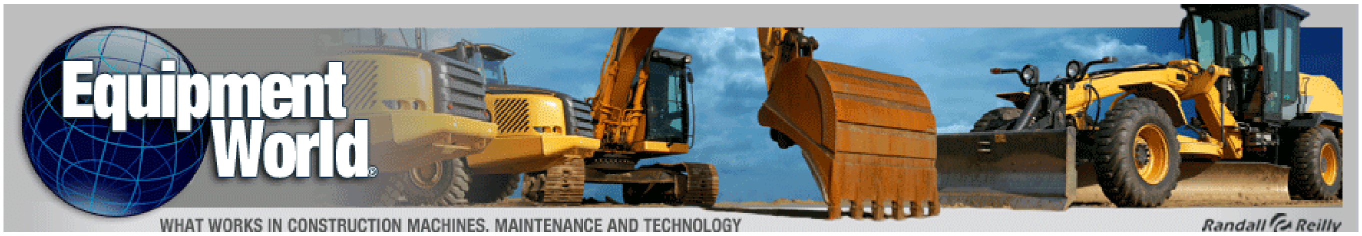

TRIP: 44 percent of Md.’s major roads need repair

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A new report examining Maryland’s transportation system finds that roads that are congested, deteriorated and not as safe as they could be cost the average Baltimore area motorist $2,226 each year, while Washington, D.C., drivers lose $2,296 annually — a total of $7 billion statewide.

The report, released Feb. 1 by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.,- based national transportation organization, finds that **44 percent of Maryland’s major roads are in need of repair**, more than a quarter of bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, more than half of the state’s urban roads are congested, and Maryland’s rural traffic fatality rate is more than double that of all other roads in the state. (***For a report on the state of the nation’s bridges broken down by state/interstate and city/county/township, go to www.BetterRoads.com and click on “Better Bridges.”***)

According to the TRIP report, **Future Mobility in Maryland: Meeting the State’s Needs for Safe and Efficient Mobility**, 26 percent of Maryland’s major roads are rated in poor condition and an additional 18 percent are in mediocre condition. Seven percent of the state’s bridges are structurally deficient and 19 percent are functionally obsolete.

These bridges are inspected regularly and are safe for travel, but many are in need of rehabilitation. In addition to deteriorating road and bridge conditions, the state’s roads are also becoming increasingly crowded, as commuting and commerce are constrained by growing traffic congestion on Maryland’s major urban roads.

In 2008, 55 percent of the state’s urban highways were congested during peak travel times – the eighth highest rate in the nation. The TRIP report also finds that Maryland’s rural, non-Interstate roads have a traffic fatality rate that is nearly two and a half times higher than that on all other roads in the state.

TRIP estimates that Maryland’s roadways that lack some desirable safety features, have inadequate capacity to meet travel demands or have poor pavement conditions cost the state’s drivers about $7 billion annually in the form of traffic crashes, additional vehicle operating costs and congestion-related delays. In the Washington, D.C., metro area this cost is $2,296 per motorist each year, while the average Baltimore driver loses $2,226 annually.

	VOC	Congestion	Safety	TOTAL
Baltimore	$ 603	$ 1,218	$ 405	**$ 2,226**
Washington, DC	$ 462	$ 1,555	$ 279	**$ 2,296**
STATEWIDE	$1.6 billion	$3.8 billion	$1.6 billion	**$7 billion**

Without a substantial boost in transportation funding, Maryland will be unable to complete numerous projects to improve the condition and expand the capacity of roads, bridges, and public transit systems, hampering the state’s ability to improve mobility and to enhance economic development opportunities.

Increased investment in Maryland’s transportation infrastructure could improve road and bridge conditions, ease congestion, enhance safety and support long-term economic growth. Numerous projects throughout the state are needed, but can not move forward under current funding conditions.

These projects include, but are not limited to, the following: improvements to the I-95/I-495 Interchange; widening portions of I-70 and I-695; constructing a new bridge over I-270 in Gaithersburg; widening the American Legion Bridge; implementing new transit lines (rail or bus rapid transit); and installing various pedestrian and bike trails throughout the state.

“Congestion costs Marylanders thousands of dollars and thousands of hours in time lost each year,” said Kathleen T. Snyder, CCE, president and CEO of the Maryland Chamber of Commerce, in a press statement. “Commuters, businesses and families are joining together to support a constitutional amendment to restore trust in our Transportation Trust Fund so that we can adequately fund the road, highway, bridge, and transit projects we need to move safely and efficiently through our State.”

The federal **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)**, more commonly called “the stimulus,” provided about $431 million in **stimulus funding for highway and bridge** improvements and $179 million for public transit improvements in Maryland.

This funding has served as an important down payment on needed road, highway, bridge, and transit improvements but is not sufficient to allow the state to proceed with numerous projects needed to modernize its surface transportation system. The federal surface transportation program, which expires on March 4, 2011, remains a critical source of funding for road and bridge repairs and transit improvements in Maryland.

“**Maryland’s deficient transportation system** is hitting the state’s drivers in the wallet at a time when many can ill afford it. It is much more cost effective to invest in building a sound transportation system than to pass along the cost of a deteriorated system to the state’s motorists,” said **Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP**, in a written statement. “It is critical that Maryland adequately fund its transportation system and that Congress produces a timely and adequately funded federal surface transportation program. Thousands of jobs and the state’s economy are riding on it.”