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## Bad roads cost average N.J. driver \$2,000 a year



Traffic backs up on the NJ Turnpike prior to the opening of new lanes south of Interchange 9. Traffic congestion like this is one of the factors that cost New Jersey drivers an additional \$2,000 a year, according to a report. (Larry Higgs | NJ Advance Media)



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Bad roads cost the average driver in New Jersey about \$2,000 a year, according to a report to be released Thursday morning by a national transportation research group.

The report by [TRIP, a national transportation research group](#), comes a week after state [Transportation Commissioner Jamie Fox said bad roads cost the average driver \\$600 in automotive repairs a year](#).

The difference between the two is the TRIP report also factors in the cost of traffic congestion and crashes, specifically in injuries and lost productivity, said Carolyn Bonifas Kelly, a TRIP spokeswoman.

"The \$600 cited by the commissioner only includes what we call "extra vehicle operating costs" which is the cost of accelerated depreciation, additional tire wear and repairs, that is part of the \$2,000 (total) figure referenced by TRIP," she said. "I think what Commissioner Fox referenced was one of our earlier reports."

TRIP, a non-profit research group, is funded by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, distributors and suppliers, businesses involved in highway and transit engineering and construction, labor unions, and organizations concerned with safe and efficient surface transportation, according to its website.

The New Jersey report comes as [Fox ordered stepped up inspection of the states worst bridges](#) this week.

The report is to be released at a presentation by the New Jersey Alliance for Action, a business group which also advocates for infrastructure improvement, will also be presented to Fox at the gathering in Edison on Thursday.

**"We make sure people understand the conditions of the roads and how it impacts people," Carolyn Bonifas Kelly, TRIP transportation research group.**

"We look at road and bridge conditions, traffic conditions and economic development...three components of extra operating costs for drivers," Kelly said.

The data the report is based on comes primarily from federal sources, including the Federal Highway Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Texas Transportation Institute, she said.

What the report will not do is recommend how New Jersey should raise revenue to replenish the state Transportation Trust Fund which runs out of money to do any road, bridge or transit work on July 1. That is when

all revenue from the state gas tax will be used to pay off past debt.

"We don't make recommend on how to address the deficiencies or the lack of funding," Kelly said. "We make sure people understand the conditions of the roads and how it impacts people. We don't take a position on how to raise the revenue"

Formed in 1971, TRIP has issued about 500 reports covering all 50 states, she said. While the reports generally cover all transportation modes, the New Jersey report will focus on roads and bridges.

In a similar report done in South Carolina which was released last week, TRIP found that bad road conditions cost drivers in that state an average of \$1,300 annually. It also found that 46 percent of the roads in that state were ranked as being in poor condition and one fifth of the bridges are considered structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

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Vehicles travel over the Morris Avenue Bridge which spans over NJ Transit rail lines and is in need of repair. Summit, NJ 1/13/15 (Robert Sciarrino | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com)