

IOWA'S 2015 GPA: C -

D+

BRIDGES

Iowa ranks fifth in the nation in terms of the most bridges. One in every five in Iowa is rated structurally deficient or posted with weight restrictions, the third worst rating in the nation despite increased freight needs. While there is progress in reducing the number of structurally deficient bridges by the Iowa Department of Transportation, there are always going to be more bridges to fix today and in the future at current funding levels.

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LEVEES

Iowa's 462 miles of documented levees are functioning adequately with typical stream flows, but 57 levees are only minimally acceptable and 18 are unacceptable. Several levees in Iowa are not in compliance with FEMA and/or USACE guidelines. At present, all new levee designs are sent to the Department of Natural Resources for review prior to construction, and although this review is thorough, funding and staff are not available for follow up once these levees are constructed.

B+

SOLID WASTE

Solid waste in Iowa is handled primarily by public facilities and includes waste collection, processing, and sanitary landfills. Approximately 42% of solid waste generated is diverted from landfills due to recycling, and 86% of all eligible containers get recycled due to Iowa's "Bottle Bill." Several new techniques and technologies have the opportunity to further improve solid waste management in the state.

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ROADS

A majority of Iowa's roadways were built 50 to 60 years ago, and the design life of these streets and highways has been met or exceeded. Traffic volumes, along with freight traffic, have increased by about 123% on primary roadways over the last 30 years, and system-wide pavement conditions are deteriorating.



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RAIL

Iowa's rail system has dropped from 10,000 miles in 1980 to 3,800 miles today. Rail's share of freight movement has declined to about 37%, yet railroad traffic is up 217% since the 80s. Some main lines have become so heavily used that service levels are hard to maintain and double or triple tracking may be needed.



D

DAMS

Steps need to be made to create a funding program to assist dam owners with rehabilitation projects for the oldest of Iowa's dams, increase the State of Iowa's authority to require Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) for high hazard dams, and grow Iowa's budget for dam safety programs. With only two staff available, only about 10% are able to be regularly inspected.



Photo Credit: "Red Rock Dam" CC image courtesy of Carl Wycoff on www.flickr.com

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AVIATION

While capacity is adequate today, substantial growth can be expected over the next 20 years. Only 61% of the state's airports meet all service level requirements. Work remains to be done to minimize flight obstructions, with only 43% of all airports protected by land use ordinances.

C ELECTRICAL ENERGY

Iowa's ongoing concern is with aging transmission infrastructure. Iowa's Investor-Owned Utilities had over 1,000 miles of transmission lines greater than 50 years old in the most recent Iowa Utilities Board Report (10%). Nearly 60% of Iowa's reported lines are 30 years old or older. Aging lines may result in lower reliability and increased operating and maintenance costs.



Photo Credit: "Electric Power Line Towers" CC image courtesy of Stefan Andrej Shambora on www.flickr.com

C+ DRINKING WATER

The quality and quantity of source water available in the state has historically been quite good; however, recent weather extremes, growing residential and industrial demands, and the growing challenge posed by excessive nutrients in the state's waterways are elevating the need for increased attention from utilities and increases demand on treatment facilities. Underground drinking water infrastructure in the state is aging, and many utilities are unable to invest as heavily in the replacement of these vulnerable transmission and distribution systems as is needed.

D INLAND WATERWAYS

Of the 13 locks and dams along the Mississippi, 12 are 80 years old, and only one can handle modern tows in a single lockage. The lock and dam system on the Upper Mississippi River is well past its design life. The result is that unexpected repairs which hinder the use of system often force shippers to use rail and truck transport for their goods.



C- WASTEWATER

Wastewater discharges that do not meet state and federal requirements can damage delicate ecosystems and create costly environmental consequences. While wastewater plants are regularly inspected and maintained, the collection lines are often allowed to reach the end of their service lives without being checked, leading to unexpected collapse, back-ups, and the need for emergency repairs.

Iowa's Infrastructure

The 2015 Report Card for Iowa's Infrastructure is a tool that shows all Iowans the extent, condition, and importance of the state's infrastructure assets that support modern life. The Report Card is used to educate citizens, business leaders, and elected officials to the needs of our infrastructure and to encourage appropriate support for maintaining and improving these crucial assets.

The 2015 Report Card for Iowa's Infrastructure contains one good B grade, seven mediocre Cs, and three poor Ds. Infrastructure provides the foundation of our state's economic viability and supports our well-being and quality of life. It enables modern life and underpins our ability to produce and sell Iowa products in a world market. As our infrastructure continues to age, deteriorate, and lack adequate capacity, we will continue to face higher cost for goods and services with less reliability. ASCE encourages Iowans to educate themselves on the importance of our statewide infrastructure network on their lives, jobs, and businesses. Let your local and state officials know that it is important to Iowa's future to find ways of maintaining, improving, and expanding our infrastructure systems to support modern life.

For more information visit
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