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[00:01:12] **Speaker 1** That bridge opened in 1931. How aged are other bridge crossings in Wisconsin? According to the National Bridge Inventory of the more than 14,000 bridges in this state, nearly 1,000 are classified as what they call structurally deficient. We turn to Wisconsin DOT Bureau of Structures Director, Josh Dietschy for more. And thanks very much for being here.

[00:01:37] **Speaker 2** Sure, not a problem, happy to join.

[00:01:39] **Speaker 1** So what does it mean for a bridge to be structurally deficient?

[00:01:44] **Speaker 2** Uh, so it's a term that probably sounds a little scarier than it is. Really. It just means that there is something, um, some kind of deterioration that's been noted with the bridge. We always try to stress that. That doesn't mean it's unsafe. If there's a bridge open in the state open to travel on, you can feel safe traveling across it.

[00:02:03] **Speaker 1** So does Wisconsin have a lot of older bridges like the one, like the Lansing Bridge?

[00:02:09] **Speaker 2** And not many that are quite as old as the Lansing Bridge. The average age of the bridges that the state owns is about 37 years. The average agent, the local system is about 42 years old. So yeah, something as old as the building Lansing is a little bit atypical.

[00:02:24] **Speaker 1** In Wisconsin, what specific bridges need immediate repair or removal? Are there any?

[00:02:34] **Speaker 2** Again, I would stress that if it's open, it's safe. So we always have a program we were going in and rehabilitating or replacing bridges. So you mentioned that there's over 14,000 bridges in the state. About 2% of those are classified as being poor condition. Kind of at a high level, as we inspect bridges, they get rated as either good, fair, or poor. And so again, with about 2% of those bridges in poor condition, those are the ones that we're focusing on. Again, not because they're unsafe, not because you shouldn't be traveling over them, but just because they're going to need some work to keep them in service in the near future. So those are the ones that we've got in the program that are in the planning stages for, you know, again getting some kind of rehabilitation or potentially being replaced.

[00:03:14] **Speaker 1** How heavy of a lift is it to inspect all of these more than 14,000 bridges across the state of Wisconsin?

[00:03:22] **Speaker 2** Yeah, I think most people are surprised when we talk about it that we do have that many bridges in the state. You know about the big ones that you travel over, but there's so many that are over just small creeks or small rivers that you probably don't even realize where you're going over a bridge. So yeah, of those 14,000, about 5,000 a little over 5, 000 are owned by the state and the remainder then are owned local municipalities, cities, villages, towns, so on and so forth. So the state bridges are inspected by mostly by state forces, although we do use and consultant engineers as well. And the same thing on the local side the local sign they do have some local staff that will inspect bridges But they lean heavily on consultant engineers as well So most when the bridges are in good condition basically new they can be inspected on as much as a four-year cycle But for the most part bridges are required to be Inspected on a two-year Cycle or as they get in that worst condition into poor condition on an annual basis So yeah, it's a heavy lift depending on the size of the bridge the larger bridges may take up to a week to inspect some of the larger britches like you referenced the Lansing Bridge or some of our more signature bridges. Others, it can be done in a morning or an afternoon, but yes, it's definitely a pretty big effort.

[00:04:32] **Speaker 1** We took a look at the work that's happening on that bridge from DeSoto to Lansing and it made me wonder how tricky is it to repair bridges while they're still in use.

[00:04:47] **Speaker 2** Yeah, it depends on the situation. You know, obviously the traffic is a big thing that plays into that. If you're trying to repair a bridge on the interstate, there's going to be lane closures. There's a large bridge over the Wisconsin River just north of Portage that's being replaced right now if you've driven through that area. And in that case, you'll see lane closers or lane shifts. So it's definitely possible. But yeah, it does present some complications for sure. But again, we make sure to do it in a way that is safe for sure. And as we try to minimize the disruption to the traveling public as much as we can.

[00:05:21] **Speaker 1** Alright, well we are all glad to know that the bridges are safe. John Dietschy, thank you so much.

[00:05:29] **Speaker 2** No problem. Thanks for joining.

[00:05:30] **Speaker 1** For more on this and other issues facing Wisconsin, visit our website at pbswisconsin.org and then click on the news tab. That's our program for tonight. I'm Fredrika Freyberg. Have a good weekend.

[00:06:57] **Speaker 2** But there's gusset plates in the truss. And that was kind of ultimately the issue that caused the collapse of that bridge. So yeah, we have different procedures, more in-depth procedures at looking at gussets plates now that we weren't doing before. So we definitely learn something every time that happens, but unfortunately sometimes it does take that to happen to kind of teach us something.

[00:07:18] **Speaker 1** All right, well thank you so much and again sorry for the difficulty in getting this connected.

[00:07:24] **Speaker 3** No, apologies. I think it's probably on my end. I never, I don't know, every once in a while Zoom acts up. I'm glad we made it work.

[00:07:31] **Speaker 1** I know, yeah, have a good weekend. Thank you.

[00:07:34] **Speaker 3** All right, thank you, you too.

[00:07:35] **Speaker 1** Goodbye.