

DeSoto Times-Tribune

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Report states case for more road spending

By BOB BAKKEN Staff Writer



Robert Long | DTT

Traffic was bumper to bumper at the intersection of Airways and Church Road in Southaven Friday

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A new report from a national transportation research group that lays a case for more highway funding has put figures to Mississippi's deteriorating road system, including DeSoto County.

The report comes from TRIP, of Washington, D.C., a nonprofit organization that researches, evaluates and distributes data on surface transportation issues. TRIP stands for The Road Information Program.

In the report titled, "Mississippi Transportation By The Numbers," TRIP states driving on deficient Mississippi roads costs state drivers \$2.9 billion annually, in the form of additional vehicle operating costs, congestion-related delays and traffic crashes.

The report also breaks it down by metropolitan area, including Southaven-DeSoto County, where an additional \$1,840 is paid by drivers a year. Jackson ranks as having the highest added cost per vehicle at \$2,046 in the report, which also includes Gulfport-Biloxi, Pascagoula and Hattiesburg.

Southaven-DeSoto County drivers ranked first in the state for extra time spent on the highway through congestion at an additional 43 hours in the car a year, a figure that compares to 38 hours for Jackson drivers.

Other figures from the report are that two of every three miles of the state's major urban roads are in either poor or mediocre condition, with 43 percent ranked as poor and 21 percent as mediocre.

The fatality rate on Mississippi rural roads is four times the rate of other roads in the state and 12 percent of the state's bridges are structurally deficient, at a total of 2,098 structures.

The traffic fatality rate of 1.70 deaths per one million vehicle miles of traffic in Mississippi is the third highest in the nation.

Despite constraints on the Mississippi Department of Transportation budget, TRIP estimates that each dollar of deferred maintenance costs the state \$4-\$5 in needed future repairs.

The Federal Highway Administration estimates a \$5.20 savings for every dollar spent on road, highway and bridge improvements. The savings comes in reduced vehicle maintenance, reduced delays and fuel consumption, as well as other factors.

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