

## CONNECTICUT

# State's bumpy roads costing motorists

By Christine Stuart  
cnewsjunkie.com

**HARTFORD** - Connecticut's poor pavement conditions and lack of highway safety features cost motorists \$5.1 billion annually in additional operating costs and lost time, according to a report from a national transportation organization.

**TRIP**, a Washington, D.C.-based transportation organization, released a report Tuesday that found 33 percent of major local and state roads in urban areas are in poor condition and more than one-third of Connecticut's bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

Those deficiencies cost Connecticut drivers.

Driving on deficient roads costs each Hartford area driver \$2,236 per year in 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 cost for New Haven area drivers is \$2,050 per year, according to the report.

Rocky Morretti, director of research and policy for TRIP, said states have come to the realization that the solution won't come from Washington, so his organization has seen states making significant moves on "transportation funding out of necessity" over the last two or three years.

The challenge at the state level is to come up with ways to fund this infrastructure investment, Morretti said Tuesday at a Legislative Office Building press conference.

Democratic Gov. Dannel P. Malloy has proposed using a half percent of the sales tax to help begin to fund what he hopes will be a \$100 billion investment in Connecticut's transportation infrastructure over the next 30 years.

To get started, Malloy wants to put about \$2 billion over the next five years on the state's credit card to begin making the necessary improvements. In order to fund

the rest, he created a panel that is looking at how to finance the projects.

But it's a hefty investment and could crowd out funding for other priorities.

According to nonpartisan fiscal analysts, the state's special transportation fund won't be increasing as much as it has in the past and will begin running into the red after 2018 if the General Assembly doesn't increase its funding.

But Senate Majority Leader Bob Duff, D-Norwalk, said he didn't want to get ahead of the governor's transportation panel in offering solutions to investing in transportation.

The panel is expected to make recommendations next month.

Duff said there are a lot of good arguments in favor of making investments in transportation. He said traffic congestion is a top complaint of the business community.

Forty-two percent of businesses surveyed by the Connecticut Business and Industry Association believe that the state's road congestion restricts or limits the territory of their market. And the Texas Transportation Institute estimates that the average driver in the New Haven area loses \$932 annually in the cost of lost time and wasted fuel from traffic congestion. The average New Haven commuter wastes 40 hours each year stuck in traffic. The average Hartford commuter, according to the TTI report, loses \$1,038 each year in lost time and wasted fuel as a result of traffic congestion and 45 hours each year stuck in traffic.

Duff said commuters already are spending thousands of dollars a year in wasted fuel and time because Connecticut hasn't been addressing the issue.

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