

Poor road conditions cost Colorado drivers \$7 billion a year

Written by Andy Koen



WASHINGTON D.C. - Deteriorated, congested roads in Colorado are costing drivers here an extra \$7.1 billion a year in car repairs, lost time and gas due to congestion, and expenses related to traffic crashes. That's according to a [new report](#) just released Thursday by the national transportation research group TRIP.

Report author Carolyn Bonifas Kelly said the price tag for an individual driver in Colorado Springs amounts to \$1,940. In Pueblo, the additional cost per driver amounts to \$1,566.

Of the five metropolitan areas evaluated in the report, roads in Pueblo are in the worst condition with 72 percent of all surfaces rated as either mediocre or poor. Pueblo also has the highest percentage of structurally deficient bridges at 11 percent.

Drivers in Denver spend the most time stuck traffic, averaging 52 hours per year. Colorado Springs drivers have the second longest wait at an average 37 hours per year.

Rocky Scott represents El Paso, Teller and Fremont Counties on the Colorado Transportation Commission. He said the need for road improvements keeps growing.

"At the same time that the need has been going up, the funding is actually going down," Scott said.

State budget trends show that spending on Medicaid, health care, and public schools have consistently outpaced highway funding every year since 2010.

Lawmakers did give an extra \$500 million to highway projects this year. In fact, half that money will be spent widening the Gap on I-25 from Monument and Castle Rock.

But Scott says the overall need for highway improvements is nearly twenty times greater at more than \$10 billion.

That's a tough sell to voters in the Pikes Peak Region who have passed or renewed new sales taxes for roads three times in the last decade.

"Those decisions by voters, they've gotten an outstanding result," Scott said. "2C has been home run, PPRTA, I got a report on that, another great home run. Those have been enormously successful. But neither of those covers state highways."

He said it would take a billion dollars for CDOT to make all the necessary improvements to Powers Boulevard alone.

Voters will be asked again this November to make decisions about roads. One question calls for a 0.62 percent sales tax increase to fund highway projects. The other, requires lawmakers to pull money away from other budget areas.

"As healthcare and education costs go up, which we have been funding compared to their need, a lot more than transportation, do we take money from those categories and move them into transportation or do we get some new revenue?"

The TRIP report concludes that substantial investments by federal, state and local governments will be necessary to both improve the condition of our existing roads and bridges and to expand that infrastructure to accommodate future growth.

"If Colorado is unable to complete needed transportation projects it will hamper the state's ability to improve the condition and efficiency of its transportation system or enhance economic development opportunities and quality of life," the report reads.