

POTHOLES PLAGUE ISLE ROADS

Drivers pay hundreds per year to repair cars damaged by poor maintenance, report says

By Dan Nakaso

Even before the recent winter storms opened up new potholes across Oahu, the poor condition of the island's major roads was costing the average driver \$701 more per year in extra wear and tear on their cars, trucks and SUVs, a new study says.

"That's a pretty high number and that was before all of the flooding and rains that hit," said Will Wilkins, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit group TRIP — The Road Information Program — that will release its study this morning.

The TRIP study, based on state Department of Transportation data, ranks the additional wear and tear costs on Honolulu vehicles as fourth-highest in the nation for cities with populations of 500,000 or more.

Roads in San Jose, Calif., cause the most extra vehicle wear, followed by Los Angeles and San Francisco.

"With each Honolulu driver paying \$701 each year in accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repairs, increased fuel and tire wear, that's great news for the car repair shops for front end alignments and new tires," Wilkins said.

The extra costs are a little lighter for neighbor island drivers. The neighbor island average costs, not detailed in the study, bring down the statewide figure to \$449 in additional wear and tear per car.

Honolulu's poor road conditions rank it third worst in the nation for major U.S. cities, behind No. 1 San Jose and No. 2 Los Angeles.

During the week of March 4 through 10 the city received 243 requests to fix potholes — 78 to its website and 165 to the pothole hotline (768-7777 <http://www1.honolulu.gov/dfm/road/pothole.htm>) city spokeswoman Louise Kim McCoy said in an email to the Star-Advertiser in response to questions.

"We do not have a cost estimate to repair all of them," she said. "However, based on \$3,000 to fix 300 potholes we can estimate that it would cost about \$10 per small pothole. This amount includes material, labor and equipment."

State and city officials responsible for pothole repair could not immediately identify Wednesday how many new potholes were created from the storms that began pummeling Oahu on March 4 — or what they will cost city and state taxpayers to repair.

But tire, rim and alignment shops are seeing steady increases in business following the heavy rain.

"Whenever we have bad weather, we get a rash of bent rims, misalignments from potholes and flat repairs," said Mike Rizzo, manager of the Kakaako Lex Brodie's Tire, Brake & Service Co. "We have definitely seen an increase in alignments and definitely an increase in customers with tire replacements."

According to the TRIP study, 47 percent of Hawaii's major roadways are "poor" and 14 percent are "mediocre."

The situation is worse in Honolulu, where nearly two-thirds of the major roads — 62 percent — are considered "poor" — meaning they show signs of deterioration including rutting, cracks and potholes.

"In some cases," according to the study, "poor roads can be resurfaced, but often are too deteriorated and must be reconstructed."

"That all adds up to extra vehicle operating costs," Wilkins said.

The three worst sections of Hawaii roads in descending order were a 5-mile stretch of Hawaii Belt Road to Laupahoehoe on Hawaii island; a 2.1-mile stretch of Oahu's H-1 freeway from Kalihi to the Puowaina area; and a 6-mile section of Kamehameha Highway from Pupukeya to Kuilima, according to the study.

Wilkins arrived in Honolulu on Monday from Washington, D.C., and has driven over some bumpy and rutted sections of state and city roads since.

"I arrived after the storms hit and there are some stretches that are pretty bad," he said. "I've certainly seen some potholes."

So has Olalani Batty, who works at her family's business, American Tire Co., in Mapunapuna.

THURSDAY 3/15/12

Star Advertiser
 THE PULSE of PARADISE

HAWAII'S DETERIORATING ROADS
 Honolulu has the island's worst roads, with 62 percent in "poor" condition — tied highest in the nation, behind No. 1 San Jose, Calif., and No. 2 Los Angeles.

\$449 Average extra cost annually to drivers, statewide

\$701 Average extra cost to Honolulu drivers

47% Portion of lane miles of major Honolulu roads in "poor" condition

14% Portion of lane miles in "mediocre" condition

17% Portion of lane miles in "fair" condition

22% Portion of lane miles in "good" condition

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So has Olalani Batty, who works at her family's business, American Tire Co., in Mapunapuna.

Ever since the rains came, she's been unsuccessfully trying to steer her Toyota Avalon around two new potholes that have appeared on her way to work on Mapunapuna Street.

"Sometimes the water builds up (hiding the pothole) and you're thinking you're avoiding a pothole — but you're not," she said.

Her customers haven't been lucky, either.

One hit a pothole so hard that it blew out his tire. Another damaged front and back tires on the same side of his car. Some customers had so much pothole-related damage that they had to be towed into the shop, Batty said.

DJ's Motorsports in Waipahu has seen recent customers with flat tires, bent rims and "bubbles" on their tires caused from the sudden jolt of hitting a pothole, employee Faith Manupule said.

While driving her Ford Expedition home, Manupule has run into a few new potholes herself on the H-1 freeway around Pearl City.

But so far, she's hasn't experienced any significant damage.

"I'm surprised my tires are still OK," Manupule said, "because I've hit some of those potholes really hard."

DAMAGED PAVEMENT
 Some of the most common pavement problems:

Potholes
 Deep, irregular holes or depressions in the pavement surface. Caused by a collapse in the upper surface.

Alligator cracks
 Shallow, interconnected cracks that form small blocks. Caused by repeated subsurface or surface base material.

Potholes
 Surface is eroded in flat when it is disturbed from the surface below.

Report a pothole?
 Call the Honolulu city hotline: 768-7777 or visit www1.honolulu.gov/dfm/road/pothole.htm. On Oahu's H-1, call the state highway: 526-5262.

State starts hunt for new teachers ahead of schedule
 To get more highly qualified teachers and deal with teacher shortages, the state is starting to hire monthly earlier this year and has partnered with the University of Hawaii to obtain more special education teachers. Department of Education officials hope filling teaching positions earlier will allow schools to tap into a more robust applicant pool. Increase the number of highly qualified teachers hired at least 500 teachers and add 250 chronic shortages in some teaching areas, including special education.

OBAMA, CAMERON STICK TOGETHER ON ARABIAN SPRING
 Despite setbacks on the battlefield, both leaders say the timetable to leave won't be altered.

FEBRUARY FORECLOSURE FILINGS TRIPLE TO A 4-MONTH LOW
 The decline in the number of cases is attributed to a state law that was meant to protect homeowners.

VOTER TURNOUT FOR CAUCUSES BEATS HAWAII REPUBLICAN PARTY
 The GOP's first-ever balloting exceeds expectations as Romney gathers allies and delegates.

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 Caltrop 22
 Sals 22

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