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# New study shows Montana needs to improve roads, bridges and highways

By Tanya Modersitzki



BILLINGS, Mont. - We all know that getting behind the wheel is dangerous but a new report released today should give many Montana's a reason to be even more diligent when behind the wheel. It doesn't matter what kind of vehicle you drive, because the subject of today's report is focused on the surface beneath your tires.

This an expensive issue one that will cost the state nearly \$900-million per year to fix over the next four years.

"Swerving to miss a pot hole, somebody else swerving to hit a pothole and swerving towards me. I worry about the safety of others and myself," Marcus Tomako said.

Trip's director says some ways to improve driver's safety would be adding, rumble strips, paving shoulders, improving lighting and adding turn lanes.

The Montana Infrastructure Coalition is pushing a pair of bills that could put \$15-million back into the highway budget. The coalition wants to make sure they have enough money in the bank while also building the Montana Department of Transportation's reserves back up.

Statewide, the way it stacks up, 30-percent of the roads in Billings are poor.. 52-percent in Great Falls and in Missoula 26-percent are poor.

The report finds that just about one-third of roads in Billings and Great Falls are in good condition. And things are much worse in great falls. there roughly one-fifth or 18-percent of the roads are in good shape. Add it all up and drivers i spoke with today don't care for the math.

"It's something we should get under control we shouldn't have any roads horrible especially that high of a percentage," Tomako said.

The Montana Infrastructure coalition says it's been almost 20 years since the fuel tax in Montana has been adjusted. They believe a 10-cent increase could add \$80 million for infrastructure repair and replacement.

They propose splitting he revenue in half between MDT and city and county governments for road maintenance.

Another tax increase would affect travelers. 11-million people visit Montana each year.

The coalition wants to tap into their wallets through a local option tax impacting hotels, restaurants, bars,luxury items. Their proposed local option sales tax would not impact people at the grocery stores or pharmacy