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Safety concerns force state to close off Belmont bridge

BELMONT — One of the most heavily-used roads in the village is now posted with “Detour” signs because state inspectors closed the Church Street bridge over Tioga River last week for safety reasons.

“We are waiting for more details from engineers, but we hope to have a repair plan put in place and have the bridge fixed by Thanksgiving,” said Town Administrator K. Jeanne Beaudin.

The town was notified on Thursday that a routine state inspection of the bridge by the Department of Transportation found corroded steel culverts and other signs of wear that required its closure, Beaudin said.

The bridge is adjacent to Monument Square, and is one of a few entry roads into the center of Belmont Village.

Town officials were a bit surprised, as the bridge had passed inspection in previous years, although some “slight deficiencies” were found in 2012, said Jim Fortin, the town’s director of public works.

The town has asked for state aid to help pay for the repairs, and there is some money available in the town’s capital reserve funds, but Beaudin said no decisions on funding for the repairs will be made until the town has firm cost estimates.

Meanwhile, the detour route takes drivers on Dearborn Street and Seavey Road, requiring users of the bridge to drive more than a mile out of their way to get to the village and Route 106.

Johnson Street is not being used as a detour because it is one of the busiest roads in town, Fortin said.

The closure of the bridge is an infrastructure problem that towns and cities across the country are facing, Fortin said.

“That bridge was built in 1975. They don’t last forever,” he said.

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