

FRONT PAGE

SPRINGFIELD

Report: Bay State roads a wreck Poor condition of highways add up to \$8.3 billion in additional costs

BY CAROLYN ROBBINS
crobbins@repub.com

One-fifth of state roads and highways are poorly maintained and congested, costing Bay State motorists an additional \$8.5 billion a year, according to a new report released by a Washington-D.C. based research group Tuesday.

The report was released with just two weeks to go before Election Day when Massachusetts voters decide whether to limit increases on the 24-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax earmarked for infrastructure improvements

The report, which did a state-by-state and regional analysis, estimated that the average Springfield driver loses more than \$1,600 each year as a result of driving on congested, deteriorated and poorly maintained roads.

During a press conference outside a garage on East Columbus Avenue, Rocky Moretti, director of policy for the Washington-based TRIP research company, said the group doesn't take positions on referendum questions.

Moretti met earlier in the day with the Boston media to outline findings in the report.

Question 1 on the Nov. 4 election ballot calls for the repeal of a 2013 law that links future gas tax increases to inflation, which was part of a larger law aimed at funding transportation repairs and improvements.

Joining Moretti in Boston, Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation President Michael Widmer and AAA Southern New England director of public and legislative affairs Mary Maguire, are both vocal opponents of Question 1, said the report calls attention to a serious problem.

Widmer told State House News Service that indexing is a "standard form of tax policy" so that we don't see our revenues depleted" and Maguire said the current condition of Bay State roads is unsafe.

In Springfield, Moretti said the group, which is funded by insurance companies, labor unions and transportation businesses, #8220;#8217;doesn't take positions on ballot questions. "It's up to the voters to decide what level of investment in infrastructure they think is appropriate," he said, adding that the research firm looks to provide information when it's timely.

"Our job is to make information available about the sufficiency of the nation's transportation network," Moretti said.

Moretti was joined by Timothy Brennan, executive director of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and Josh Ostroff, outreach director for Transportation4Massachusetts, an alliance of elected, business and civic leaders from communities across the country to ensure that states and the federal government step up to invest in smart, homegrown, locally-driven transportation solutions.

Moretti said the aging transportation and public transit networks in the Northeast are in worse shape than in many other states.

Brennan said the state's 2013 Transportation Finance Act of 2013 provided an additional \$600 million annually for improvements to the state's roads, bridges and transit system. The allocation presumes gas tax indexing will continue, he said. But if voters decide against indexing the gas tax to inflation, that appropriation would take \$100 million hit.

The TRIP report says the \$600 million allocated by the state is "\$400 million short of the estimated \$1 billion in additional investment needed over the next decade" to address the commonwealth's infrastructure inadequacy.

The report says the state of Massachusetts must boost funding to improve its system of roads, highways and bridges to "foster economic growth and keep business in the state and to ensure safe, reliable mobility and quality of life for all residents."

Additional federal funds are also critical to improve and modernize the states' transportation system, the report said.

Brennan said the "Pioneer Valley is a region of bridges" that are in desperate need of repair and maintenance.

Ostroff said attention gets focused on infrastructures at election time, "but people pay the cost of bad roads and bridges all year round.

"Ostroff said his organization's role is to provide information on how to promote a well-maintained and sufficient transportation system," he said, adding that the the public expects "a fire truck to be able to get across a bridge to fight a fire."

The report outlined inadequate transportation costs including the following:

- An inadequate transportation system costs Massachusetts residents a total of \$8.3 billion every year in the form of additional vehicle operating costs, congestion-related delays and traffic crashes.
- A lack of adequate state and local funding has resulted in one-fifth of major roads and

The image shows a collage of newspaper front pages from The Republican. The main headline is "Report: Bay State roads a wreck" with a sub-headline "Poor condition of highways add up to \$8.3 billion in additional costs". Other visible headlines include "LEGENDARY EDITOR DIES", "Hopes riding high on subway car pact", "Casino firms eye Springfield to fight repeal", "Baker, Coakley face off in debate", "HEATHER High 57° Low: 50°", "FREE DAY PASS Central Book Gym", "SPRINGFIELD Grants support job creation", and "HEALTHY".

highways in Massachusetts having pavement surfaces in poor condition, providing a rough ride and costing motorist in the form of additional vehicle operating costs.

- More than half of locally and state-maintained bridges in Massachusetts show significant deterioration or do not meet current design standards – often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment. This includes all bridges that are 20 feet or more in length.
- Improving safety features on Massachusetts' roads and highways would likely result in a decrease in the state's traffic fatalities and serious crashes. It is estimated that roadway features are likely a contributing factor in approximately one-third of all fatal and serious traffic crashes.
- The efficiency of Massachusetts' transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state's economy. Businesses are increasingly reliant on an efficient and dependable transportation system to move products and services.

[MA Transportation by the Numbers TRIP Report Oct 2014](#)