

Driving in metro area has high price tag from wasted gas, poor roads, study says



Potholes along the westbound Northern State Parkway in Roslyn in February 2020. Credit: Newsday/William Perlman

By Lorena Mongelli

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Driving in the New York metro area comes with a high price tag – primarily due to wasted gas from sitting in traffic and increased wear and tear on vehicles from driving on rough roads, according to a recent study.

The study released by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based transportation research group, highlights how drivers are burdened by poorly maintained roads and bridges, with crashes linked to roadway safety deficiencies and congestion.

The number one driving cost is linked to congestion, with about 9 million motorists sitting in 92 hours of traffic annually and consequently burning through 38 gallons of gas per year. Wasted time and fuel costs each driver roughly \$2,107 per year, according to the private, nonprofit's report.

While there was a 45% drop in vehicle travel during the height of the pandemic in April 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, vehicle travel rebounded to near pre-pandemic volumes by October 2021.

The second highest driving expense stems from traveling on poorly maintained roads and bridges, which leads to higher car operating costs and faster vehicle depreciation.

The report found that in New York, 45% of major roads are in poor or mediocre condition while 26% of major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor condition. Ten percent of New York's locally and state maintained bridges were rated as poor or structurally deficient. This costs drivers roughly \$759 per year, the study states.

Pavements in bad condition “have visible signs of deterioration including potholes, cracking or rutting, and frequently have

deterioration in the pavement's subbase, which will often require costly Reconstruction to address,” the report states.

Finally, drivers are also affected by the financial toll of traffic crashes, at least partly attributable to inadequate roadway safety features. Traffic crashes at least partly linked to a lack of adequate roadway safety features, led to \$4.6 billion in economic costs and it cost drivers an average of \$326 annually.

“A lack of adequate investment has significant costs on the public in terms of reduced safety, less reliability, and increased operating costs. It's critical that we make the investments that are necessary to have a system that's safe, reliable and well maintained,” said TRIP director of policy and research Rocky Moretti.

Moretti pointed to the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, passed by Congress in November, as a step in the right direction.

Marc Herbst, executive director of the Long Island Contractors' Association, a construction trade group, said he will continue to advocate for better and safer roads for Long Island.

“TRIP's report once again highlights the desperate need for continued funding for our roads, highways and bridges on Long Island. The numbers speak for themselves,” Herbst said.

In total, the study determined drivers lose \$3,192 per year as a result of rough roads, congestion and inadequate roadway safety features.

TRIP compiled data from several agencies including the National Highway Safety Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation and Texas Transportation Institute.

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