

## U.S. has a \$740 Billion Backlog of Roads and Bridges Repairs

[Clarissa Hawes](#) | November 9, 2016



Road construction in Ohio. (Photo: [Alice/Flickr](#))

The U.S. needs to devote \$740 billion to infrastructure spending in order to fix a network of deteriorating highways, roads and bridges, according to [TRIP](#), a national transportation research group based in Washington, D.C..

A study released by TRIP this week entitled, “Bumpy Roads Ahead: America’s Roughest Rides and Strategies to make our Roads Smoother,” finds that “road conditions could deteriorate even further in the future as the rate of vehicle travel continues to increase and local and state government find they are unable to adequately fund road repairs

The research group calculated the shortfall using statistics collected by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, or [AASHTO](#). The study also relied on federal and state road and bridge condition data.

“It really boils down to lack of funding at all levels, at the local, state and federal level,” said Carolyn Bonifas Kelly, spokeswoman for TRIP. “That being said, in almost every state, there does exist a transportation funding backlog.”

Roads and bridges in the U.S. [have taken a pounding from increased traffic](#). Vehicle travel in the U.S. was up 15 percent from 2000 to 2015, and commercial truck travel increased by 26 percent from 2000 to 2014. An additional increase of 72 percent in heavy truck travel in the U.S. is expected to occur between 2015 to 2030, according to the TRIP report.

“Now that we are seeing that vehicle and truck travel has returned to pre-recession levels and even surpassed that, it is critical that we find a way to keep the roads in good repair,” Kelly said.

AASHTO estimates that annual investment in our nation’s roads needs to increase by 36 percent – from \$88 billion to \$120 billion – assuming an annual one percent increase in vehicle miles traveled, Kelly said.

Infrastructure spending isn’t keeping pace with the increase in vehicle miles traveled, Kelly said.

[California](#) led all states in major roads and highways in poor conditions.

Three metropolitan areas in the state – San Francisco-Oakland, Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana and San Jose – have the highest percentage of roads rated “poor” of any large U.S. cities, according to the study. The report rated 71 percent of the roads in San Francisco as poor, 60 percent for the Los Angeles region and 59 percent for San Jose.

The state also ranked poorly for smaller urban areas. Concord, Calif., rated the worst in the category with 75 percent of its roads listed as poor.

Other states that fared poorly included Michigan and Oklahoma.

“Driving on roads in disrepair increases consumer costs by accelerating vehicle deterioration and depreciation, increasing the frequency of needed maintenance and requiring additional fuel consumption,” the report said.

The average motorist loses \$523 annually — \$112 billion nationally — to repairs and additional operating expenses caused by bad roads, according to TRIP.

Kelly said the level of deterioration of roads and highways in California is “largely a result of under investment.”

The current five-year transportation funding bill, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, or the [FAST Act](#), provides \$305 billion in transportation funding, an approximately 15 percent boost in national highway funding and an 18 percent increase in national transit funding.

However, Kelly said the level of funding still isn’t enough and doesn’t “contain a long-term sustainable revenue source.”

While TRIP doesn’t propose specific funding solutions – leaving it up to individual states to determine their transportation funding needs – Kelly said significant transportation funding needs to exist in nearly every state.

“The states aren’t able to operate efficiently because they simply don’t have enough funding available at many municipalities and state Department of Transportations, but there simply not enough funds at the federal level to keep the roads in good repair,” Kelly said.