

THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 2017

Faulty roads and bridges cost Johnson, Wyandotte motorists \$1,600 a year



By Matt Campbell
mcampbell@kcstar.com

Crumbling, crowded and unsafe roads and bridges cost Kansas motorists \$2.7 billion a year, according to a report released Thursday by a transportation study group.

That breaks down to nearly \$1,600 a year for every driver in Johnson and Wyandotte counties.

That comes in the form of vehicle operating costs on rough roads, congestion-related delays and traffic

crashes, the report said.

That is a consequence, in part, of the diversion of \$2.4 billion and counting from the Kansas Department of Transportation to the general fund to stanch revenue shortfalls, according to [TRIP](#), a Washington-based research group sponsored by businesses and organizations concerned with transportation issues.

TRIP says it does not take a position on specific legislative or executive actions, but it says the diversion of state funds away from transportation could increase to \$3.4 billion by fiscal 2019, further straining the roads and bridges infrastructure.

“We’re certainly pointing out this is a consequence,” Rocky Moretti, director of research and policy for TRIP, said in a visit Thursday to Overland Park.

The study included state roads as well as roads cared for by local governments. It included data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Texas A&M Transportation Institute, the Federal Highway Administration and KDoT.

Among the findings:

- Thirty-seven percent of Kansas’ major urban roads are in poor or mediocre condition.
- Nine percent of Kansas bridges are structurally deficient.
- Congestion costs time and fuel. Drivers in Johnson and Wyandotte counties waste 39 hours a year.
- Every \$1 in deferred maintenance will cost \$4 or \$5 in future repairs.
- Traffic crashes in which the roadway was likely a contributing factor cost Kansas motorists \$730 million a year in lost productivity, insurance and other expenses.

Tracey Osborne, president of the Overland Park Chamber of Commerce, said that 92 percent of Kansans surveyed think highways should be a priority for lawmakers. She said the chamber has long opposed the diversion of transportation money to other funds.

Matt Campbell: [816-234-4902](tel:816-234-4902), [@MattCampbellKC](https://twitter.com/MattCampbellKC)