

Report: Connecticut motorists losing \$5.1 billion annually

By SUSAN HAIGH, Associated Press **AP** Tuesday, November 24, 2015



HARTFORD, Conn. - (AP) -- A national transportation research group released a report Tuesday that found Connecticut motorists are losing \$5.1 billion annually due to congestion-related delays, higher vehicle operating costs and traffic crashes.

The annual report determined 33 percent of major locally and state-maintained urban roads in Connecticut are in poor condition, while more than a third of bridges are structurally deficient. The Washington, D.C.-based organization TRIP reviewed various state and federal data sources.

Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, D-Norwalk, said the report comes at a crucial time as federal surface transportation legislation is set to expire on Dec. 4.

"This is really a call to action from us here in Connecticut, to Congress, to work and continue to work on a long-term, sustainable funded bill that is federal, that we can plan and work with the \$100 billion transportation plan that we passed this year as well," said Duff, referring to Gov. Dannel P. Malloy's proposed overhaul of Connecticut's transportation system.

Will Wilkins, TRIP's executive director, said the condition of Connecticut's roads will only worsen if greater funding is not made available at the local, state and federal levels. A committee created by Malloy is expected to release recommendations at the end of the year on possible revenue streams to fund the governor's \$100 billion transportation overhaul.

Tuesday's TRIP report found drivers in the Bridgeport/Stamford area are paying the most for congestion, \$1,174 annually, when compared with Hartford and New Haven. That figure takes into account lost time and fuel due to congestion-related delays. In the Hartford area, motorists pay \$1,038 for congestion, while those in New Haven pay \$932.

Rocky Moretti, TRIP's director of research and policy, said traffic congestion problems in Connecticut's urban areas are similar to those in other cities in the U.S., especially those in the Northeast with older infrastructure.

"It's facing challenges similar to, say, New York State," he said.

The report found 72 percent of the major roads in the Hartford urban area are in poor or mediocre condition, costing the average motorist an additional \$654 in extra vehicle operating costs. In Bridgeport/Stamford, the cost is \$701 per motorist, while it's \$707 in New Haven.

Moretti said the study found Connecticut ranks below the national average on pavement conditions, while bridge conditions are close to the national average. He said Connecticut's overall traffic fatality rate is lower than the national average, 0.89 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel, compared to the national average of 1.09.

The study determined traffic crashes killed 1,274 people between 2009 and 2013 in Connecticut.