

Report: Bad Roads Cost Illinois Drivers \$18.3bn

By [Mary Hansen](#) • Thursday, May 16, 2019



Peter Gray / NPR Illinois

Drive down a major road or highway in Illinois and you'll likely feel the bump of potholes. A report from TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based research group, put a number on what it costs drivers to travel these roads — \$18.3 billion. That includes additional car repairs, time lost in traffic, and crashes caused by poor road conditions.

Lawmakers are using the new report to push for a multibillion-dollar infrastructure plan, paid for in part by a gas tax hike and higher vehicle and registration fees.

Carolyn Kelly, associate director of TRIP, said drivers and lawmakers have a choice to make about costs.

“They can pay for it up front in fixing the roads or they can pay for it down the line,” she said.

Results of the report were announced Wednesday at a news conference organized by the Illinois Chamber of Commerce. The business group has offered its own proposal, which includes a 25-cent gas tax increase in exchange for phasing out the sales tax on fuel.

TRIP's report estimates that drivers around the state pay more than a thousand dollars per year — ranging from \$1,294 in Springfield to \$2,559 in Chicago — for flat tires and other repairs, as well as time and fuel lost in traffic.

The TRIP report found that 19 percent of the major roads were in “poor” condition.

State Sen. Don DeWitte, a St. Charles Republican, said it's important to understand the cost of doing nothing to address the state's infrastructure needs.

“The longer we wait, not only do things get worse but the more expensive it becomes,” he said.

Lawmakers have been hearing for months about the need for an influx of money to repair bridges, highways and roads. The Illinois Department of Transportation estimated that it needed an additional \$13 billion to \$15 billion to repair highways over the next ten years. For public transit, \$19.1 billion is needed, while the state's passenger rail system could use \$800 million.

“We have allowed these structural deficiencies to go on for too long,” said state Sen. Martin Sandoval, a Chicago Democrat who chairs the Senate Transportation Committee. “Now is the time for courageous, decisive action.”

One current proposal, unveiled last week, would add \$2.4 billion in annual funding by raising the gas tax from its current 19 cents a gallon to 44 cents a gallon. Fees for driver's licenses would also double, and license plate fees would jump from \$98 to \$148.