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Bad roads cost drivers money, research group says

TRIP: On average, poor roads and congestion cost Capital Region motorists \$1,900 per year

[Stephen Williams @gazettesteve](#) | November 19, 2018



In this file photo from Oct. 11, construction on the Michigan Avenue 1-890 overpass continues to cause traffic delays.

Photographer: Marc Schultz/Gazette Photographer

Poor roads and bridges are costing the average Capital Region motorist nearly \$1,900 per year, according to a [new report](#) from a transportation research group.

TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based group that generally supports increased infrastructure spending, said an average of \$1,863 per driver is spent each year due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion-related delays. It's a higher cost than anywhere else in upstate New York. Then next-highest is \$1,808 per driver in the Poughkeepsie-Newburgh-Middletown area; the lowest is \$1,396 in the Binghamton area.

All together, the report pegs the cost to drivers across upstate New York at \$24.8 billion, due to higher than necessary fuel consumption and vehicle repairs from hitting things like [potholes](#), a perennial problem on Capital Region streets. The figures both locally and statewide are higher than they were when TRIP did a [similar study in 2014](#).

"When roads are in poor, mediocre or fair condition -- which may include potholes, rutting or rough surfaces -- the cost to operate and maintain a vehicle increases," the report states. "These additional vehicle costs include accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional vehicle repair costs, increased fuel consumption and increased tire wear."

The report found that 15 percent of major local and state roads are in poor condition, and another 20 percent are in mediocre condition. It said the average Capital Region motorist spends 42 hours in unnecessary traffic delays each year, wasting time and fuel.

"Adequate funding for the state's transportation system would allow for smoother roads, more efficient mobility, enhanced safety and economic growth opportunities while saving New

York's drivers time and money," said Will Wilkins, TRIP's executive director.

Business interests say more money needs to be spent on roads and bridges, given the importance of good roads to a smooth economy.

"Once again, TRIP is highlighting the desperate need to increase funding for the state's rapidly deteriorating infrastructure," said Heather C. Briccetti, president and CEO of the Business Council of New York State.

"The facts in this report speak for themselves," said Mark Eagan, president and CEO of the Capital Region Chamber. "It is critical that elected officials make increased funding for transportation infrastructure a top priority."

The report is coming out as speculation has grown that with Democrats' new control of the House of Representatives -- it will have a Democratic majority in January for the first time in eight years -- increasing infrastructure spending may be one of the few issues on which Democrats and Republicans can agree.

President Donald Trump, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and prospective incoming House Speaker Nancy Pelosi have all identified infrastructure as an area [where they might reach agreement](#).

The current federal transportation funding bill, the \$305 billion Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, expires in 2020. The Trump Administration's position is that federal funding should be used to spur other investment, rather than be the primary source of infrastructure funding.

"The Department is committed to revitalizing America's infrastructure using federal dollars as seed money to encourage additional infrastructure investment by states, localities and private sector partners," the U.S. Department of Transportation explained in an October funding announcement. Back in May, Gov. Andrew Cuomo proposed increasing state infrastructure funding by \$125 billion over five years, though the state Legislature hasn't acted.

"From building bridges to revitalizing our subway and rail systems, we have invested more in our infrastructure than any other administration, and now we must take the next step forward with an additional \$125 billion commitment," Cuomo said at the time. "These efforts will improve travel and transportation, strengthen regional economies and increase our state's competitiveness, and make New York stronger and more resilient for future generations."

While TRIP's research is conducted independently, the organization is allied with transportation user and construction industry organizations -- ranging from the American Automobile Association to National Stone, Sand and Gravel Association - - that would likely benefit from funding increases and better roads and bridges.

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