

After Italy bridge collapse, France worries about its infrastructure

By [RFI](#) Issued on 17-08-2018 Modified 17-08-2018 to 14:36



The Pont Alexandre III bridge in Paris, France was built at the end of the 19th century. Flickr/CC/Joe de Sousa

One-third of France's bridges are in need of repair, while seven percent are presently "at risk of collapse", according to an audit published by the Transport Ministry in June. The audit has received renewed attention following the deadly collapse of the Morandi Bridge in Genoa, Italy on Tuesday.

In addition to France's aging bridges, seventeen percent of its roads are also in need of structural repair, according to the audit performed by two Swiss companies. The auditors examined 12,000 bridges and 10,000 kilometres of France's national public road network.

The 380,000 kilometres of local roads don't seem to be faring much better. "A similar percentage of regional and local roads are suffering from poor maintenance", according to the Paris-based Institute for Roads, Streets and Mobility Infrastructure (IDRRIM), cited in French daily [Le Monde](#).

Even when authorities are made aware of structural deficiencies, renovations are often delayed. The audit notes that, on average, French bridges are repaired 22 years after the first signs of structural deterioration.

Some lawmakers have said that insufficient budgets are largely to blame.

ADVERTISEMENT



Votre solution entreprise

Nouvelle 500X BUSINESS

Inspired by

“The French road network is very efficient, but it’s deteriorating rapidly. Year after year, the government underinvests by 200 million to 300 million euros,” *Le Monde* quotes Matthieu Orphelin, MP of President Emmanuel Macron’s majority Republic on the Move party (LRM), as saying.

But other experts, like engineer Jean-Michel Torrenti, have said “there is no absolute urgency” to act now, or even in the next few years. Torrentini, of the French Institute of science and technology for transport, development and networks (IFSTTAR), is quoted in *Le Monde* as saying “the risk isn’t necessarily that bridges will collapse, but that bridges will be forced to close down”.

“The longer we wait to move forward with construction maintenance, the more urgent and expensive this construction will become,” Torrenti said.

Rail concerns

Currently, about a quarter of rail lines have exceeded their design life, according to *Le Monde*.

In a report published earlier this year, Jean-Cyril Spinetta warned in a report for France’s state-owned rail operator SNCF that underinvestment could negatively affect local lines. “If investment levels remain the same, nearly half of the 9,000 kilometres of local lines could be closed to traffic by 2026,” he said.

However, government investment in rail has steadily increased over the years, from 800 million euros in 2004 to nearly three billion euros today, as *Le Monde* reports. And the budget allocated to rail is only expected to increase. But the paper says these budget increases were too little, too late for the national rail network, as it now plays catch up to address its infrastructure issues.