

TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2020

Louisville drivers lose more than \$1,700 per year due to crumbling roads, report finds

[Billy Kobin](#), Louisville Courier Journal



Driving on deteriorating and congested roads in Louisville costs the average motorist more than \$1,700 each year, according to a report released Tuesday.

Louisville-area drivers have to pay \$569 per year in extra vehicle operating costs as a result of traveling on roads in need of repair, \$726 in lost time and fuel due to congestion-related delays and \$417 in costs from traffic crashes in which subpar roads were likely a contributing factor, according to the report from [TRIP](#), a Washington, D.C.-based transportation research nonprofit.

The report also found that deficient roads and bridges cost Kentucky drivers \$4.5 billion annually, with nearly 30% of major locally and state-maintained roads in "poor" or "mediocre" condition.

According to TRIP's report, 19% of major roads in the Louisville urban area are in poor condition, and another 27% are in mediocre condition.

In addition, 7% of the Bluegrass State's bridges that are at least 20 feet in length are rated as poor or structurally deficient, and 3,773 people lost their lives on the state's roads from 2014 to 2018, the TRIP report found.

TRIP used data from the several sources for its report, including the Federal Highway Administration, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Kentucky has roughly 14,000 bridges and 80,000 miles of roads.

TRIP's report says increased investment in transportation infrastructure could relieve

traffic congestion, boost safety and help Kentucky's economy grow.

Chris Dickinson, senior principal of [Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions](#) and chair of [Greater Louisville Inc.](#)'s Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said in a news release that the TRIP report "continues to illustrate the serious needs we have throughout Kentucky."

"In order for greater Louisville to fully capitalize on our central location to attract jobs and compete in today's 21st century economy, we must make the commitment to invest in our roads and bridges," Dickinson said. "The business community urges policymakers to take swift action to repair our crumbling infrastructure."

The average annual cost per driver in Louisville due to deficient roads is \$1,712, which is the second-highest cost among the state's largest urban areas, according to TRIP.

The report found crumbling roads and bridges in the Northern Kentucky region cost the average driver \$2,025 per year.

Lexington (\$1,554), Bowling Green (\$1,493) and Owensboro (\$1,177) followed behind Northern Kentucky and Louisville in the average annual cost per driver, according to TRIP.

Traffic congestion in the Louisville area is worsening, the report found, causing 46 hours of delays for the average motorist each year.

"Infrastructure investment in Kentucky is a top priority for the greater Louisville business community in 2020, not only for moving commerce and improving bottom lines, but as an important tool for business and job attraction," said Rebecca Wood, COO and vice president of investor development for Greater Louisville Inc., the city's chamber of commerce.

"As a major logistics and manufacturing region that is within a day's drive of two-thirds of the U.S. population, it is vital to greater Louisville's economic future that

lawmakers increase funding and support for infrastructure and roads," Wood added.

Kentucky's roads and bridges have not been immune from criticism in the past.

In 2019, the [American Society of Civil Engineers](#) gave Kentucky a D+ for road conditions and C- for the state of its bridges.

Gov. Andy Beshear is not seeking additional funds in the [upcoming two-year budget](#) to bolster the state's \$1.5 billion Road Fund, but he has indicated a desire to finish up road projects such as the widening of the Mountain Parkway in Eastern Kentucky and completion of an I-69 bridge between Henderson and Evansville, Indiana.

Raising taxes to support the state's roads and bridges, such as through a higher gas tax, has been a political hot potato for Kentucky lawmakers over the years.

But the TRIP report says that taking no action to improve the experience for drivers will only hurt the state's economy.

According to TRIP, \$578 billion in goods are shipped to and from Kentucky each year, and about 900,000 full-time jobs in industries like tourism, retail, agriculture and manufacturing are dependent on a reliable transportation network.

"These conditions are only going to get worse, increasing the additional costs to motorists, if greater investment is not made available at the federal, state and local levels of government," said Dave Kearby, TRIP's executive director. "Without adequate funding, Kentucky's transportation system will become increasingly deteriorated and congested, hampering economic growth, safety and quality of life."

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