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## Construction

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### County bridge report shows improvement

- *On a scale of zero to 100 the “average sufficiency rating” of county bridges has gone from 64.1 to 68.3.*

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Journal Staff Reporter

How safe are King County's bridges? It's a pertinent question, in light of the recent bridge collapse in Minneapolis.

King County owns 195 bridges, ranging from the 1,320-foot-long South Park Bridge in Seattle to the 16-foot-long Bear Creek Bridge in Redmond.

Every two years, the county is responsible for reporting on the health of its bridges — as well as 75 other bridges owned by cities within its jurisdiction. The report goes to the state and the Federal Highway Administration.

The 2006 report was released yesterday. On a scale of zero to 100 the “average sufficiency rating” of county bridges has gone from 64.1 to 68.3, meaning they are a little safer than they were five years ago. The rating looks at how structurally sound and serviceable a bridge is, and how important it is to the region.

King County's worst bridge is the South Park Bridge, which urgently needs to be replaced, according to the report. It is the county's longest bridge, carrying 20,000 vehicles per day across the Duwamish River, and scores a dismal 4 out of 100 points on a federal scale of “bridge health.” That makes it the sixth-worst bridge in the state. Experts say it has a one in three chance of being destroyed in the next major earthquake.

It will cost about \$150 million in 2010 dollars to replace the South Park Bridge; \$110 million of that will be secured if voters approve a tri-county transportation ballot measure this fall.

If the ballot measure is defeated, King County could decide to establish a special transportation taxing district to pay for a new South Park bridge, possibly by raising vehicle licensing fees. The bridge will have to be closed by 2010 if it is not replaced, the county says.

King County also wants to replace the Bandaret Bridge, which spans May Creek south of Issaquah, next year. That project — which the county estimates will cost \$4 million — is already funded.

Several bridges in King County are in varying stages of being rebuilt, including the 84-year-old Tolt Bridge near Carnation. The new bridge will have two 300-foot-long steel trusses across the Snoqualmie River and the adjoining wetland.

The new Tolt Bridge is under construction by Wilder Construction and is scheduled to open next year.

On the North Fork of the Snoqualmie River, a recreational bridge called the Wagners Bridge is being rebuilt by Scarsella Brothers. The original 1977-era bridge was made of log beams that were rotting. The new bridge is scheduled to open this fall. It will have concrete girders and a concrete deck.

Last year the county also finished building the York Bridge, a new concrete arch bridge over the Sammamish River in Redmond.

After the November floods, it cost King County almost \$3 million to repair two bridges and an adjoining road. The Raging River flowed into the east abutment of the Preston-Frontage Bridge and took out about half the soil, requiring immediate repairs.

“The large landslide up the road changed the course of the river so it slammed into this bridge abutment. That was unpredictable,” said Jim Marcus, the county's managing engineer.

The Skykomish River got so high that floating timber debris damaged the deck of the Baring Bridge, a timber suspension bridge that is the only access across the Skykomish River for about 147 property-owners.

In the last 12 years, King County has upgraded 110 bridges to withstand an earthquake of 7.5 magnitude and has five more bridges on its upgrade list. The seismic retrofit program is scheduled to be completed next year.

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