

Study: Sorry State of Denver Roads Costing Money, Lives and Business

[Conor McCormick-Cavanagh](#)



Denver drivers are certainly familiar with the sad state of the city's roads. Congestion slows down daily commutes, and Denver's potholes are notoriously common — and large.

A new study highlights the effects of shoddy road conditions, which are costing motorists more than \$2,300 per year in the form of "higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes, and congestion-related delays." TRIP, a nonprofit transportation research group, put together the report, which reveals just how dire the crisis actually is. According to TRIP, 40 percent of roads in Denver are in poor condition, [meaning](#) that the pavement is "uncomfortable with frequent bumps or depressions." These roads, in addition to sucking money from drivers, are also costing lives, wasting time and potentially pushing business away.

"Lives are on the line. Our future is on the line," said J. Skyler McKinley, director of public relations and government affairs at AAA Colorado, at a press conference at the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce today, June 28.

Nearly 400 motorists were killed in [accidents](#) in Denver between 2014 and 2016. According to the TRIP study, the lack of certain roadway features, such as lane markings, rumble strips and guardrails, "are likely a contributing factor in approximately one-third of fatal traffic crashes."

Less tragic but still painful for Denver commuters is the time spent stuck in traffic. On average, they lose 52 hours annually to congestion.

Transportation woes in the city are [timeless](#). In a 1998 [survey](#) of 75 companies in the southeast I-25 corridor, transportation, or "the mobility of employees to get to and from work," was voted as one of the top issues in the state.

That problem continues to grow as roads have yet to catch up with city- and statewide population increases. Annual vehicular miles of travel in Colorado went up from 42 billion to 52 billion between 2000 and 2016. Roads in the rest of Colorado are suffering, with 40 percent qualifying as poor or mediocre, according to the TRIP study.

Despite Colorado's GDP growing by 31 percent from 2000 to 2016, businesses in Denver are starting to worry about attracting and maintaining labor for their companies.

"Half a dozen large companies told me they are having a harder time recruiting millennials now than eight or nine years ago," says Mike Fitzgerald, president and CEO of Denver South Economic Development Partnership. He believes that lack of affordable housing combined with transportation issues are the main factors leading young people to leave Denver for work elsewhere.

"Transport will start to solve it more than anything," he says.

Mayor Jackie Millett of Lone Tree shares his concerns. "We cannot wait any longer. We need a reliable statewide funding source," she said at the press conference.

A solution could be on the horizon. Initiatives [153](#) and [167](#), which both call for solutions to transportation issues but are pro-tax and [anti-tax](#), respectively, may hit the November statewide ballot if they gather enough signatures.

Conor McCormick-Cavanagh is a fellow at *Westword*. He previously worked as a journalist in Tunisia, where he aimed to cover stories no one else was writing about. Born and raised in New York, he is exploring the West for the first time.

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