

Study: Bad roads cost average Bangor driver \$1,500 a year

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BANGOR – Pot holes, bumpy roads and traffic delays are not only frustrating, but a new study shows they’re costing you and other drivers money.

“It may not be breaking news to people that the roads are deteriorated and congested,” said Carolyn Bonifas-Kelly of National Transportation Research Nonprofit, also known as TRIP. “It does have a direct impact on people’s pocketbooks.”

A new TRIP study shows the average driver in the Bangor area loses more than \$1,500 each year as a result of deteriorated, congested or unsafe roads that are putting wear and tear on your vehicle. Those costs are associated with traffic crashes, lost time, lost fuel, and other vehicle operating costs.

It’s not a new issue, but it takes money to fix, which the city’s manager said is a problem itself.

“The issue really has been the pot of money hasn’t changed, and the pressures on that pot of money have increased,” said Cathy Conlow, Bangor’s city manager.

Conlow said the city has needed more funding for road improvements for years and the need is even greater now.

COVID-19 has created a revenue shortfall and fewer people are taking trips, which equates to a drop in gas tax revenue.

While the city has done its best to maintain the roads, Conlow says it’s hard to catch up.

“We have directed our money toward sort of band aid maintenance projects, as opposed to creating expansion projects, capacity projects, or really redoing our road infrastructure,” Conlow said.

Officials say there’s no easy fix. They suggest increasing funding for infrastructure, potentially through increasing the state and federal fuel tax, or shifting money from the general fund.

“I think the need is clear, and the time to do maintenance is now,” said Tim Doyle, vice president of the Maine Motor Transport Association. “It doesn’t get any cheaper to defer maintenance. In order to have a vital economy, we need this backbone in our state to be safe and efficient.”