

# STARKVILLE DAILY NEWS

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SUNDAY, JUNE 4, 2017

## Study: Poor infrastructure costing MS motorists \$2.9B annually



*A road work sign for safety upgrades being implemented along the Highway 12 corridor through Starkville. (photo by Ryan Phillips, SDN)*

SDN STAFF

STARKVILLE, MS - Infrastructure may be the issue most on the minds of Mississippi residents and one transportation organization says it is costing motorists billions of dollars annually.

Washington, D.C. -based TRIP is a national transportation organization that released its most up-to-date research showing roads and bridges in the state that are deteriorated, congested or lack some desirable safety features. The study claims the failing roads and bridges cost Mississippi motorists a total of \$2.9 billion statewide annually.

Individually, drivers can be impacted by up to \$2,046 annually due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion related delays.

The study considered roadways across the Magnolia State and reports nearly two-thirds of major locally and state-maintained urban roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Additionally, 12

percent of the state's bridges are listed a "structurally deficient."

Magee Mayor Jimmy Clyde also serves as the president of the Mississippi Municipal League and said one of the most requested services for his office is to provide better and safer streets.

"The cost of providing and maintaining streets and bridges continues to outpace current municipal revenue streams," Clyde said. "Raising property taxes should not be the only recourse for generating new revenue. If cities and towns can improve their street infrastructure, the climate for economic development will continue to improve and more jobs can be created for all Mississippians."

The Jackson metro - which is the most densely-populated area in the state - saw the highest costs in two of the three categories studied. Annually, individual motorists in Jackson pay \$823 in vehicle operating costs, \$345 for safety and \$878 for congestion.

The Southaven-DeSoto County area topped metros for congestions costs with motorists paying \$1,080 annually. In total, drivers in the Jackson area pay \$2,046 annually due to failing infrastructure. TRIP Executive Director Will Wilkins said the condition of Mississippi's transportation system will worsen in the future without additional funding, leading to even higher costs for drivers.

"In order to promote economic growth, foster quality of life and get drivers safety and efficiently to their destination, Mississippi will need to make transportation funding a top priority," Wilkins said.