



## Report: La.'s roads costing motorists

### Nearly two-thirds of major locally and state-maintained urban roads are in poor or mediocre condition, the study finds.

By Keith Magill Executive Editor

Bad roads cost Louisiana motorists a combined \$6.5 billion a year in higher vehicle operating costs, crashes and congestion-related delays, a new study shows.

The cost amounts to as much as \$2,466 per driver in some Louisiana cities, according to the report, released March 29 by TRIP, a national transportation research organization based in Washington.

The report comes as Louisiana lawmakers debate whether and how to address a road maintenance and upgrade backlog the state Transportation Department estimates at \$13 billion. The state also has a wish list of \$16 million worth of major road and bridge projects.

[Gov. John Bel Edwards](#) and others have proposed increasing Louisiana's gasoline tax by about 17 cents, which has [attracted opposition](#) among some lawmakers as the Legislature convenes today for its three-month regular session.

Taxes on gas amount to 38.4 cents per gallon, including 20 cents levied by the state.

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.

-- Traffic crashes killed 3,563 people across the state between 2011 and 2015. Louisiana's overall traffic fatality rate of 1.51 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled 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 more than double that on all other roads in the state -- 2.46 deaths per 100 million miles driven. The financial impact of traffic crashes costs Louisiana residents a total of \$2.1 billion annually.

-- About 40 percent of the roads in the state's largest cities -- New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Shreveport -- are rated in poor condition. The percentage of roads rated good ranges from 20 percent in Shreveport to 28 percent in New Orleans.

The efficiency and condition of Louisiana's transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state's economy, the report says. 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," Will Wilkins, TRIP's executive director, said in a news release. "Without adequate funding, Louisiana's transportation system will become increasingly deteriorated and congested, hampering economic growth, safety and quality of life."

TRIP's complete report accompanies this story at [houmatoday.com](http://houmatoday.com) and [dailycomet.com](http://dailycomet.com).

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