

## Area roads among worst in nation

By Bill Cummings

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TRIP, a national transportation research group based in Washington, D.C., said more investment on the state and national level is needed to bring the roads into good repair.

“With state and local governments struggling to fund needed road repairs, and with federal surface transportation funding falling short of the amount needed to make needed improvements, road conditions are projected to get even worse,” said Will Wilkins, TRIP’s executive director.

The TRIP report noted that 55 percent of the major urban roads in the Bridgeport and Stamford region are in poor condition, the sixth highest among large urban areas, and the resulting impact to vehicles is \$797 annually, the ninth highest among large cities. The economic cost of poor roads was not lost on local officials who see the impact daily.

“Connecticut’s businesses and residents didn’t need a study or a report to know that our roads are in poor condition — they ride on them every day and feel the pain,” said John P. Condlin, president of the Stamford Chamber of Commerce.

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Keven Nursick, a spokesman for the state Department of Transportation, said TRIP’s analysis does not provide an accurate assessment of the

state’s roads. He said the report mixes state highways with local roads and is focused on urban regions where roads are pot marked by manhole covers and utility crossings that make them bumpy. “Urban roads will always have a rougher ride,” Nursick said. “Urban roads have utilities under them, sewer and water drainage and multiple utility access points.”

The TRIP report examined road quality in the nation’s 25 largest urban regions, meaning areas with more than 500,000 in population, and is based on data collected in 2014.

The organization is supported in part by the transit and road construction industries.

TRIP found that 32 percent of the nation’s major urban roads — interstate highways, freeways and other arterial roads — have pavements in substandard condition and provide a rough ride to motorists, costing the average driver \$523 annually.

The nationwide annual cost of driving on deteriorated roads totals \$112 billion, the study found.

### Bumpy ride

New Haven’s urban roads are the 14th most deteriorated in the nation, with 47 percent in poor condition, and drivers lost \$728 annually in repair costs. In the Hartford area, 38 percent of major urban roads are in poor condition, the 25th highest, an cost Hartford drivers \$653 annually.

TRIP pointed out that driving on roads in disrepair increases consumer costs by accelerating vehicle deterioration and depreciation, and increasing maintenance, fuel consumption and tire wear.

“Without adequate investment at the local, state and federal levels, our nation’s crumbling pavements will be more than just a nuisance for drivers - they’ll be a roadblock to economic growth and quality of life,” Wilkins said.

Gov. Dannel P. Malloy has proposed a \$100 billion, 30-year plan to fix the state’s roads, bridges and rail systems, but funding the ambitious program has proven difficult.

### Economic cost

Eric Gjede, assistant counsel for the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, said poor roads dampen economic activity and job growth.

“Connecticut’s highways and roads are a critical economic driver,” Gjede said. “Lawmakers attempting to jump start the state’s economy must prioritize our roads when investing transportation resources to ensure our people and products get safely to their destinations.”

Amy Parmenter, manager of public and government affairs at AAA Allied Group, said potholes and cracked roads cost motorists hundreds of dollars a year.

“The TRIP research underscores AAA’s findings that deteriorating road conditions and potholes are not just an inconvenience but a significant expense to motorists,” Parmenter said. “It’s no wonder that, according to a AAA poll, more than 90 percent of Americans rank road maintenance and repair, such as fixing those potholes, as a top priority when it comes to transportation funding.”

Nursick said TRIP’s portrayal of the Bridgeport and Stamford region’s roads is based on one measure of condition. He said state and national transportation

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# CONNECTICUT POST

## TRANSPORTATION

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officials use five measures to determine the quality of roads. Under that expanded assessment, Nursick said 2 percent or less of state owned roads are in poor condition. He said that using TRIP’s criteria produces a finding of 23 percent of state owned roads poor condition. “The town numbers are dragging it down,” Nursick added, referring to the overall ranking. “You can’t change the fact that urban roadways are going to have more utility access points that impacts ride quality. It’s not fair to say that because you are bald you are in also bad shape.”

**More Information**

Here are the road conditions found by TRIP, a national transportation research group based in Washington, D.C.:

- 55 percent of the major urban roads in the Bridgeport/Stamford region are in poor condition, the sixth highest among large urban areas; cost to drivers \$797 annually
- 47 percent New Haven’s urban roads are in poor condition, 14th highest; cost to divers is \$728 annually
- 38 percent of Hartford area roads are in poor condition; cost to drivers is \$653 annually
- U.S. vehicle traffic increased by 15 percent from 2000 to 2015; 3.1 percent during the first eight months of 2016
- Large commercial truck travel nationally increased 26 percent from 2000 to 2014; projected to grow by 72 percent by 2030