

## Report: Central Coast commuters lose hundreds of dollars due to poor road conditions



By Aja Goare

A transportation study released Wednesday found “poor road” conditions are costing California’s Central Coast residents hundreds of dollars and countless hours of lost time.

According to the report, San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara County drivers lose about \$1,400 each year due to “deficient” roads, which reportedly cost California residents statewide a combined \$61 billion.

The report, which is based on information from the Federal Highway Administration and

Bureau of Transportation Statistics, found 58 percent of roads in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties are considered to be in “poor” condition.

The study conducted by Washington D.C.-based non-profit TRIP found California increased its motor vehicle travel by 3 percent from 2013 to 2016. Drivers in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties paid the smallest amount of money due to deteriorating roads, compared to other metro areas included in the report. Drivers in Los Angeles and the Bay Area spent the most.

"350 billion miles traveled every year, it's the freeway capital of the world and with that comes a lot of wear and tear on our system," Cal Trans Spokesman Colin Jones said.

Those worn out roads can damage vehicles, lead to longer phases of construction and keep drivers ensnared in hours of traffic jams.

"(I've spent) several hours of my life (in traffic), probably days at this point," Arroyo Grande resident Gene Grant said.

Jones said funding and growth are to blame for the deteriorating roads and bridges.

"The Central Coast isn't as busy and active as some other urban areas in California, but it's not a sleepy area anymore," Jones said. "Just in the past five years since the economy turned around, we've seen an incredible amount of development here on the Central Coast and we're feeling the growing pains a little bit."

The report shows Central Coast commuters spend a whopping 16 hours every year idling in traffic.

Jones said Proposition 6 to repeal the state's gas tax, which added a 12 cent tax when it was passed in 2017, would not only increase traffic woes but harm local economies.

"There's nothing more important to the vibrancy of a local economy than a good transportation system, so it's vital we make those investments," Jones said.