

TULSA WORLD

Energy efficient city

EPA highlights Tulsa's number of energy-efficient buildings. **WORK&MONEY, PAGE A13**

Blood donors needed

Red Cross notes high demand in plea for public's help. **METRO, PAGE A9**



Celebrating freedom

Juneteenth festivities get underway.

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2021

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Report: Oklahoma's roads, bridges improving, but significant challenges ahead

[Barbara Hoberock](#) | Jun 16, 2021

OKLAHOMA CITY — On average, Tulsa drivers lose 46 hours and \$732 annually due to traffic congestion, according to a report released Wednesday by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit. The average Oklahoma City driver spends 50 hours in traffic and \$842 annually in wasted time and fuel, according to the report.

“The state continues to make significant progress in terms of improving bridge conditions, making sure the major state roads are being kept in good condition, but faces significant challenges moving forward in being able to make further progress in the case of pavements and actually bridges and not seeing that progress slip back,” said Rocky Moretti, TRIP director of policy and research.

As the state continues to recover from COVID-19, it will see additional growth in vehicle travel, putting additional pressure on the state's transportation safety challenges, he said.

By April 2020, vehicle travel dropped by 33%; but by March 2021, it was 5% higher than March 2019, he said.

Some 90% of state-maintained highways have pavements in good or fair condition.

But in looking at the state's eight-year, long-range plan in terms of pavement, in terms of repairs and reconstruction, the state only has adequate funding for 15% of those needed projects, Moretti said.

“The average motorist in Oklahoma paid an additional \$394 annually in the cost of driving on rough roads,” he said. “That is about \$1 billion annually that consumers in Oklahoma are paying in those additional costs.” Fifteen years ago, the high number of structurally deficient bridges in the state was a tremendous challenge, he said.

In 2004, some 1,200 of the state-maintained bridges were structurally deficient compared to 86 as of last year, Moretti said.

Over the next eight years, it is estimated that approximately 1,100 state-maintained bridges are at risk of becoming structurally deficient, he said.

The state has a high rate of traffic fatalities, making it as of 2019 the sixth highest in the nation, he said. Over the last five years, more than 3,200 people were killed, he said,

adding that the state has significant room for improvement, Moretti said. “The traffic fatality rate on the state's rural, non-interstate roads is approximately double on all other routes in the state,” he said.

Moretti said there are ongoing deliberations in Washington, D.C., about an infrastructure package that would have significant, additional dollars for roads and bridges and surface transportation in Oklahoma, Moretti said.

“That funding, if approved, would be above and beyond a long-term federal surface transportation program,” he said.

Revenue from the state's motor fuel tax will continue to drop due to increases in fuel efficiency and reliance on electric vehicles, according to the report.

Residents should contact members of the federal delegation and express support for ongoing and additional funding for roads and bridges, said Leslie Gamble, AAA Oklahoma spokeswoman.

Photos: See a bird's-eye view of traffic and construction along the I-44

I-44 Traffic



Traffic travels on I-44 west of U.S. 75 Monday, April 5, 2021 in Tulsa, Okla.
Mike Simons, Tulsa World

I-44 Traffic



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U.S. 75 Traffic



Traffic travels on U.S. 75 north of Interstate 44 on Monday in Tulsa.
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