PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

FRONT PAGE

THE COST OF BAD ROADS

For a Lafayette driver, it's over \$2,000 a year, study shows

Amanda McElfresh. amcelfresh@theadvertiser.co



A new study from TRIP, a national transportation research group, shows that roads in Lafayette that are congested or in poor condition cost drivers thousands of dollars each year in operating costs, lost time and crashes. Amanda McElfresh



Traffic remains at a standstill on Interstate 10 in Lafayette after a crash. A new study shows drivers pay more each year because of poor road conditions, crashes and a lack of safety features. (Photo: Advertiser file photo)

A new study shows Lafayette drivers pay an average of \$2,024 per year because of roads that are deteriorated, congested or lack safety features.

The costs are because of increased operating costs, crashes and congestion-related delays. The study was conducted by TRIP, a national transportation research group. Researchers also found Louisiana motorists spend \$6.5 billion each year on increased costs because of poor road conditions.

"Increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels could relieve traffic congestion; improve road, bridge and transit conditions, boost safety and support long-term economic

growth in Louisiana," TRIP officials said in a news release.

Poor conditions, congestion add up

In Lafayette, additional operating costs include accelerated vehicle depreciation, repair costs, increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

"This report underscores the critical need for Louisiana to invest more in our transportation infrastructure," said Jason El Koubi, president and CEO of One Acadiana.

Other findings in the report include:

- 60 percent of major local and state roads in the Lafavette area are in poor or mediocre condition
- Traffic congestion in the Lafayette area causes 26 annual hours of delay for the average motorist
- Lafayette traffic congestion costs the average driver \$715 per year in lost time and wasted fuel

"Better roads will save drivers money and enhance our economic competitiveness," El Koubi continued. "That's why improving our transportation infrastructure is a top priority for the businesses and families of Acadiana."

The report also found that, on average, 44 people were in killed in Lafayette traffic crashes in each of the last three years.

Study shows problems exist statewide

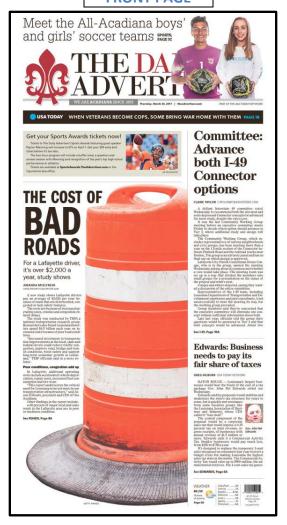
The bad road conditions and traffic congestion aren't confined to Lafayette.

According to the study, Baton Rouge drivers pay an average of \$2,466 because of higher operating costs, congestion and a lack of safety features.

In the New Orleans area, the annual cost is \$2,171. The figure is \$1,894 per year in the Shreveport area.

Researchers found nearly two-thirds of major local and state roads in Louisiana are in poor or mediocre condition and 13 percent of local and state bridges are structurally deficient.

"AAA appreciates TRIP delineating the tremendous cost and loss to the motoring public due to poor roads," said Don Redman,



AAA Louisiana public affairs specialist, in a statement. "AAA members are aware on a daily basis the shortcomings of our roadway system and want to see greater focus and action to improve our roads."

The report also looked at statistics from traffic crashes. TRIP's research found that 3,563 people died in Louisiana wrecks between 2011 and 2015, resulting in the seventh highest fatal traffic crash rate in the country.

"These conditions are only going to get worse, increasing the additional costs to motorists, if greater investment is not made at the state and local levels of government," said Will Wilkins, TRIP's executive director, in a news release. "Without adequate funding, Louisiana's transportation system will become increasingly deteriorated and congested, hampering economic growth, safety and quality of life."