

Shreveport area motorists losing money due to poor road conditions.

By Andrea Finney



Youree Drive and Kings Highway construction takes toll on local businesses

SHREVEPORT, La. – Roads and bridges that are deteriorated, congested or lack some desirable safety features cost Louisiana motorists a total of \$6.5 billion statewide annually - \$1,894 per driver in the Shreveport urban 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 Louisiana, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a Washington, DC based national transportation organization.

The TRIP report, “Louisiana Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility,” finds that throughout Louisiana, nearly two-thirds of major locally and state-maintained urban roads are in poor or mediocre condition, 13 percent of locally and state-maintained bridges are structurally deficient, and the state has the seventh highest rate of fatal traffic crashes in the nation. The report also finds that Louisiana’s major urban roads are becoming increasingly congested, causing significant delays and choking commuting and commerce.

Driving on roads in the Shreveport area costs the average driver \$1,894 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 Baton Rouge, Lafayette, New Orleans and Shreveport urban areas. A breakdown of the costs per motorist in each area along with a statewide total is below.

The TRIP report finds that 65 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in the Shreveport urban area are in poor or mediocre condition, costing the average motorist an additional \$698 each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

“AAA appreciates TRIP delineating the tremendous cost and loss to the motoring public due to poor roads,” said Don Redman, AAA Louisiana public affairs specialist. “AAA members are aware on a daily basis the shortcomings of our roadway system and want to see greater focus and action to improve our roads.”

Traffic congestion in the Shreveport area is worsening, causing 27 annual hours of delay for the average motorist and costing the average driver \$713 annually in lost time and wasted fuel.

Thirteen percent of Louisiana’s bridges are structurally deficient, with significant deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components. In the Shreveport metro area, 13 percent of bridges -- 123 of 952 -- are structurally deficient.

Traffic crashes in Louisiana claimed the lives of 3,563 people between 2011 and 2015. Louisiana’s overall traffic fatality rate of 1.51 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is the seventh highest in the nation and significantly higher than the national average of 1.13. Louisiana’s rural roads have a traffic fatality rate that is more than double that on all other roads in the state (2.46 fatalities per 100 million VMT vs. 1.16). In the Shreveport metro area, on average, 45 people were killed in traffic crashes in each of the last three years. The financial impact of traffic crashes costs each Shreveport driver an average of \$483 annually.

The efficiency and condition of Louisiana’s transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state’s economy. Annually, \$734 billion in goods are shipped to and from sites in Louisiana, relying heavily on the state’s network of roads and bridges. Increasingly, companies are looking at the quality of a region’s transportation system when deciding where to re-locate or expand. Regions with congested or poorly maintained roads may see businesses relocate to areas with a smoother, more efficient and more modern transportation system.

“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, Louisiana’s transportation system will become increasingly deteriorated and congested, hampering economic growth, safety and quality of life.”