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Rough roads have drivers paying twice



Even if you've managed to avoid pot holes and the expense of fixing your tire or car, Rochester's rough roads cost you plenty every year.

A national transportation organization called TRIP crunched federal data and found 37 percent of Rochester area roads are in poor or mediocre condition.

"Your vehicle is depreciating quickly, which means it's slowly falling apart," said Rocky Moretti.

The folks at Gates Automotive have seen it all this pothole season.

Vice President of Operations Tony Ardillo showed 13WHAM News tire rims missing chunks of metal and shreds of what was once a tire.

"If you're driving 30 miles an hour or 60 miles an hour, it can be a real problem," he explained.

In recent years, the auto repair company also began seeing cars growing old before their time - an impact of driving on rough roads year after year.

"It takes years of heavy use on the system, of tough winters without any investment," said Moretti. "What happens, though, is it gets harder and harder to turn that ship around."

Rough roads cost Rochester drivers \$402 each year for things like tire wear and depreciation.

"We see a lot of shifted belts and tires," said Ardillo. "We see a lot of people with not a lot of miles on the car, but the suspension is worn. Also, belts and tie rods and the suspension wear faster than they should."

Vehicle owners are paying the cost of these bad roads not once, but twice. Gas taxes and vehicle fees collected by New York State which are supposed to pay for road repairs often don't. A recent 13WHAM investigation found only a quarter of the \$3.8 billion collected each year for the Dedicated Highway and Bridge Fund are actually spent on road work.

Our investigation revealed the rest went to DOT salaries, phone bills, and operating expenses.

"It's supposed to go towards the infrastructure costs of roads and bridges," said Renee Terreri of the American Automobile Association. "But because of operating costs and debt we haven't been able to take that money and use it where we needed to."

"The money raised by taxpayers like you and I is not being used the way it was intended to be used. It's being used for anything but," said Gates Town Supervisor Mark Assini.

Assini also sits on the Genesee Transportation Council (GTC), which released a report this week calling for more funding for bridge repair. If that doesn't happen, the GTC suggests some bridges should be closed to keep the public safe.

Delaying road repair also costs taxpayers more in the long run. Fixing a poor road is 19 times as expensive as maintaining a good road, according to TRIP estimates.

"Much like maintaining our own home if you stay on top of maintenance, it's much cheaper in the long run," said Moretti.