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Rep. Miller Urges Use of Proven Anti-Corrosion Treatment for Connecticut's Bridges

Cathodic Protection Not Used In CT Despite Proven Success in Other States

Connecticut should begin using a proven anti-corrosion treatment to prevent further deterioration of the state's bridges, 411 of which have been rated in 'poor' or worse condition by inspectors, state Representative Lawrence G. Miller said today.

"One of those bridges is the Moses Wheeler Bridge that crosses the Housatonic River from Stratford to Milford, which is listed in critical condition," said Representative Miller, R-122nd District. "The Moses Wheeler Bridge is used by between 110,000 and 120,000 vehicles a day and is highly susceptible to corrosion. Contributing to the bridge's corrosion problems are diesel emissions, salty air from Long Island Sound, stray electrical currents from several overhead power transmission lines that cross the structure, the CL&P power plant in Milford, two drawbridges on either side of the Moses Wheeler Bridge, as well as electrical equipment at the Dock Shopping Plaza. Two communication cables also cross the bridge."

"Salt, which is a component of the material used to de-ice highways, plus the salt-laden air from Long Island Sound also combines with water and oxygen to produce a highly corrosive environment that also affects the concrete sections of bridges," Representative Miller added.

"In light of the recent bridge collapse in Minneapolis, I am more concerned than ever about not only the Moses Wheeler Bridge, but the Commodore Hull Bridge on Route 8 that crosses the Housatonic River as well, both of which are located in my district," Representative Miller said. "While I compliment the state for its decision to hire upwards of 80 new inspectors for the Department of Transportation, I also believe something has to be done as soon as possible to halt the ongoing corrosion of our bridges."

"That is why I strongly recommend that DOT begin using a proven anti-corrosion treatment process that is relatively inexpensive and widely used in many other states," Representative Miller said. "It is known as the cathodic process and it involves the application of electrical current to a bridge's metallic structure. Using this process, corrosion can be reduced to virtually zero. It protects bridges from deteriorating even in a corrosive environment like the one that afflicts the Moses Wheeler Bridge. The technology has been in use since the 1930's and is currently utilized to prevent corrosion

on the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco Bay Bridge, on the Alaskan Pipeline and on most gas pipelines in the United States."

Nationwide, the direct cost of corrosion on the country's infrastructure, which includes highways, bridges, railroads, airports, waterways, pipelines and storage tanks amounts to an estimated annual cost of $22.6 billion. The annual direct cost of corrosion to highway bridges nationwide amounts to about $8.3 billion a year, consisting of $3.8 billion to replace structurally deficient bridges over the next 10 years; $2 billion for maintenance and cost of capital for concrete bridge decks; $2 billion for maintenance and cost of capital for concrete substructures; and $0.5 billion for maintenance painting of steel bridges, Representative Miller noted.

"If we are going to spend $119 million to replace the Moses Wheeler Bridge, which will take about seven years, we also should be taking responsible steps to protect it from corrosion – which means we should immediately begin using the cathodic anti-corrosion process to protect both our existing bridges and those that are yet to be built," Representative Miller said. "It has been used for more than a half a century because it provides effective anti-corrosion protection at an affordable cost to taxpayers. Connecticut needs to follow the lead of most other states in the United States and begin using this proven technology to protect our bridges – before another Mianus River Bridge collapse forces us to act."