

The Journal News

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2018 ■ LOHUD.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Poor road conditions cost NYC-area drivers \$2,800 a year: Report

The report is from TRIP, a transportation research group.

[Matt Spillane](#)

Rockland/Westchester Journal News
Published November 14, 2018

How bad are New York's roads? A report issued today confirms what many drivers know anecdotally — that local roads and bridges are in need of repair.

"It is essential that Westchester's roads, bridges, tunnels and overpasses are safe for the business, tourist and local ridership," said John Ravitz, executive vice president and COO of the Business Council of Westchester. "Those of us who are charged with creating new economic development for the county need to be able to state clearly that our transportation system is safe and accessible."

The report, called "New York Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State's Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility," was released by TRIP, a research group focused on transportation.

[READ: TRIP report on New York-Newark-Jersey City region's roads, bridges](#)

[READ: TRIP statewide report on roads, bridges](#)

"Today's TRIP report highlights the poor conditions that New Yorkers across the state face on our roads and bridges every day," John Corlett, legislative committee chairman at AAA New York State said in a release.

Here are five important takeaways from the TRIP report:

1. The roads are in bad shape

According to the report, 46 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in the New York-Newark-Jersey City area are in poor condition and another 23 percent are rated in mediocre condition.

Potholes play a part in those poor conditions, which were made worse last year by a harsh winter, Ravitz said.

"New York is known often as the pothole capital of the country," Corlett said, adding that damage to a car from a pothole "can be a very costly repair."

"This is just a quality of life issue that I'm sure any New Yorker can relate to," he said.

2. Bridges are old and in need of repair

TRIP found that 8 percent (491 of 6,525) of bridges in the greater New York City area are in poor condition, "with significant

deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components." Another 65 percent (4,269 of 6,525) were rated in fair condition, indicating some deterioration to major components of the bridge.

More than half — 52 percent — of New York's bridges are at least 50 years old.

3. Traffic is bad

Congestion in the greater New York City area is bad and getting worse — something any driver in the area can tell you. The TRIP report was able to quantify that. As of now, traffic congestion results in 74 annual hours of delay for the average motorist.

4. All of this is very expensive

Traffic congestion alone costs the average driver \$1,765 each year in lost time and wasted fuel.

Add that all up and the numbers get large: "New York drivers lose a total of \$13 billion annually in the form of lost time and wasted fuel due to congestion," the report said.

Much of that can be blamed on the state of the roadways. Factor in the cost of damage to vehicles, crashes that were caused by roadway problems and other extra vehicle operating costs and the average New York City-area driver is spending an extra \$2,768 annually.

Several sources of research help TRIP calculate that figure, said Carolyn Bonifas Kelly, TRIP's associate director of research and communications. The group considers factors such as depreciation of a car's value, repair costs and wear on tires.

"We take AAA's figure for the average cost each year to operate a motor vehicle," Bonifas Kelly said. "We use that as our baseline, and then we have a formula where we can extrapolate, based on the condition of the roads in a given area, how that baseline cost increases based on the roughness of the roads."

The cost of lost time and wasted fuel because of traffic comes from the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, a research organization, Bonifas Kelly said. TRIP also adds in the cost of crashes, including lost household productivity, medical costs and insurance costs, which are calculated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, she said.



AAA New York Legislative Committee Chairman John Corlett, right, discusses New York's poor road conditions during a meeting at the Business Council of Westchester in Rye Brook on Nov. 14, 2018. Also discussing the conditions: Business Council of Westchester Executive Vice President and COO John Ravitz, left, and TRIP Associate Director of Research and Communications Carolyn Bonifas Kelly. (Photo: Matt Spillane/The Journal News)

5. Solutions mean more costs, cooperation

The way to fix these problems on the roads is to spend more money and make infrastructure improvement a priority across the board, according to the officials at the Rye Brook meeting.

"We really need to have all levels of government focus on this issue," Ravitz said. "We need to be able to have our county government laser-focused on making the repairs that they can do. We need to have our state government really understand, as they're beginning to plan the 2019 state budget, that funding for restorations and repairs really has to be a priority statewide. And we need our federal government to also focus on this and bring in the dollars for infrastructure funding that are so important." Ravitz, a former state Assemblyman, said the issue can't be fixed in one budget, but that smart decisions can start the process.

"Decisions have to be made," he said. "But I think when you make those type of decisions, you have to have priorities, and you have to have priorities that are going to have long-lasting effects on the state of New York. Improving our infrastructure system has to be one of those."