

What's next for Grand Island's aging bridges? A study will weigh the options

- Matthew Trunfio – Buffalo News August 5, 2026

Every couple of years, maintenance and repairs take place on the bridges connecting Grand Island, two connecting to the Town of Tonawanda, two to Niagara Falls. Rather than dealing with that upkeep, the state Thruway Authority is considering another option sure to strike fear into any resident or commuter who counts on them: the replacement of all four bridges.

But fear not, Island residents. Such a dramatic step is so far only being studied, not planned. In 2024, Congress [approved a \\$1.6 million federal grant](#) for the authority to complete a Planning and Environmental Linkages study that determined what the best steps forward for the bridges would be. Having received the money earlier this year, the authority is now beginning its review, which officials estimate will take up to two years. “It will give us a guideline and help us plan for the future,” Thruway Authority Executive Director Frank Hoare said Wednesday at a news conference.

John Boser, director of infrastructure management at the Thruway Authority, said the study will conduct a “life-cycle cost analysis,” that examines the recurring maintenance costs to keep the bridges open, along with “what is needed in the short term to keep the bridges open, safe and operational.”

While a final solution is yet to be sorted out, Boser said future options could range from keeping the current bridges up as they are, to replacing them all together with brand-new bridges or underwater tunnels.

Built in the 1930s and '60s, the four bridges, two on the north side and two on the south side, are part of the Niagara Thruway. In 2025, 45.8 million vehicles traveled over the four bridges combined, with roughly 68,000 vehicles using the bridges every day. After decades, they have become “increasingly expensive to maintain due to both their age and structural complexity,” Hoare said in a 2024 news release announcing the study’s funding.

Asked about the future of the four bridges, Grand Island Supervisor Peter Marston said he was pleased to know the Thruway is taking a proactive approach. “I’m happy they’re not waiting until our backs are against the wall; the bridges are still operating and functional.”

Traffic regularly backs up on the Grand Island bridges during rush hour, even without construction. Any construction projects on the bridges add to the delays and, were any of the four bridges to be temporarily taken down to build a new one, the congestion would get worse. “I think most islanders will tell you that we need at least another lane on each one of our bridges, or a secondary bridge that would take traffic at peak times,” Marston said. “We get trouble every time we have an impaired vehicle on top of the bridge, and it really backs up Grand Island.

“It really affects us living here, getting home, and leaving. I think people would like to see improved flows, which would mean more lanes.”

The funding for the study comes from the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, better known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill. Signed into law by President Biden in 2021, [the bill](#) authorized \$1.2 trillion for transportation and infrastructure spending.

As the study gets underway, it will happen in the backdrop of a \$54 million project meant to fortify the bridges against severe earthquakes, ground motion and soil failure, that [kicked off just last month](#). The project relies on [\\$39 million in federal grant funding](#), with the remaining cost made up by the Thruway Authority.