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EDITORIAL

Hidden Cost of Bad Roadways

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When is the last time you drove on Main or Market streets in downtown Wheeling? Or how about out along one of the ridges in our region?

There's a common factor to those roads and most others in the greater Wheeling area — they're in bad shape. In fact, a new report out this week from TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit, concludes that less than 50 percent of the roads in our region are in "good" condition. Another 20 percent are in "poor condition," while 19 percent of our roads are "mediocre" and the remaining 14 percent are "fair."

Those findings shouldn't come as a surprise to the motoring public. But what it's costing you on an annual basis is cause for concern.

TRIP's research indicates that between poor road conditions, congestion and traffic accidents, drivers in the Wheeling area spend more money each year in hidden costs than any other city in the state.

The report concludes that drivers in Wheeling spend \$509 annually on repairs due to poor road conditions, \$572 annually in lost time and fuel due to traffic congestion and \$340 each year in safety costs. The \$1,421 total cost is more than \$100 higher than what drivers in Beckley (second highest city) spend, and more than \$200 higher than drivers in Morgantown.

To be fair, the state is spending more than \$200 million to upgrade Interstate 70 through Wheeling, and has pledged tens of millions to improve Main and Market streets downtown. And the city of Wheeling invested nearly \$900,000 late last year into paving neighborhood streets. The fact is that more needs to be done — much more. Local leaders should use this report to help determine just how that can happen.