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THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2021 . No. 63 . LONGMONT, COLORADO

TRAFFIC STUDY

22% of Colorado's roads are in poor condition

Helen H. Richardson/The Denver Post

A truck takes the southbound E-470 exit off of Interstate 25 passes on Oct. 28, 2019, in Thornton. Below E-470 ends and turns into the Northwest Parkway. E-470 is a 47-mile-long controlled-access toll road traversing the eastern portion of the Denver-Aurora Metropolitan Area.

BY JAKE SHAPIRO
THE DENVER POST

You can do a lot with an extra $2,000 in your pocket, and that's about how much Denver drivers are squandering per year on excess wear, tear and wasted traffic hours in their vehicles. According to a recent study by Washington, D.C.-based national nonprofit transportation research group The Road Information Program, crumbling infrastructure is hurting motorists' wallets.

The 50-year-old group published its "Keeping Colorado Mobile Report" on Tuesday. It describes that the average Denverite is losing $1,242 as a result of spending 62 hours stuck in traffic, which wastes an additional 26 gallons of fuel annually.

Analysts found 22% of Colorado's roads are in poor condition, and 25% are rated as mediocre. In Denver, 37% of major local and state roads are in poor condition and another 26% are in mediocre shape. That's another $732 on average to the regular driver repairs and lost time.

"The new TRIP report reinforces one simple fact: too many Coloradans are wasting too much of their time and money stuck on congested and potholed roads," said Mike Kopp, president and CEO of Colorado Concern.

Colorado Springs' residents face the same issue as the average driver pays $838 annually for congestion on 44 extra hours commuting. About 30% of their major roads are in poor condition, and another 25% are mediocre, which cost drivers about $644 in additional costs.

"Our struggling transportation systems hurt the great quality of life that draws businesses and people to our communities," said Rachel Beck, vice president of government affairs for the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce and EDC. "Sitting in traffic for an extra twenty minutes commuting to and from work has real opportunity and social costs for Colorado Springs families. That time could be much better spent helping our students out with homework, going to the gym, coaching a child's sports team, or enjoying meals around the family dinner table."

The study used data that showed that Colorado's crashes claimed the lives of 3,030 people from 2015 to 2019. Colorado's overall traffic fatality rate of 1.09 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2019 is lower than the national average of 1.11. Traffic crashes in Colorado totaled $6.5 billion in economic costs in 2019. TRIP estimates that roadway features were likely a contributing factor in approximately 33% of all fatal crashes.

About 5% of Colorado's state and local bridges are in poor condition, while 54% are only in fair shape.

Approximately 1.1 million full-time jobs in Colorado 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. Annually, $305 billion in goods are shipped to and from Colorado, relying heavily on the state's network of roads and bridges. The value of freight shipped to and from Colorado sites is expected to increase 82% by 2045.

The report also listed the most congested highways across the state. Many were major highways around Denver and Colorado Springs.

The 10.8-mile stretch of C-470 between Santa Fe Drive and Yosemite Street is the most congested, seeing 104,959 cars per day. The 10-mile stretch of Interstate 25 from Hampden Avenue to Speer Boulevard is second-worst, while Parker Road from Hampden to Cornell Street came in third.

The sixth most congested stretch of highway was a near 5-mile portion of Interstate-70 through West Vail.

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