

Report says deteriorating roads, congestion costs Wisconsin drivers \$6.8 billion a year



A look at the Lincoln Avenue ramp on the Zoo Interchange. According to a report from Washington, D.C.-based TRIP, driving on deteriorated bridges and roads and congestion due to crashes and construction cost Wisconsin drivers \$6.8 billion annually in operating costs. SCOTT PAULUS



By [Nick Williams](#) – Reporter, Milwaukee Business Journal

Driving over severely cracked roads and burning fuel while inching along in bumper-to-bumper traffic is making a big dent in Wisconsin motorists' bank accounts.

According to a report from Washington, D.C.-based TRIP, a national transportation

research group, driving on deteriorated bridges and roads, congestion due to crashes and construction and lack of safety features in the state's largest urban metros cost Wisconsin drivers \$6.8 billion annually in operating costs, which includes fuel and repairs. Half of the government-maintained roads in those urban areas are in poor or mediocre condition, the report says, while only 9 percent of bridges here are structurally deficient. In the Milwaukee area, that figure is much higher, with 72 percent of government-maintained roads being in poor or mediocre conditions.

Eau Claire has the best road systems in the state, according to the report, with 44 percent in good or fair condition.

In Milwaukee, drivers spend \$2,321 per year on operating costs because of road conditions, while Madison drivers spend \$2,139. Congestion on roads in the Milwaukee area causes 41 annual hours of delay for the average motorist, resulting in the loss of \$1,067 each year in lost time and wasted fuel, the report says.

At a recent luncheon co-sponsored by the Rotary Club of Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Press Club, Gov. [Scott Walker](#)

said he opposes spending heavily on wider highways and bigger freeway interchanges and [believes the state needs to redirect road funding for a new era with fewer gas-powered vehicles.](#)

Walker added his new plan for transportation funding in Wisconsin will address maintenance of existing roads and include other "advances along the way."

"Going forward we believe we can continue to make investments," he said. "We'll lay out in September some things we believe we can do without a massive gas tax increase."



Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker
RICH KIRCHEN

Between 2006 and 2019, funding for highway development and rehabilitation and bridge construction in the state has decreased 23.2 percent, [according to a recent Wisconsin Department of Transportation report.](#)

Daniel Fedderly, executive director of the Wisconsin County Highway Association, was quoted in the TRIP report saying "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."

Meanwhile, transportation construction in Wisconsin contributes an estimated \$506 million in state and local income, according to TRIP.

[Information in the TRIP report](#) was pulled from the Federal Highway Administration, the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, the U.S. Census Bureau, the Texas Transportation Institute, the American Road and Transportation Builders Association and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.