

TRIP: Missouri Roads and Bridges in Need of Investment

December 3, 2020 | Rock Products News
Roads and bridges that are deteriorated, congested or lack some desirable safety features cost Missouri motorists a total of \$8 billion statewide annually – up to \$1,917 per driver in some urban areas – 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 Missouri, according to a new report released by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation research nonprofit.

The TRIP report, “Missouri Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility,” finds that throughout Missouri, more than half of major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor or mediocre condition, 9% of locally and state-maintained bridges (20 ft. or more in length) are rated poor/structurally deficient, and 4,431 people lost their lives on the state’s roads from 2014-2018.

Missouri’s major urban roads are 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 Columbia-Jefferson City, Kansas City, St. Louis and Springfield urban areas and statewide.

Driving on deficient roads in Missouri costs drivers a total of \$8 billion per year – as much as \$1,917 per motorists – 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 the lack of adequate roadway safety features likely were a contributing factor.

The TRIP report finds that 25% of major locally and state-maintained roads in Missouri are in poor condition

and another 27% are in mediocre condition, costing the state’s drivers \$3.3 billion each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. Eighteen percent of the state’s major roads are in fair condition and the remaining 30% are in good condition.

“The TRIP report confirms what we know about the deficiencies in the condition of our transportation system in Missouri – there are not enough resources to properly maintain it,” said Patrick McKenna, director of the Missouri Department of Transportation. “Missouri’s basic infrastructure condition will continue to get worse until the proper funding is addressed.” Statewide, drivers lose \$2.3 billion annually as a result of lost time and wasted fuel due to traffic congestion. Traffic congestion causes up to 47 annual hours of delay for the average motorist and costs the average driver as much as \$898 annually in lost time and wasted fuel. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, vehicle travel in Missouri dropped by as much as 38% in April 2020 compared to vehicle travel during the same month the previous year, but rebounded to 6% below the previous year’s volume in September 2020. Statewide, 9% of bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient, with significant deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Forty-eight percent of Missouri’s bridges are rated fair and the remaining 43% are rated in good condition.

Traffic crashes in Missouri claimed the lives of 4,431 people between 2014 and 2018. Missouri’s overall traffic fatality rate of 1.20 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2018 is higher than the national average of 1.13. Traffic crashes imposed a total of \$7.2 billion in economic costs in Missouri in 2018 and traffic crashes in which a lack of adequate roadway safety features were likely a contributing factor imposed \$2.4 billion in economic costs.

“MoDOT, which was recently rated by the Reason Foundation as the nation’s second most efficient state transportation department, is doing an exceptional job with very limited resources. Bottom line, current funding is simply inadequate to support Missouri’s role as the crossroads for the nation’s logistics,” said Len Toenjes, CAE, president of the Associated General Contractors of Missouri. “Responsibility clearly lies with the Missouri Legislature to provide the proper level of transportation funding investment to propel Missouri’s economy forward during its 2021 legislative session.”

The efficiency and condition of Missouri’s transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state’s economy. Annually, \$469 billion in goods are shipped to and from Missouri, 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 relocate 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 Missouri supports approximately 79,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the state economy. Approximately 1.3 million full-time jobs in Missouri 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, Missouri’s transportation system will become increasingly deteriorated and congested, hampering economic growth, safety and quality of life.”