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## Report: Deteriorating roads cost Charleston drivers \$1,850 a year

### Staff Report



Statewide, S.C. motorists kick in about \$5.4 billion annually on average for extra vehicle operating costs associated with road issues, according to the report. That's up from \$3 billion a year in the 2015 report. (Photo/File)

Traffic congestion and deteriorated roads cost Charleston drivers at least \$1,850 a year on average, according to a report (.pdf) from [Trip](#), a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation organization.

That's more than half again above the \$1,200 per year the organization estimated drivers paid [in the same report two years ago](#).

The report said the state's failing roads and bridges, coupled with increasing congestion, result in more traffic crashes, higher vehicle maintenance costs, and time and fuel wasted while drivers sit in traffic.

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Vehicle traffic statewide has increased 10% in the past three years. The Charleston region's growing population worsens traffic congestion. Charleston motorists are typically delayed 41 hours each year on average, the report said. That's up from 30 hours lost in the 2015 report.

The new report found that two-thirds of South Carolina's major urban roads (64%) are in poor or mediocre condition, and 10% of bridges are structurally deficient. The study looked at roads and bridges maintained locally and by the state. The 2015 report said 46% of roads were poor or mediocre, while 11% of bridges were structurally deficient.

"These conditions are only going to get worse, increasing the additional costs to motorists, if greater investment is not made available at the state and local levels of government," Trip Executive Director Will Wilkins said in a news release announcing the report. "Without adequate funding, South Carolina's transportation system will become increasingly deteriorated and congested, hampering economic growth, safety and quality of life."

South Carolina now has the highest rate of fatal traffic crashes in the nation with 4,406 drivers killed from 2012 to 2016, up slightly from the 4,315 fatalities reported from 2008 to 2012, when the state was tied for first. Rural roads have a traffic fatality rate nearly four times higher than all other roads in the state.

The report called for increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels. Improved roadways and decreased traffic congestion would boost safety, economic growth and quality of life, the report said.

"The current condition of our state's roads places a significant cost on residents, both in time and money, but also puts them at risk each and every time they get in their car," said Mary Graham, chief advancement officer for the [Charleston Metro Chamber of Commerce](#), in a news release regarding the study.

"With the highest rate of traffic fatalities in the nation, we must urge our elected officials to pass the infrastructure funding bill, H.3516, to fix our roads," Graham said. "This issue is not only costing South Carolinians time and money, it is costing their lives. It is time to pass the funding necessary to make our roads safe again."

The news release said the [state Department of Transportation](#) currently spends \$415 million annually on road and highway pavement repairs and construction, which is about 46% of the \$900 million needed to make significant improvements.

### Costs to motorists, by location:

Location	Vehicle Operating Costs	Congestion	Safety	Total
<b>Charleston</b>	<b>\$452</b>	<b>\$1,047</b>	<b>\$351</b>	<b>\$1,850</b>
Columbia	\$449	\$951	\$316	\$1,716
Florence	\$472	\$272	\$539	\$1,283
Greenville-Spartanburg-Anderson	\$492	\$509	\$378	\$1,379
Myrtle Beach	\$527	\$754	\$508	\$1,789
<b>South Carolina</b>	<b>\$1.8B</b>	<b>\$1.8B</b>	<b>\$1.8B</b>	<b>\$5.4B</b>

Source: [S.C. Transportation By The Numbers: Meeting the State's Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility](#)