

KENOSHA NEWS

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Bad roads a boon to repair shops, tire sellers

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Rich Covelli, owner of Auto Medix, inspects a vehicle's front end suspension.

KENOSHA NEWS PHOTO BY BILL SIEL

Potholes, cracks, crooked manhole covers and rough railroad crossings aren't necessarily bad for everyone.

Local auto repair shops appear to be the main beneficiary of the area's deteriorating roadways as frustrated motorists continue to spend hundreds of dollars each year on replacing damaged tires, rims and suspension.

Rich Covelli, owner of Auto Medix, 4500 Sheridan Road, said nearly half of his repair work is on suspension.

"The only solution to this problem is to drive on better roads," Covelli said. "These roads are really hard on your suspension and tires. That's what's making contact on the road. We're seeing a lot of premature suspension wear and a lot of abuse on tires."

"You can have a car get knocked out of alignment pretty easily from a pothole, and you don't notice it until your tires are uneven and need to be replaced."

Costly annual repairs

A recent study showed Wisconsin's poor road conditions cost motorists \$6.8 billion annually — as much as \$2,321 per driver in the state's largest urban areas — due to increased vehicle operating costs, crashes and congestion-related delays.

The report, released on Sept. 18, was conducted by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation research group.

A similar study done by the American Society of Civil Engineers showed 27 percent of Wisconsin public roadways are in poor condition, resulting in the average, annual cost of \$637 per driver for road-related repairs.

"I could see that," said Jay Rhodes, owner of Rhodes Auto and Truck Repair Inc., 8640 Sheridan Road. "A new set of struts is pretty close to \$600. These roads are really hard on your vehicles, especially tires. All it takes is one pothole to take out a tire or ball joint."

While deteriorating roads are wonderful for the auto repair business, Rhodes is saddened to see the state of our local roadways. Rhodes' great-grandfather, Jay Rhodes, was a well-known civic leader and has a road named after him in Somers. Highway JR runs through Petrifying Springs from Green Bay Road to Highway E.

"There's no potholes on that road," Rhodes said. "There are several on the back streets and the main roads. There's a lot of roads that need to be redone too."

"If they're not going to replace them, I think they need to do a better job of patching them. They just throw stuff in the holes and you drive over it. They need to make sure it stays in there," he said.

Get vehicles inspected

Motorists should have their vehicles inspected at least once a year and have them looked at immediately if there's any unusual noises or issues, according to Covelli.

Auto Medix offers a free, quick inspection during all of its oil changes.

"It's the cheapest preventive thing you can do," Covelli said. "We'll be able to see if anything is bent or worn out. Everything in there has a joint ... a ball and socket, a tie-rod. It can wear out and start slopping around. If you brought your car in here for an inspection, I want to look at that car like it's my family preparing for a long trip."