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Local News

September 13, 2011

Process helps restore older bridges

By Taylor Kuykendall
 Register-Herald Reporter

GLENCO HOLLOW —

A West Virginia researcher is looking at solving the problem of widespread deterioration of the state's bridges.

Hota GangaRao, founder and director of West Virginia University's Constructed Facilities Center, is working on a process for preserving existing bridges and building. According to a release from WVU, GangaRao has developed a process that has already rehabilitated 30 bridges across the state at average cost of about a quarter of the bridge's original price.

"West Virginia is among the leading states with bridge deficiencies for a couple reasons," GangaRao said. "No. 1, the state does not have the funds to rehabilitate all its old bridges. No. 2, traffic intensity and load capacities have increased significantly since these bridges were built."

With a partnership with the West Virginia Division of Highways, the CFC hopes to apply its new process to about 400 to 500 concrete bridges across the state over the next five years.

"Because of the simple fact of the country's failure to sufficiently invest in our transportation infrastructure, including bridges, it has been estimated our economy has lost 870,000 jobs and \$3.1 trillion in declined growth of our national gross domestic product," GangaRao said, citing recent numbers from the American Society for Civil Engineering.

"In addition, U.S. business would be not expending at an extra \$430 billion by 2020 — almost half a trillion dollars — in terms of transportation costs, if our roads and bridges were in better shape," he said. "Deficient highways and bridges led to an additional cost of more than \$129 billion alone in 2010 to U.S. households and businesses. That's why we should be concerned."

GangaRao said that once a bridge is identified for rehabilitation, it is stripped down to a solid portion of original concrete or steel. It is then covered with a 2-inch mortar and wrapped tightly with either glass fabric or carbon fabric and resin.

"Not only does it hold things together, but the wrap also enhances the strength of the overall structure," GangaRao said.

The CFC trains contractors and DOH workers to wrap the bridges, but CFC also does some of the work on its own.

CFC also uses its technique for older buildings, but it is not involved in preservation of residential buildings.

"I think our infrastructure is going to deteriorate even more in the next five or 10 years simply because we just do not have the money to keep pace with the rate of deterioration that's taking place," he said.

Though there is some improvement in the repair of structures, funding concerns are widespread. The U.S. House Transportation Committee recently announced federal cuts of about one third and intends to lock those cuts over the next six years.

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"This proposal is a real job-killer for West Virginia and the nation at a time when we need to be creating jobs, not cutting them. Our state's roads and bridges need repairs now," Gary Zuckett, executive director of West Virginia Citizen Action, said in a news release last week. "Congress is now back in session, and the federal transportation funding is set to expire at the end of September, so now is the time to make sure that our lawmakers understand the negative effects of this House proposal and encourage them to keep funding at present levels."

— E-mail: tkuykendall@register-herald.com

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Local News

Calendar — Wednesday, September 14, 2011

September 14, 2011

Utility insurance to be offered

September 14, 2011

DEP youth conference planned

September 14, 2011

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DEP holds informal conference on surface mine

September 14, 2011

Local news briefs

September 14, 2011

Two arrested in connection with robberies

September 14, 2011

Job fair aims to match potential employees with right employer

The Register-Herald hopes to match local employers with local employees today as it hosts the Fall 2011 Job Fair.

September 14, 2011

Vandalism reported at Raleigh elementary

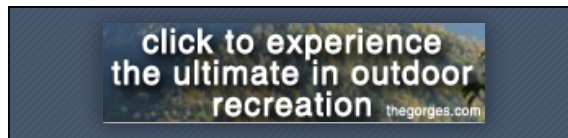
September 14, 2011

Beckley awards contract to Ohio firm

Beckley Common Council members started their bimonthly meeting by awarding a bid for the installation of vehicle exhaust systems at each of the city's three fire stations. The bid was awarded to MagnaGrip, of Cincinnati, Ohio for the price of \$112,136.

September 14, 2011

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August 6, 2010

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