

Altmire Statement on Pennsylvania's Structurally Deficient Bridges

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Representative Jason Altmire (PA-4), a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, released the following statement from today's full committee hearing on the nation's structurally deficient bridges:

"Thank you, Chairman Oberstar, for calling this important hearing today to examine the nation's structurally deficient bridges. On August 1, my thoughts and prayers, as well as those of my constituents, were with you and all Minnesotans affected by the tragic collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge. For many, this tragic accident was an eye-opening event about the state of our nation's bridges. For others, it unfortunately highlighted a point that has been made many times before."

"The condition of bridges throughout the country is a national crisis. In Pennsylvania, we have the highest number of structurally deficient bridges in the country. PennDOT classifies 6,000 of the more than 25,000 bridges in the commonwealth as structurally deficient, including approximately 800 in need of outright replacement. The average age of these bridges is 50 years and, in the six counties in western Pennsylvania that I represent, many are over 100 years old."

"The number of structurally deficient bridges in the six counties in my district is alarming, totaling over 1,000 bridges. Of these bridges, 29 have sufficiency ratings of 10 or below, and 566 are rated at 50 or below. These ratings are on a scale of 0 to 100 and are comprised of assessments of the bridge's structural condition, its ability to meet current traffic conditions, and how essential the bridge is for public use. Sufficiency ratings of 50 or below qualify a bridge for federal funding, and require regular inspections from state Departments of Transportation."

"Two bridges in my district - the Koppel Bridge and the Rochester-Beaver Bridge - are steel truss bridges of a similar design to the I-35W span. The Koppel Bridge, which carries Route 151 over the Beaver River in North Sewickley, Beaver County, was constructed in 1915 and has a sufficiency rating of 8. The Rochester-Beaver Bridge, which is part of Route 51 and also runs over the Beaver River, was built in 1963 and has a sufficiency rating of 62. PennDOT has inspected both since the I-35W tragedy. Both remain open and are deemed safe for travel."

"As the state with the largest percentage of structurally deficient bridges, there is no shortage of examples in Pennsylvania of bridges that are in dire need of rehabilitation, repair or replacement. In total, the state estimates \$11 billion is required to update the 6,000 structurally deficient bridges."

"It is imperative for us to work in a bipartisan manner to develop a solution that will generate the massive level of funding required to repair and rebuild our nation's bridges. I look forward to today's testimony from Secretary Peters, representatives from state Departments of Transportation from across the country, and several transportation experts. It is my hope that this hearing will be the first step in developing a solution to the nation's bridge crisis."