

# FORT MORGAN TIMES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2017

## Deficient Fort Collins/Greeley roads cost drivers nearly \$1,400 per year

### A total of \$6.3 billion in cost statewide

By TRIP

*Special to the Times*



Roads and bridges that are deteriorated, congested or lack some desirable safety features cost Colorado motorists a total of \$6.8 billion statewide annually.

**Fort Collins, CO** - Roads and bridges that are deteriorated, congested or lack some desirable safety features cost Colorado motorists a total of \$6.8 billion statewide annually - \$1,396 per driver in the Northern Colorado 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, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a Washington, DC based national transportation organization.

The TRIP report, "Colorado Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State's Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility," finds that throughout Colorado, 41 percent of major, locally and state-maintained urban roads are in poor condition and six 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's roads from 2011 to 2015.

Driving on Northern Colorado roads costs the average driver \$1,396 per year in the form of extra vehicle operating costs

(VOC) as a result of driving on roads in need of repair, lost time and fuel due to congestion-related delays, and the costs of traffic crashes in which roadway features likely were a contributing factor. The TRIP report calculates the cost to motorists of insufficient roads in the Colorado Springs, Denver, Northern Colorado, Grand Junction and Pueblo urban areas. A breakdown of the costs per motorist in each area along with a statewide total is below.

The TRIP report finds that 52 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in the Northern Colorado urban area are in poor or mediocre condition, costing the average motorist an additional \$440 each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

"This report underscores that our state must act to solve Colorado's transportation challenges," said David May, president and CEO of the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce. "Residents and businesses need a reliable, efficient transportation system. Our economy depends on it, as does our basic quality of life. In addition to commuter frustration, there are real costs associated with congestion. We need to stop kicking the proverbial can down our deteriorating roads."

Traffic congestion in the Northern Colorado area is worsening, causing 17 annual hours of delay for the average motorist and costing each driver \$381 annually in lost time and wasted fuel.

"Congestion costs the business community production time and money and hits the consumer in the wallet. Along the Northern Colorado corridor alone, the cost to the average driver is \$381 annually in wasted fuel and 17 hours lost in traffic," added Rich Werner, president and CEO of Upstate Colorado. "Compound that with an additional \$440 in vehicle operating costs per motorist as a result of driving on deteriorated roads in the Fort Collins-Greeley-Loveland area."

Six percent of Colorado's bridges are structurally deficient, with significant

deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components. In the Northern Colorado urban area, seven percent of bridges are structurally deficient.

Traffic crashes in Colorado claimed the lives of 2,434 people between 2011 and 2015. 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 Northern Colorado urban area, on average, 74 people were killed in traffic crashes in each of the last three years.

"This report highlights some of the challenges we see every day in rural Colorado as it relates to our transportation system," said Cathy Shull, executive director of Progressive 15. "Our roads serve as connectors of our communities and the lifeblood of our economy, in particular, as they support our energy development opportunities and our industries who provide critical movement from farm to market in northeastern Colorado. The safe condition of those roads is a top priority for us."

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.

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