the Kentucky and Indiana sides of the study area residential and commercial rates for electric and gas are lower than the national average. Investment is needed to increase energy base load generation and peak demand capacity, while additional public outreach is necessary to encourage energy conservation. Opportunities in alternative energy resources need to be explored and the construction of energy efficient and sustainable buildings should be encouraged.

Kentuckina's aviation infrastructure received a B- because 3 of the 4 NPIAS airports in the study area have active improvement programs. Of the 46 airports in the Kentuckiana region, only one provides both air carrier service and general aviation services. The remaining 45 are general aviation airports. Federal funding accounts for the majority of funding for airports, while state and local funding is either minimal or nonexistent.

Coming in with the highest grade on the report card, inland waterways received a B. A new 1,200-foot lock chamber came online at the McAlpine Lock in April 2009. This new lock eliminates previous river traffic bottlenecks reducing transportation costs. However, maintenance is necessary at the McAlpine Dam to ensure continued safe operation and maintenance of the navigational pool. Dredging costs in the Kentuckiana region could approach \$550,000 annually to keep the 57 million tons of commodities moving through the area.

The Kentuckiana Report Card Committee consisted of members from ASCE's Louisville Branch, Kentucky Section and the Southwest Branch of the Indiana Section.

To receive a copy of the report card, including all 11 grades, contact :

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