



# TRIP REPORTS: NEW MEXICO MOTORISTS LOSE \$2.7 BILLION PER YEAR ON ROADS THAT ARE ROUGH, CONGESTED & LACK SOME SAFETY FEATURES – UP TO \$2,400 PER DRIVER

Posted on March 4, 2021 by [Greg](#)

## NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FACES \$2.8 BILLION FUNDING GAP FOR NEEDED PROJECTS

Roads and bridges that are deteriorated, congested or lack some desirable safety features cost New Mexico motorists a total of \$2.7 billion statewide annually – as much as \$2,447 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 New Mexico, according to a new report released today by [TRIP](#), a Washington, DC based national transportation research nonprofit.

The TRIP report, [“New Mexico Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility,”](#) finds that throughout New Mexico, more than half of major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor or mediocre condition, five percent of locally and state-maintained bridges (20 feet or more in length) are rated poor/structurally deficient, and 1,894 people lost their lives on the state’s roads from 2015-2019. New Mexico’s major urban roads are congested, causing significant delays and choking commuting and commerce.

Driving deficient New Mexico roads costs the state’s drivers a total of \$2.7 billion per year 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 features likely were a contributing factor. The report includes regional pavement and bridge conditions, a list of the most congested corridors, highway safety data, and cost breakdowns for the Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Santa Fe urban areas and statewide. A breakdown of the costs per motorist in the state’s largest urban areas, along with a statewide total, is below.

Location	VOC	Safety	Congestion	TOTAL
Albuquerque	\$836	\$635	\$976	\$2,447
Las Cruces	\$790	\$513	\$392	\$1,695
Santa Fe	\$749	\$560	\$603	\$1,912
<b>NEW MEXICO STATEWIDE</b>	<b>\$1.1 Billion</b>	<b>\$847 Million</b>	<b>\$760 Million</b>	<b>\$2.7 Billion</b>

The TRIP report finds that 32 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in New Mexico are

in poor condition and another 24 percent are in mediocre condition, costing the state’s drivers an additional \$1.1 billion each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. Twelve percent of New Mexico’s major locally and state-maintained roads are in fair condition and the remaining 32 percent are in good condition.

Five percent of New Mexico’s bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition, meaning there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Fifty-seven percent of the state’s bridges are rated in fair condition and the remaining 38 percent are in good condition. Most bridges are designed to last 50 years before major overhaul or replacement, although many newer bridges are being designed to last 75 years or longer. In New Mexico, 49 percent of the state’s bridges were built in 1969 or earlier.

“Safe, modern and well-planned roads are more important than ever in our effort to create jobs and improve our economy,” said New Mexico State Senator Michael Padilla, vice chair of the New Mexico State Senate Tax, Business and Transportation Committee. “For every dollar we invest in our roads, we see a tenfold return for our people.”

In 2019, the state’s transportation system carried 27.8 billion annual vehicle miles of travel (VMT), a 22 percent increase since 2000. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, vehicle travel in New Mexico dropped by as much as 41 percent in April 2020 (as compared to vehicle travel during the same month the previous year), but rebounded to 10 percent below the previous year’s volume in November 2020. Congested roads choke commuting and commerce and cost New Mexico drivers \$760 million each year in the form of lost time and wasted fuel. In the most congested urban areas, drivers lose up to \$976 and spend as many as 44 hours per year sitting in congestion.

“Transportation and road infrastructure is so critical to my rural community in the Southern part of our state,” said New Mexico State Representative Willie Madrid, member of the House Transportation, Public Works and Capital Improvements Committee. “Our roads need to be safe for our school bus routes and the safety of our citizens.”

Traffic crashes in New Mexico claimed the lives 1,894 people from 2015 to 2019. New Mexico’s overall traffic fatality rate of 1.53 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2019 is the third highest in the U.S. and higher than the national average of 1.11. Traffic crashes imposed a total of \$2.5 billion in economic costs in New Mexico in 2019 and traffic crashes in which a lack of adequate roadway safety features were likely a contributing factor imposed \$847 million in economic costs.



“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 New Mexico State Representative Rebecca Dow, member of the House Commerce and Economic Development Committee. “In my district alone, there are currently ten shovel ready pavement preservation projects on I-10 and I-25 that are worth \$123 million dollars. The investment New Mexico has provided Space Port America is one example of building new roads to a new economy.”



The efficiency and condition of New Mexico’s transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state’s economy. Annually, \$123 billion in goods are shipped to and from New Mexico, 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 re-locate 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. Approximately 349,000 full-time jobs in New Mexico 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.

A lack of sufficient funding at the local, state and federal levels will make it difficult to adequately maintain and improve the state’s existing transportation system. The New Mexico Department of Transportation has identified nearly \$2.8 billion in needed but unfunded transportation projects throughout the state. The list of the most needed projects is included in the TRIP report.

“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, New Mexico’s transportation system will become increasingly deteriorated and congested, hampering economic growth, safety and quality of life.”

**NEW MEXICO KEY TRANSPORTATION FACTS**

photo credit: Timothy Mainiero

**THE HIDDEN COSTS OF DEFICIENT ROADS**

Driving on New Mexico roads that are deteriorated, congested and that lack some desirable safety features costs New Mexico drivers a total of \$2.7 billion each year. TRIP has calculated the cost to the average motorist in the state’s largest urban areas in the form of additional vehicle operating costs (VOC) as a result of driving on rough roads, the cost of lost time and wasted fuel due to congestion, and the financial cost of traffic crashes. The chart below shows the cost of deficient roads statewide and for the average driver in the state’s largest urban areas.

**NEW MEXICO ROADS PROVIDE A ROUGH RIDE**

Due to inadequate state and local funding, 56 percent of major roads and highways in New Mexico are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on rough roads costs the average New Mexico driver \$767 annually in additional vehicle operating costs – a total of \$1.1 billion statewide. The chart below details pavement conditions on major roads in the state’s largest urban areas and statewide.



Location	VOC	Safety	Congestion	TOTAL
Albuquerque	\$836	\$635	\$976	\$2,447
Las Cruces	\$790	\$513	\$392	\$1,695
Santa Fe	\$749	\$560	\$603	\$1,912
<b>NEW MEXICO STATEWIDE</b>	<b>\$1.1 Billion</b>	<b>\$847 Million</b>	<b>\$760 Million</b>	<b>\$2.7 Billion</b>

**NEW MEXICO BRIDGE CONDITIONS**

Five percent of New Mexico’s bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition, meaning there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Fifty-seven percent of the state’s bridges are rated in fair condition and the remaining 38 percent are in good condition. Most bridges are designed to last 50 years before major overhaul or replacement, although many newer bridges are being designed to last 75 years or longer. In New Mexico, 49 percent of the state’s bridges were built in 1969 or earlier. The chart below details bridge conditions statewide and in the state’s largest urban areas.

Location	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good
Albuquerque	40%	20%	10%	30%
Las Cruces	32%	32%	13%	23%
Santa Fe	34%	18%	14%	34%
<b>NEW MEXICO STATEWIDE</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>32%</b>

	POOR/STRUCTURALLY DEFICIENT		FAIR		GOOD		TOTAL BRIDGES
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	
Albuquerque	8	2%	334	68%	151	31%	493
Las Cruces	11	4%	151	58%	99	38%	261
Santa Fe	7	3%	124	50%	118	47%	249
<b>NEW MEXICO STATEWIDE</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2,277</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>1,517</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>4,013</b>

## NEW MEXICO ROADS ARE INCREASINGLY CONGESTED

In 2019, the state's transportation system carried 27.8 billion annual vehicle miles of travel (VMT), a 22 percent increase since 2000. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, vehicle travel in New Mexico dropped by as much as 41 percent in April 2020 (as compared to vehicle travel during the same month the previous year), but rebounded to 10 percent below the previous year's volume in November 2020. Congested roads choke commuting and commerce and cost New Mexico drivers \$760 million each year in the form of lost time and wasted fuel. The chart below shows the annual number of hours lost to congestion and the cost of lost time and wasted fuel for the average driver in the state's largest urban areas.

Location	Hours Lost to Congestion	Annual Cost Per Driver
Albuquerque	44	\$976
Las Cruces	18	\$392
Santa Fe	28	\$603

Traffic crashes imposed a total of \$2.5 billion in economic costs in New Mexico in 2019 and traffic crashes in which a lack of adequate roadway safety features were likely a contributing factor imposed \$847 million in economic costs. The chart below shows the number of people killed in traffic crashes in the state's largest urban areas between 2015 and 2019, and the cost of traffic crashes per driver.

Location	Average Fatalities 2015-2019	Crash Costs per Driver
Albuquerque	150	\$635
Las Cruces	39	\$513
Santa Fe	29	\$560
<b>NEW MEXICO STATEWIDE</b>	<b>379</b>	<b>\$847 Million</b>

## TRANSPORTATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The health and future growth of New Mexico's economy is riding on its transportation system. Each year, \$123 billion in goods are shipped to and from sites in New Mexico, mostly by trucks. Increases in passenger and freight movement will place further burdens on the state's already deteriorated and congested network of roads and bridges. The value of freight shipped to and from sites in New Mexico, in inflation-adjusted dollars, is expected to increase 110 percent by 2045 and by 126 percent for goods shipped by trucks.



## NEW MEXICO TRAFFIC SAFETY AND FATALITIES

From 2015 to 2019, 1,894 people were killed in traffic crashes in New Mexico. In 2019, New Mexico had 1.53 traffic fatalities for every 100 million miles traveled, the third highest rate in the nation and significantly higher than the national average of 1.11.



According to a [report by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association](#), the design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in New Mexico supports approximately 26,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the state economy. These workers earn \$802 million annually. Approximately 349,000 full-time jobs in New Mexico in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are completely dependent on the state's transportation network.

## NEEDED PROJECTS AND TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Investment in New Mexico's roads, highways and bridges is funded by local, state and federal governments. A lack of sufficient funding at all levels will make it difficult to adequately maintain and improve the state's existing transportation system.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation has identified nearly \$2.8 billion in needed but unfunded transportation projects throughout the state, as detailed in the chart below.

Route or Corridor	Project Description	Estimated Cost +/-
<b>Southwest New Mexico and Border Region (District 1)</b>		
I-25, MP 3.0 to 9.5	Reconstruction of six-lane corridor with added capacity	\$75M
I-25 at Nogal Canyon	Bridge replacement	\$30M
US 180 at Deming to Bayard	Reconstruction with four-lane or alternating passing lanes	\$135M
I-10 Corridor	Reconstruct pavement and infrastructure to current design standards	\$850M
I-25, MP 0 to 1	Expand to six lanes	\$30M
<b>DISTRICT ONE TOTAL COST</b>		<b>\$1.120 BILLION</b>
<b>Southeast New Mexico and Permian Basin (District 2)</b>		
US 380/NM 157-242, Roswell to Tatum to State Line	Capacity improvements including alternating passing lanes throughout corridor	\$125M
NM 18, NM 58 to 71 Lovington to Hobbs	Minor pavement rehabilitation	\$25M
NM 18, Hobbs to Jal	Major pavement rehabilitation	\$75M
US 54, MP 0 to 55 South of Alamogordo	Minor pavement rehabilitation	\$55M
US 82, MP 139 to 171 West of Lovington	Roadway reconstruction with addition of shoulders, passing lanes and drainage improvement	\$64M
US 60, MP 328 to 378 Clovis to Ft. Sumner Corridor	Roadway reconstruction, rehabilitation, additions of passing lanes and drainage improvements	\$150M
<b>DISTRICT TWO TOTAL COST</b>		<b>\$494.0 MILLION</b>
<b>Albuquerque Metro Area and Central Rio Grande Corridor (District 3)</b>		
I-40 MM 152 to 155.5	Reconstruction	\$30.5M
I-40 MM 170.2 to 180.2	Minor pavement rehabilitation, 3" mill and inlay	\$40.0M
I-40 WB, Wyoming to Pennsylvania	Reconstruction/Geotechnical	\$15M
NM 500 MM 4.75 to 7.5 from NM45 Coors to 118th street	Roadway reconstruction, addition of shoulders, turn lanes and drainage improvement, bridge widening	\$40M
I-25 Sunport to Cesar Chavez	Reconstruction	\$90M
I-25 Cesar Chavez to Central	Reconstruction to correct S-Curve I-25	\$200M
Paseo Del Vulcan (PDV) ENTIRE Corridor	Design Engineering Services Only	\$19M
Paseo Del Vulcan (PDV) and I-40 Interchange	Design Engineering Services Only	\$3.5M
Paseo Del Vulcan (PDV) I-40 to Paseo Del Norte	Design Engineering Services Only	\$6M
Paseo Del Vulcan (PDV) Paseo Del Norte to Southern Blvd	Design Engineering Services Only	\$3M
Paseo Del Vulcan (PDV) Southern Blvd to Unser Blvd	Design Engineering Services Only	\$6.5M
<b>DISTRICT THREE TOTAL COST</b>		<b>\$453.5 MILLION</b>
<b>Northeastern Quadrant of New Mexico, Bordering Texas, Oklahoma and Colorado (District 4)</b>		
NM 39, MP 14.6 to MP 30	Pavement reconstruction/rehabilitation.	\$21M
NM 434, MP 21.1 to MP 25.8	Reconstruction and widening thru Coyote Creek Canyon.	\$20M
I-25, MP 455.10 to MP 459.30	Roadway Rehabilitation/ reconstruction	\$20M
I-25/US64-87 Interchange	Reconstruction of interchange at exit 451 in Raton.	\$20M
US 64/87, MP 349.4 to MP 404	Rehabilitation from Raton to Clayton.	\$120M
BL-15, MP 2.37 to MP 3.06	Roadway Rehabilitation, ADA	\$15M
US 54, MP 306.1 to MP 356.2	Reconstruction or major rehabilitation	\$80M
<b>DISTRICT FOUR TOTAL COST</b>		<b>\$296 MILLION</b>
<b>Northwest New Mexico and Northern Rio Grande Corridor (District 5)</b>		
US 550, MP 99 to MP 150 (51 mi.)	Roadway centerline wall barrier	\$56.6M
NM 76, NM 68 to NM 503, MP 0 to MP 10 (10 mi.)	Roadway rehabilitation and drainage improvements	\$27.1M
NM 96, NM 512 to US 84 (35.5 mi)	Roadway rehabilitation / widening to add shoulders	\$38.4M
Cerrillos Road in Santa Fe / St. Michael's to St. Francis	Roadway Reconstruction	\$25M
NM 599 at Via Veteranos in Santa Fe	Interchange construction	\$15M
US 550 Aztec to Colorado State Line	Full depth reclamation	\$28M
<b>DISTRICT FIVE TOTAL COST</b>		<b>\$190.3MILLION</b>
<b>West-Central New Mexico, Gallup and Grants Area (District 6)</b>		
Allison Corridor - NM 118, BNSF and I-40 overpasses and connection	Phase 2 and Phase 3	\$34.2M
NM 547, MP 4 to 13.6	Widening, drainage improvements, design and construction	\$34M
I-40 at multiple locations: MP 18.4-54, MP 96.1-101.4	Design and reconstruction	\$96M
NM 264, MP 0 to 16	Design and reconstruction	\$42M
I-40 MP 35 to 36.3, NM 118 MP 30.1 to 35.7	Phases 2-5, Drainage and flood mitigation project	\$33M
<b>DISTRICT SIX TOTAL COST</b>		<b>\$239.2 MILLION</b>
<b>TOTAL STATEWIDE COST</b>		<b>\$2.79 BILLION</b>

The ability of revenue from New Mexico's motor fuel tax – a critical source of state transportation funds – to keep pace with the state's future transportation needs is likely to erode as a result of increasing vehicle fuel efficiency and the increasing use of electric vehicles. The average fuel efficiency of U.S. passenger vehicles increased from 20 miles per gallon in 2010 to 24.5 miles per gallon in 2020. Average fuel efficiency is expected to increase another 31 percent by 2030, to 32 miles per gallon, and increase 51 percent by 2040, to 37 miles per gallon. The share of electric vehicles of total passenger vehicle sales in the U.S. is expected to increase to five percent by 2023 and to 60 percent by 2040, by which time electric vehicles will represent approximately 30 percent of the passenger vehicle fleet.

The current federal transportation legislation, [Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act \(FAST Act\)](#), was set to expire on September 30, 2020. Congress extended it by one year to September 30, 2021. The FAST Act is a major source of funding for road, highway and bridge repairs in New Mexico. Throughout the FAST-Act – fiscal years 2016 to 2021 – the program provided \$2.3 billion to New Mexico for road repairs and improvements, an average of \$391 million per year. From 2014 to 2018, the federal government provided \$1.14 for road improvements in New Mexico for every \$1.00 state motorists paid in federal highway user fees, including the federal state motor fuel tax.

From 2014 to 2018, federal funds provided for highway improvements were the equivalent of 94 percent of the amount of New Mexico state capital outlays on road, highway and bridge projects, including construction, engineering and right-of-way acquisition. *Sources of information for this report include the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the U.S. Census Bureau, the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Cover photo credit: Timothy Mainiero*