

New report says road conditions cost West Memphis drivers \$1,800+ yearly

The TRIP report says the condition of roads costs \$3.2 billion statewide each year due to vehicle operating costs, crashes, and congestion.



Credit: AP

A motorist prepares to enter a construction area on Interstate 440 in North Little Rock, Ark., on Wednesday, June 7, 2017. (AP Photo/Kelly P. Kissel)

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WEST MEMPHIS, Ark. — A new report says deteriorating and congested roads and bridges cost West Memphis drivers more than \$1,800 each annually.

The TRIP report looked at roads throughout Arkansas. TRIP is a Washington D.C. based national transportation research nonprofit. The report says the condition of roads costs \$3.2 billion statewide each year due to vehicle operating costs, crashes, and congestion.

The following is the full news release from TRIP:

“Roads and bridges that are deteriorated, congested or lack some desirable safety features cost Arkansas motorists a total of \$3.2 billion statewide annually - \$1,822 per driver in the West Memphis urban area - due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion-related delays. Increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels could relieve traffic congestion, improve road, bridge and transit conditions, boost safety, and support long-term economic growth in Arkansas, according to a new report released today by [TRIP](#), a Washington, DC based national transportation research nonprofit .

The TRIP report, “[Arkansas Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility](#),” finds that throughout Arkansas, more than half of major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor or mediocre condition, five percent of locally and state-maintained bridges (20 feet or more in length) are rated poor/structurally deficient, and 2,551 people lost their lives on the state’s roads from 2014-2018. Arkansas’ major urban roads are becoming increasingly congested, causing significant delays and choking commuting and commerce. The TRIP report includes regional pavement and bridge conditions, congestion data, highway safety data, and cost breakdowns for the Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers, Fort Smith, Hot Springs, Jonesboro, Little Rock-North Little Rock-Conway, Pine Bluff and West Memphis urban areas and statewide.

Driving on roads in the West Memphis urban area costs the average driver \$1,822 per year in the form of extra vehicle operating costs (VOC) as a result of driving on roads in need of repair, lost time and fuel due to congestion-related delays, and the costs of traffic crashes in which roadway features likely were a contributing factor. A breakdown of the costs per motorist in the state’s largest urban areas, along with a statewide total, is below.

The TRIP report finds that 17 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in the West Memphis urban area are in poor condition and another 22 percent are in mediocre condition, costing the average motorist an additional \$473 each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. Statewide, 26 percent of Arkansas’ major roads are in poor condition and 26 percent are in mediocre condition.

“The findings of the TRIP report reaffirm the fact that the economic growth of our region and the quality of life of our residents is directly linked to the condition, safety and efficiency of our transportation system,” said Randy Zook, president and CEO of the Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce and the Associated Industries of Arkansas. “Adequate investment in improving our roads and bridges puts Arkansans to work today and creates a lasting asset for future generations.”

Traffic congestion in the West Memphis urban area is worsening, causing 48 annual hours of delay for the average motorist and costing the average West Memphis driver \$651 annually in lost time and wasted fuel. Statewide, drivers lose \$780 million annually as a result of lost time and wasted fuel due to traffic congestion.

Traffic crashes in Arkansas claimed the lives 2,551 people between 2014 and 2018. Arkansas’ overall traffic fatality rate of 1.41 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2018 is the 12th highest in the nation and significantly higher than the national average of 1.13. In the West Memphis urban area, on average, 15 people were killed in traffic crashes each year from 2016 to 2018. The financial impact of traffic crashes in which the lack of adequate roadway safety features were likely a contributing factor was an average of \$698 annually per each West Memphis area driver.

In the West Memphis urban area, two percent of bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient, with significant deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Statewide, five percent of Arkansas’ bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient.

The efficiency and condition of Arkansas’ transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state’s economy. Annually, \$226 billion in goods are shipped to and from Arkansas, relying heavily on the state’s network of roads and bridges. Increasingly, companies are looking at the quality of a region’s transportation system when deciding where to re-locate or expand. Regions with congested or poorly maintained roads may see businesses relocate to areas with a smoother, more efficient and more modern transportation system. The design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in Arkansas supports approximately 35,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the state economy. Approximately 594,000 full-time jobs in Arkansas in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are dependent on the quality, safety and reliability of the state’s transportation infrastructure 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, Arkansas’ transportation system will become increasingly deteriorated and congested, hampering economic growth, safety and quality of life.”