

## LAS CRUCES

# Report: Bad roads cost Las Cruces drivers more than \$1,800 per year

### Roads that are rough, congested and lack safety features cost Las Cruces drivers



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Las Cruces Sun-News



Construction on US 70 slows traffic during rush hour in Las Cruces in this file photo from Dec. 10, 2019. According to a recent report from TRIP, a private nonprofit organization that researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues, Las Cruces drivers spend an additional \$1,841 due to roads and bridges that are deteriorated, congested or lack certain safety features. *Nathan J Fish/Sun-News*

#### Story Highlights

- Overall, New Mexico drivers pay an additional \$3 billion statewide
- The New Mexico Department of Transportation identified \$5.1 billion in needed projects
- Thirty-two percent of roads in the Las Cruces area are in poor condition
- New Mexico's overall traffic fatality rate in 2019 was the third highest in the U.S.

LAS CRUCES - A report released Tuesday by TRIP, a Washington, DC-based national transportation research nonprofit, found that deteriorated roads and bridges, congestion and a lack of safety features cost the average Las Cruces driver \$1,841 per year.

The TRIP report, "[New Mexico Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State's Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility](#)," finds that more than half of major locally and state-maintained roads within the state are in poor or mediocre condition, 5 percent of locally and state-maintained bridges (20 feet or more in length) are rated poor/structurally deficient, and New Mexico has the third-highest rate nationally of traffic fatalities. New Mexico's major urban roads are congested, causing significant delays and choking both commuting and commerce.



#### Las Cruces traffic, by the numbers

According to the report, the costs to Las Cruces drivers come in the form of vehicle operating costs as a result of driving on roadways in need of repair, lost time and fuel due to congestion-related delays and the costs of traffic crashes that may have been prevented with improved safety features.

By the numbers, here's how the costs break down for Las Cruces drivers:

- **Vehicle operating costs:** \$910
- **Safety features:** \$513
- **Congestion:** \$418

Statewide, Las Cruces ranks second in costs to drivers. In Albuquerque, the average driver pays \$2,604 each year.

#### Majority of Las Cruces roads listed as 'poor' or 'mediocre'

The report found that 32 percent of locally and state-maintained roads in the Las Cruces urban area are in "poor condition," another 36 percent are in "mediocre condition." Driving on these roads, the report states, costs drivers in terms of accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs and increased tire wear and fuel consumption.

#### Better bridges

Around the Las Cruces urban area, the city is on par with the rest of the state when it comes to the condition of bridges. Five percent of bridges were rated poor or structurally deficient — "with significant deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components." Fifty-nine percent were rated in fair condition.

Statewide, 5 percent of New Mexico's bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient and 58 percent are rated in fair condition.



According to a report released Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2022, deficient roads cost Las Cruces-area drivers \$1,841 each year. *Courtesy/TRIP*

Across New Mexico, 34 percent of major roads are in poor condition and 22 percent are in mediocre condition.

#### Congestion, crashes and COVID-19

Traffic congestion in the Las Cruces urban area results in the average driver losing 19 hours annually in traffic delays and wasting nine gallons of fuel, costing the average Las Cruces driver \$418 annually in lost time and wasted fuel, the report found.

Statewide, drivers lose \$845 million each year as a result of lost time and wasted fuel due to traffic congestion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, vehicle travel in New Mexico dropped by as much as 41 percent in April 2020 — compared to vehicle travel during the same month the previous year — but by November 2021 had rebounded to 15 percent above November 2019 volumes.



Traffic congestion in Las Cruces costs commuters an average of \$418 per year, according to a report Released Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2022. *Courtesy/TRIP*

Traffic crashes in New Mexico claimed the lives of 1,894 people from 2015 to 2019. New Mexico's 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. In the Las Cruces urban area, 39 people were killed in traffic crashes each year, on average, from 2015 to 2019.

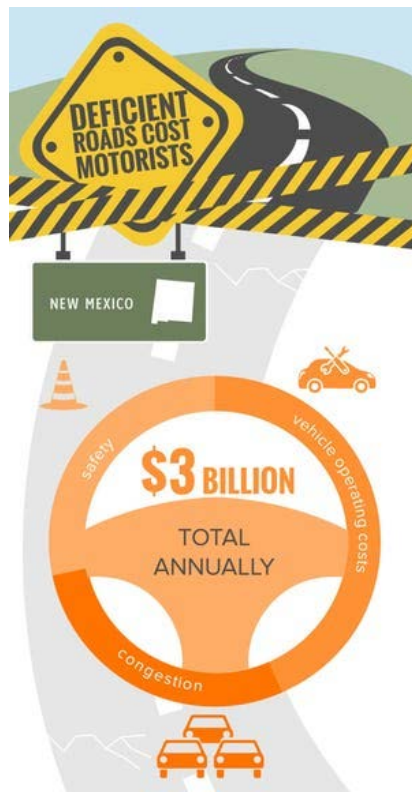
**“New Mexico’s highway needs are so essential to our agriculture, mining, oil & gas industries. We need a good balance between populated and rural New Mexico. Our state’s economy will grow only if we have a good transportation system. That’s how jobs are created. We all love New Mexico.**

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The financial impact of traffic crashes in which the lack of adequate roadway safety features, while not the primary factor, was likely a contributing factor is an average of \$513 annually per Las Cruces-area driver.

**Critical infrastructure**

The efficiency and condition of New Mexico’s transportation system — particularly its highways — is critical to the health of the state’s economy, the report states. Annually, \$120 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 relocate or expand.



Transportation is critical infrastructure in New Mexico, accounting for \$120 billion dollars in goods shipped to and from sites across the state each year. That is according to a new report from TRIP, released Jan. 25, 2022. *Courtesy / TRIP.*

Regions with congested or poorly maintained roads may see businesses relocate to areas with a smoother, more efficient 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.

“New Mexico’s highway needs are so essential to our agriculture, mining, oil & gas industries,” said New Mexico State Representative Rebecca Dow, R-Truth or Consequences. “We need a good balance between populated and rural New Mexico. Our state’s economy will grow only if we have a good transportation system. That’s how jobs are created. We all love New Mexico.”

**Insufficient funding**

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, according to the report. The New Mexico Department of Transportation has identified nearly \$5.1 billion in needed — but unfunded — transportation projects throughout the state.



The New Mexico Department of Transportation has identified nearly \$5.1 billion in necessary but unfunded projects across the state. *Courtesy / TRIP*

However, TRIP states that the level of highway investment in New Mexico is likely to increase as a result of the five-year federal [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#), signed into law last November, which provides \$2.7 billion in road, highway and bridge funding from 2022 to 2026, resulting in a 35 percent increase in federal funding in 2022.

**Read the full report below:**

[https://www.scribd.com/document/554982690/TRIP-New-Mexico-Transportation-by-the-Numbers-Report-January-2022#fullscreen&from\\_embed](https://www.scribd.com/document/554982690/TRIP-New-Mexico-Transportation-by-the-Numbers-Report-January-2022#fullscreen&from_embed)

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