

ALBUQUERQUE BUSINESS FIRST

New Mexico's rough roads cost drivers nearly \$3B annually, TRIP report finds



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It's probably not hard to think of a tooth-rattling stretch of New Mexico road that impacts your commute or business.

Roads and bridges that are in poor repair, congested or lack safety features cost New Mexico motorists a total of \$2.7 billion annually. That's according to a new report by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit that researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues.

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The report found more than half of major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor or mediocre condition, 5% of locally and state-maintained bridges are rated poor or structurally deficient, and 1,894 people lost their lives on the state's roads from 2015 to 2019.

Driving on roads in the Albuquerque urban area costs the average driver \$2,447 per year in extra vehicle operating costs that stem from driving on roads that need repair; congestion-related delays that cost time and fuel; and costs from traffic crashes where the lack of adequate roadway features likely were a contributing factor.

"New Mexico's investment in highway and rural road infrastructure is key to ensure New Mexico will continue to provide safe and reliable transportation to rebuild our economy," said state Rep. Rebecca Dow, a member of the House Commerce and Economic Development Committee, in a news release issued by TRIP. "In my district alone, there are currently 10 shovel-ready pavement preservation projects on I-10 and I-25 that are worth \$123 million."

Nearly \$125 billion in goods is shipped to and from New Mexico annually, the TRIP report says, relying on the state's network of roads and bridges. Almost 350,000 full-time jobs in New Mexico, from tourism to agriculture and manufacturing, depend on the safety and reliability of the state's transportation infrastructure, the report finds. The state has nearly \$3 billion in needed but unfunded transportation projects, according to the report.

TRIP says more 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 New Mexico.