



Oklahoma makes new strides in reducing structurally deficient highway bridges

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Oklahoma wants to be known as being near the top of the list of states with the best bridges, and now it is closer than ever to making that goal a reality. The Oklahoma Department of Transportation has crossed more than 70 bridges off its total structurally deficient state highway bridge list in the past year. And with new funding mechanisms in place, it is on track to address all current structurally deficient state highway bridges by the end of the decade.

In new figures released from the latest round of inspections in 2011, the number of structurally deficient state highway bridges now stands at 634, down from 706 bridges identified in a 2010 report. "Structurally deficient" means structural members of a bridge are showing signs of deterioration and the structure itself needs to be significantly rehabilitated or replaced.

"This reduction shows Oklahoma's investment in our highways is steadily improving our bridges and allowing us to eliminate a critical backlog of projects," Oklahoma Gov. Mary Fallin said. "Oklahomans should be proud of this continuing progress on our transportation infrastructure which provides a reliable travel network for our citizens and businesses."

With ODOT maintaining about 6,800 state highway bridges statewide, the new numbers reflect that nine percent of those structures are currently considered structurally deficient. In 2004, Oklahoma topped national lists for the number of deficient bridges, with nearly 1,200 bridges or 17 percent considered structurally deficient. In 2006, the state legislature created the Rebuilding Oklahoma Access and Drivers Safety (ROADS) program, which led to a new era in funding highway and bridge projects. Since that time, the structurally deficient bridge number has been sliced almost in half; from nearly 1,200 bridges to 634 by the end of 2011.

"There is a tremendous momentum underway in repairing or replacing these bridges and watching those numbers shrink each year," Oklahoma Transportation Secretary Gary Ridley said. "We are fully committed to continuing these efforts and reaching our goal to make our state one of the top in the country for having a safer, modern bridge system."

In Oct. 2011, Gov. Fallin announced the "Bridge Improvement and Turnpike Modernization Plan" which called for ODOT to program all current structurally deficient bridges into its 8-Year Construction Work Plan and for the legislature to increase funding to the ROADS program with existing state revenues and no new taxes. Legislation enhancing the ROADS fund by \$480 million through 2019 was signed by Gov. Fallin in June 2012.

"Gov. Fallin's vision along with support from the state legislature will provide for the elimination of the backlog of structurally deficient bridges on the Oklahoma state highway system by 2019," ODOT Chief Engineer Gary Evans said. "This will essentially take us from worst to among the best, and move the state from an unmanageable system to a manageable system with respect to highway bridges. This is truly historic for our state."

Oklahoma's highway bridge progress will be shown in the latest inspection data submitted to the Federal Highway Administration for the National Bridge Inventory database. This nation-wide compilation of 2011 data from all states is expected to be released soon.

INFORMATION RELEASE

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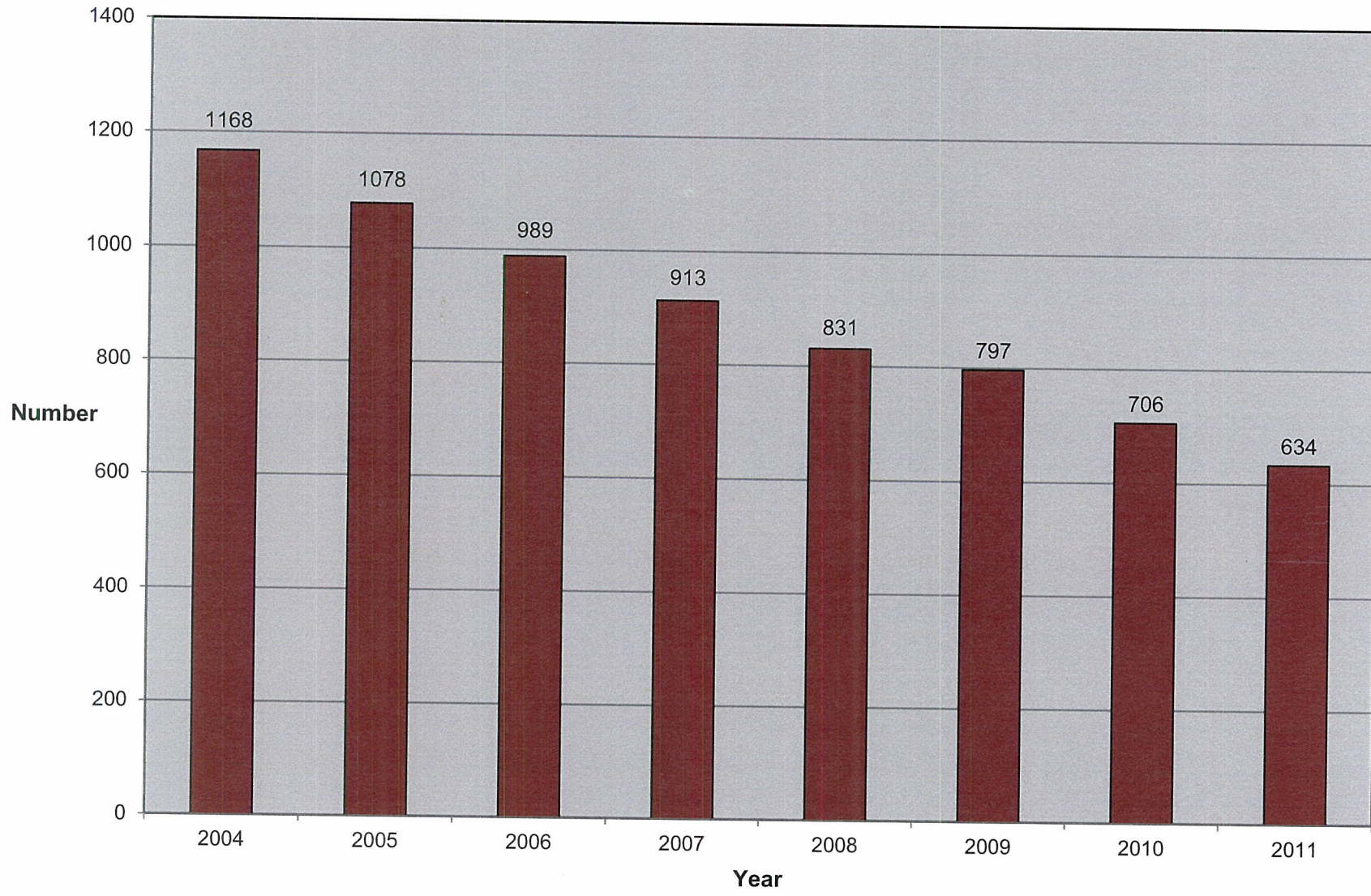
It is important to note, however, the data not only includes Oklahoma highway bridges but also more than 16,000 city and county bridges which are maintained separately by local governments. The new figures from 2011 inspections show, of those other structures, 4,636 are considered structurally deficient.

While those total numbers may keep Oklahoma's overall ranking near the top of national deficient bridge lists this year, state highway bridges continue to show marked progress. The Oklahoma Department of Transportation will keep building on this momentum to improve the state's infrastructure and provide a safe and reliable transportation system for the state.

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(Editors and News Directors: For more information call the ODOT Media & Public Relations Division at 405-521-6000.)

**On System SD Bridges
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Based on year of the actual inspection