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How bad are St. Louis area's major roads? Study says 22 percent are in poor condition

By Mark Schlinkmann St. Louis Post-Dispatch



Traffic in both directions fills every lane of Interstate 270 on Friday, Dec. 16, 2016, looking northward from J.J. Kelley Memorial Drive in Des Peres. Photo by Christian Gooden, cgooden@post-dispatch.com

Twenty-two percent of major roads and highways on the Missouri side of the St. Louis metro area are in poor condition, a national construction industry group says.

The report, released Wednesday by the Road Information Program (TRIP) to bolster the ongoing campaign to pass a state gas tax increase at the Nov. 6 election, said 29 percent of roads here are in mediocre shape.

The figures are similar to the ratings for major roads statewide in the study. Twenty-four percent are considered poor and 28 percent mediocre.

Meanwhile, the report said 7 percent of 1,903 St. Louis area bridges are structurally deficient. The percentage of bridges statewide in that category was much higher, 13 percent.

The report estimated that driving in the St. Louis area costs the average motorist \$2,031 a year in extra vehicle operating costs due to roads needing repairs, lost time and fuel due to congestion-spurred delays and traffic crashes related to road features.

"TRIP's study shows bad roads cost Missourians money and time in big and small ways that add up to considerable expense, stress and frustration," said Scott Charton, a spokesman for SaferMo.com, the campaign committee for the gas tax hike.

The measure, Proposition D, would phase in a 10-cent increase in the state's 17-cent per gallon tax between July of next year and 2022.

Analysts say when the tax hike is fully implemented, at least \$228 million more a year would be available for state road and bridge construction and maintenance and about \$123 million for similar work carried out by cities and counties.

The TRIP group is funded by construction companies, engineering manufacturers, unions and other industry-related groups. The Washington-based organization periodically releases reports on highway conditions across the country.