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Opinion: Mississippi transportation is going nowhere

by [Woody Dobson](#)

I love being on time. When I wake up every morning, my brain shouts, “Woody, you MUST be on time!” Immediately, I want to begin moving. This goes for any location my mind adjusts to. Whether it’s work, school or the doctor, I’ll make sure I arrive.

My car is essential for time management, and usually, my 2014 Mazda 2 serves me well. However, there’s just one problem: Mississippi’s roads are terrible for my car, and statewide transportation also suffers due to [ineffective transportation initiatives](#).

Driving on North Gloster Street in Tupelo about three years ago was the first time I conceived an even slightly negative thought about statewide transportation. On this single road, there were [numerous potholes](#) and crevices that could have severely damaged any personal vehicle or semi-truck alike.

From that point forward, it’s been increasingly difficult to keep my eyes off highways to check whether they’re in disrepair, which isn’t a bad thing. On the other hand, I’d like to be able to drive five minutes down a Mississippi road without hitting a pothole. Wouldn’t you?

Instead, it seems Mississippi’s roads are slowly declining in quality as the years go on. This is especially true in Mississippi’s rural areas, where the roads are [four times more likely to cause fatalities](#) than any other streets in the state are, according to transportation research group TRIP. This fatality rate doesn’t sound very comforting when you are driving every day to work.

Nevertheless, Mississippi lacks the funding to fix statewide transportation issues, as Mississippi is the poorest compared to the other 49 states.

Luckily, the [Mississippi Department of Transportation \(MDOT\)](#), is, in fact, aiding Mississippi’s transportation sector as much as it can. MDOT workers help greatly by repairing multitudes of issue areas within the counties, along with providing roadside assistance. MDOT’s work affects civil rights, electrical grids and the environment within the state,

while simultaneously providing the support for Mississippi’s infrastructural well-being, for which it is known.

Therefore, it would prove difficult for Mississippi’s transportation sector to sustain itself without MDOT’s continued support in various areas of expertise. A key concern, though, is: If Mississippi cannot increase infrastructural funding, will MDOT become useless?

As 2018 looms, Mississippi seems to be looking this way. The reliability of Mississippi’s transportation system is far too reliant on state economic growth. For state roads and transportation interests to improve, private sector economics would have to do so first.

Without a doubt, transportation must find a statewide solution. Just considering the statistic that 28 percent of Mississippi’s major roads are in poor quality and 27 percent are in mediocre quality is enough to prove this.

Getting a [D+ on the nationwide infrastructural report card](#) isn’t something Mississippi should be proud to represent. But new transportation initiatives could alleviate the national pressure to compete with better-funded states.

Government workers, such as those within MDOT, are the true, unsung heroes representing Mississippi’s various infrastructural sectors. However, without proper economic funding, their work will be to no avail, and serious trouble will eventually reach Mississippi.

Economic choices must be addressed, and alternatives must be introduced to counteract ineffective transportation policy in Mississippi. Until that happens, though, unfortunately, you might just hit that pothole on a Mississippi street and end up going nowhere.

Woody Dobson is a senior political science major from Tupelo.