

## Iler's Bridges Falling Down

*Letter to the Editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 10.20.22*

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is the largest bridge investment since construction of the Interstate Highway System. It brought \$456.8 million to repair North Carolina's bridges. None of that is going to the 53-year-old Cape Fear Memorial Bridge (CFMB), critical to our region and nearing the end of its useful life. That's because, as structurally deficient as CFMB is, we have 11,035 bridges that are worse.

North Carolina simply failed to maintain them. In 2019, the American Road and Transportation Builders Association called our bridges "among the worst in the country." The NC Chamber Foundation says we haven't invested enough "to maintain, let alone improve, the deteriorating system." TRIP, a transportation research nonprofit, says that failure costs us "\$10.3 billion each year."

Chad Kimes is an Engineer with North Carolina's Department of Transportation (NCDOT). He manages maintenance for our region's bridges. In January, Kimes explained: "While the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law makes important investments in bridges, the cost of replacing the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge exceeds the new funding being made available."

The Wilmington Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization held a board meeting in February to urge Kimes to prioritize CFMB. Kimes told them it's not within NCDOT's authority to request special assistance or appropriations from the legislature, which is the only body that can adequately fund proper maintenance or replacement of our bridges.

The legislator most responsible for failing to maintain our bridges is Frank Iler. Since 2011 Iler's been Chair of the North Carolina House of Representatives' Transportation Committee. Since 2015 he's also been Chair of its Appropriations on Transportation Committee. Eleven years of Iler's failed transportation leadership is more than we can afford.

Eric Terashima is a retired US Marine Corps colonel. He spent 30 years and 8 active combat tours bringing together people from different backgrounds to get the job done. We need fresh, new can-do leadership. On Nov. 8, elect Eric Terashima.

Claudia Tidwell  
Leland