



## The high cost of poor roads

### New study says Wisconsin motorists pay \$6.8B annually in higher operating costs, crashes and traffic delays. For Eau Claire area drivers, that's \$1,219 for each of us.

FRONT PAGE

By [Eric Lindquist](#) – Leader-Telegram staff



A vehicle travels over a bump in the road Wednesday on Birch Street in Eau Claire. A national report released this week found that half the state's major roads — and 56 percent in the Eau Claire area — are in poor or mediocre condition. View more photos at [LeaderTelegramPhotos.com](#).

Deteriorated roads, traffic congestion and a lack of safety features cost Eau Claire area drivers an average of \$1,219 a year, a national study revealed this week.

That's just the local share of the \$6.8 billion bill Wisconsin motorists pay annually in higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion-related delays resulting from the state's poor road conditions, according to the report by the national nonprofit transportation research group TRIP, based on 2016 state Department of Transportation data on road conditions.

The TRIP report found that 56 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in the Eau Claire urban area are in poor or mediocre condition, which is slightly worse than the 50 percent share statewide but better than the other four Wisconsin urban areas detailed in the study. It showed 75 percent of roads in Madison, 72 percent in Milwaukee, 70 percent in Green Bay-Appleton-Oshkosh and 67 percent in Wausau are in poor or mediocre condition, creating even higher costs for drivers in those areas. The rate of deficient roads in all five urban areas is worse than the national average of 44 percent.

The study indicates that increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels could relieve traffic congestion, improve road conditions, boost safety and support long-term economic growth in Wisconsin.

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

Wilkins, TRIP's executive director, said in a statement.

Dan Fedderly, executive director of the Wisconsin County Highway Association, called on state legislators to at least begin to tackle the funding problem that has left the state's roads and highways in bad shape and getting worse. The decline in the road system began in 2005 when lawmakers voted to eliminate gasoline tax indexing, which called for the state's gas tax to be adjusted annually based on inflation, he said.

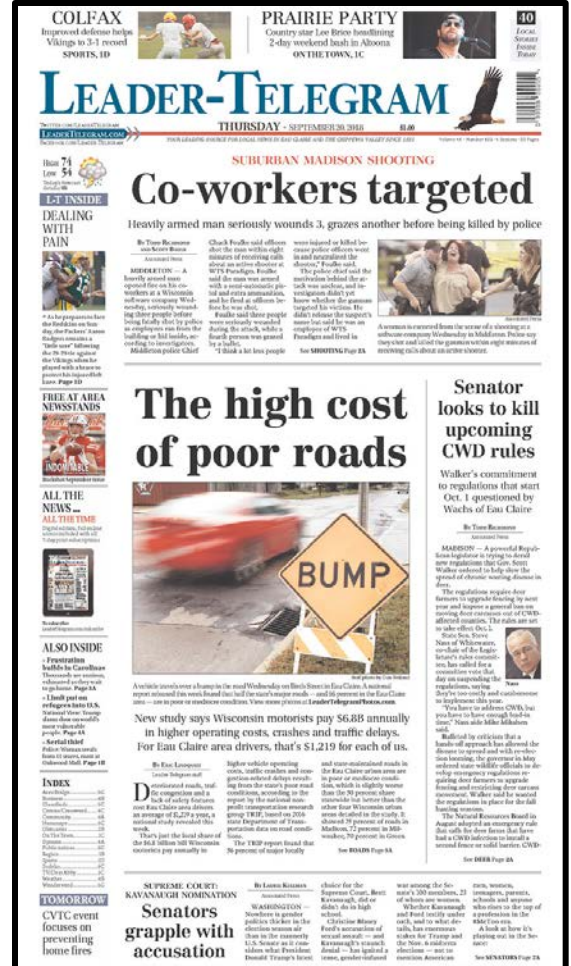
"Until state elected officials are able to agree on long-term, sustainable transportation funding, Wisconsin will be unable to meet mounting needs on our local roads and state highways," said Fedderly, of Boyceville. "The current funding system causes us to be reactive, responding from one crisis to the next. We would much rather be working proactively on a shared sense of vision that can move our communities and state forward."

Wisconsin lawmakers and Gov. Scott Walker have been battling for years on how to solve the state's road funding woes. Walker has said he would not sign any legislation that includes a gas tax increase, forcing the state to bond for transportation funds. Hundreds of millions of dollars were budgeted in the last cycle for transportation needs, but it was not enough to fund several major roads projects in the state.

It doesn't take a national study to identify that Wisconsin has a problem, Fedderly said, adding, "All you need to do is get out and drive on the roads."

The TRIP report is the latest research to document the state's crumbling roads. In January, U.S. News & World Report ranked the condition of Wisconsin's roads second worst in the country, and a study by the nonpartisan Legislative Audit Bureau found that about 32 percent of Wisconsin's state highways were in good condition, compared with an average of about 68 percent in other Midwestern states.

The earlier research prompted Transportation Development Association executive director Craig Thompson to release a statement declaring, "The state of transportation in Wisconsin is poor and declining. And there is no plan to reverse this trend."



### Co-workers targeted

Heavily armed man seriously wounds 3, grazes another before being killed by police

By Tom Reardon  
A 34-year-old man with a long history of mental health issues and a history of violence was shot and killed by police Wednesday night after a gun battle with officers in a suburban Madison neighborhood. The man, identified as a suspect in a shooting that wounded three people, was shot in the chest and killed by police officers. The man was shot in the chest and killed by police officers. The man was shot in the chest and killed by police officers.

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### Senator looks to kill upcoming CWD rules

Walker's commitment to regulations that start Oct. 1 questioned by Wochs of Eau Claire

By Tom Reardon  
A proposal by Republican Sen. Scott Walker to delay or kill certain regulations that the state's Department of Natural Resources is expected to release this week has drawn the attention of local conservationists. The proposal would delay or kill certain regulations that the state's Department of Natural Resources is expected to release this week.

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