

## Press conference, report address transportation issues

By [John Hazlehurst](#)

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Traffic was moving briskly along Interstate 25 as TRIP's Carolyn Kelly and Colorado Springs Chamber & EDC President and CEO Dirk Draper talked about transportation in Colorado at a press conference this morning at America the Beautiful Park.

The good news: Additional city funding is making a difference in road conditions within the city.

The bad news: A report released today by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation organization, stated, "Roads and bridges that are deteriorated, congested or lack some desirable safety features cost Colorado motorists a total of \$6.8 billion statewide annually — \$1,954 per driver in the Colorado Springs urban area — due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion-related delays. 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 Colorado."

Congestion is particularly troublesome on state highways, Draper said.

"[Colorado Springs-based manufacturer] Qualtek can no longer guarantee same-day delivery along the Front Range," Draper said. "This increases costs for transport and for Qualtek's customers. And for Care & Share, which distributes millions of pounds of food to 31 Colorado counties, congestion and delays literally mean that people go hungry."

Focusing on the notorious [I-25 bottleneck between Monument and Castle Rock](#), Draper expressed his continuing dismay at the fact that the two largest cities in Colorado are linked in part by a four-lane interstate highway. Plans are underway to widen the highway, but funding for the \$400 million project has yet to be identified.

"We had our day at the legislature yesterday," Draper said, "and about 125 people made the trip to Denver and met with legislators. Almost every question had to do with transportation."

While confirming that area legislators haven't yet come to agreement on a specific plan for funding the I-25 fix, as well as other crucial transportation needs statewide, Draper expressed confidence in the legislature's ability to agree on a fix during this session.

According to the TRIP report, a fix is long overdue.

The report, "[Colorado Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State's Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility](#)," finds that:

- 41 percent of major, locally and state-maintained urban roads are in poor condition and 6 percent of Colorado's locally and state-maintained bridges are structurally deficient. The state's major urban roads are becoming increasingly congested, with drivers wasting significant amounts of time and fuel each year. And, more than 2,400 people were killed in crashes on Colorado roads from 2011-2015.
- Driving on area roads costs the average driver \$1,954 per year in the form of extra vehicle operating costs as a result of driving on roads in need of repair, lost time and fuel due to congestion-related delays.
- The TRIP report finds that 76 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in the Colorado Springs urban area are in poor or mediocre condition, costing the average motorist an additional \$776 each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.
- Traffic congestion in the Colorado Springs area is worsening, causing 35 annual hours of delay for the average motorist and costing each driver \$772 annually in lost time and wasted fuel.
- Colorado's overall traffic fatality rate of 1.08 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is lower than the national average of 1.13. In the Colorado Springs urban area, on average, 59 people were killed in traffic crashes in each of the last three years.
- The efficiency and condition of Colorado's transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state's economy. Annually, \$323 billion in goods are shipped to and from sites in Colorado, mostly by truck. Seventy-five percent of the goods shipped annually to and from sites in Colorado are carried by trucks and another 21 percent are carried by courier services or multiple mode deliveries, which include trucking.

"At its very core, transportation is about economic and community development," Draper concluded.

"Businesses need the assurance of an efficient, effective, and reliable transportation system to be confident they can accomplish their own work. We must act swiftly and intentionally to ensure that the transportation system we depend on is sound."