

THE ADVOCATE

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Editorial: No more evidence needed about roads

Did you know our state roads are in pretty bad shape?

If not, then have we got a report for you (tripnet.org). “Connecticut’s Top Transportation Issues,” was unveiled last week by TRIP, a self-described national transportation research group.

Arguably, TRIP is pretty transparent about itself. The cover sheet of the report flags readers that the agency is sponsored by the likes of insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, highway construction companies and labor unions.

In other words, it is in their interest to convince states to spend money on transportation.

Gov. [Dannel P. Malloy](#) doesn’t need convincing, and can easily point to the 24-page report as his “I Told You So” document to garner support for his \$100-billion, 30-year transportation initiative. Of course, so can the 14 other governors who read TRIP reports about their states this year. Negligence of road upkeep appears to be a national epidemic.

If the 20th century was defined by the automobile, the 21st century seems to be a study in how a national infrastructure can erode from neglect. States can be like stingy homeowners. Don’t fix the roof, and the home value declines. Let the problem linger, and the rain will start coming in. Ignore it further, and everything you own can become damaged goods.

TRIP makes the pitch that carrying on a legacy of ignorance will only make Connecticut’s curb appeal less appealing to companies seeking to relocate or expand. The study points to the Bridgeport-Stamford corridor as the worst of the lot, as motorists face additional costs of more than \$2,200 a year in repairs, tires and the like. The dismal rating given to the pavement conditions of regional roads may not come as much of a surprise, but even hardened road warriors will likely blanch that only 12 percent fall into the “good” bracket. They also may prefer not to see their daily frustrations tagged with real numbers (“The average Bridgeport/Stamford commuter wastes 49 hours each year stuck in traffic”).

Malloy’s plan aims high, which has had the unfortunate backlash of making many critics see his entire plan as folly. Some of it is. There is no need to contemplate spending millions to create bicycle paths along the Merritt Parkway when reports such as this one cite 11 percent of regional bridges as deficient. But two-thirds of his proposed investments are for maintenance, catching up on work his predecessors ignored.

State Senate Majority Leader [Bob Duff](#) referred to the report as a “call to action” from Connecticut to Congressional leaders.

Lawmakers should not need a heavy handed reminder to build roads to take them deeper into the 21st century. Connecticut motorists certainly don’t need a white paper to tell them the horizon is pretty bleak on the other side of the windshield. This is not the time for another diagnosis; it’s time to get to work.