

Michigan roads costing motorists billions each year, per transportation research group

by Jorge Rodas | Newschannel 3



Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer made road repair a key part of her campaign. (WWMT/Mikenzie Frost/File)

KALAMAZOO, Mich. — A new report unveiled Tuesday showed Michigan drivers are losing \$14.1 billion a year because of the condition of the state's roads.

[TRIP](#) is a national transportation research group. The private nonprofit organization released the [findings](#). The group said the report proves Michigan roads are in need of repair, and funding can help the problem.

"The TRIP data confirms what we've been saying for some time: Michigan's roads and bridges are crumbling because of decades of under investment," said Tony Kratofil, the chief operating officer and chief engineer at the Michigan Department of Transportation. Kratofil issued the statement in a written response to the TRIP report distributed Tuesday.

The data in the report broke down the condition of the state's roads.

In Kalamazoo and Battle Creek, 29 percent of the roads were rated as being in good condition according to the TRIP report; 19 percent were considered in fair condition. Twenty-seven percent of the roads in both communities were classified as mediocre, while 26 percent were classified as poor.

TRIP claims that as a result of those road conditions, drivers in the area are spending \$1,923 a year in vehicle operating costs, safety costs and congestion costs. The report defines vehicle operating costs as things like accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

According to the report, safety costs are determined after considering how roadway design factors into serious and fatal crashes. The report said those costs come in the form of "lost household and workplace productivity, insurance and other financial costs."

Congestion costs are in the form of lost time waiting in traffic and wasted fuel because of bad roads, according to the report.

TRIP said the conditions are not directly tied to the region's weather.

"There are certainly states with much better climates that also have rough roads because there's simply not enough funding. So while the weather is an important

factor in that, really the most important thing is the amount of funding that's available," said Carolyn Kelly, associate director for research and communication for TRIP.

TRIP said the report is timely given that Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer recently proposed increasing the state's gas tax by 45 cents to pay for road maintenance. The proposal was included in her 2020 budget. That plan, according to Whitmer, will raise \$2.5 billion a year once fully implemented. The proposal still has to become law.

"Every driver in Michigan is already paying a hidden tax on our roads, and the cost just went up," Whitmer said Tuesday. "If we don't raise the \$2.5 billion we need to actually fix our roads the right way with the right materials, the cost will continue to go up year after year."

TRIP said Michigan has made investments in road maintenance, but not enough.

"While the recent influx of funding has allowed Michigan to make strides in improving its transportation system, more work still needs to be done to provide the state's residents, businesses and visitors with a smooth, safe and efficient transportation system," said Will Wilkins, TRIP's executive director, in a written statement on the data. "Michigan will need to continue to make transportation investment a top priority."