



# High costs for Michigan drivers due to poor road conditions don't come as surprise, officials say

Tuesday, March 12, 2019



Drivers dodge potholes on Francis Street in Jackson on Thursday, Feb. 22, 2018. Many Jackson area roads have potholes appearing. (J. Scott Park | MLive.com)

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Local and state officials said they weren't surprised by results of a new study finding driving on Michigan roads costs motorists an average of \$648 a year in additional vehicle operating costs.

In a report released Tuesday, TRIP - a national nonprofit that analyzes transportation issues at the state and federal level - found only about 32 percent of Michigan's major roads were in "good" condition, about 15 percent of the roads were labeled "fair"; 20 percent, "mediocre," and 22 percent "poor."

These road conditions add significant costs to drivers each year, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, increased fuel consumption and tire wear, the study found.

ony Kratofil, COO and chief engineer of the Michigan Department of Transportation, said the new TRIP report "confirms what MDOT's been saying for years" during a press conference in Lansing.

"Michigan roads and bridges, as well as underground systems, are crumbling because of decades of under investment," he said. "The state's economic recovery could be slowed if Michigan is not able to provide

modern, well-maintained transportation and infrastructure systems."

Kratofil said MDOT attempts to prioritize projects that ensure the safety and mobility of Michigan residents, but that the money isn't there to fully fund a road fix.

In 2018, 5,000 potholes were fixed in Lansing, Mayor Andy Schor said. But the amount of money the city is able to spend on roads each year - between \$4-5 million from state funds, a \$2 million millage and \$3-4 million in road fixes stemming from sewer separation projects - pales in comparison to the \$250-300 million need to bring all city roads up to par.

"We would need \$36.7 million to really make an impact in Lansing," Schor said. "We know that Lansing's roads need help, and we don't have the resources to do it. So what do we do? We fix the roads we can and do pothole repairs, and put Band-Aids on it."

Michigan County Road Association President Joanna Johnson, the managing director of the Road Commission of Kalamazoo County, said the TRIP report results hammers home the message that Michigan's roads have a lot of room for improvement.

"All roads need to be addressed for quality of life - investment needs to be towards a well-maintained and safe transportation system," she said.

The report's authors found the last major effort to fund the roads, signed in 2015, helped state and local governments move forward with a number of crucial projects, but "is not sufficient to fully address the significant deterioration of the system, or to allow the state to provide many of the transportation improvements needed to support economic growth."

The TRIP results come shortly after Gov. Gretchen Whitmer rolled out a plan to raise the gas tax by 45 cents a gallon over the course of a year, a proposal that's already been rejected outright by many legislative Republicans.