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Lexington drivers lose \$1,500 per year dealing with rough roads, traffic, survey says

By Christopher Leach

Driving on roads that are rough, congested or lack specific safety features costs Lexington drivers \$1,513 per year, according to a state-wide study from a transportation research firm.

Some of the reasons for the added expenses are higher vehicle operating costs, congestion-related delays and safety-related costs, according to TRIP, a national nonprofit which does transportation research. According to TRIP, \$809 of the extra expenses are blamed on congestion and traffic delays alone while the remaining \$704 comes from vehicle operation and safety costs.

TRIP estimated that drivers in Lexington spend an average of 35 hours a year in traffic, costing drivers in lost time and wasted fuel. The average Lexington driver wastes 17 gallons of fuel each year due to traffic congestion, per TRIP.

Seven percent of major-local and state-maintained roads in Lexington are in poor condition and another 13 percent are in mediocre condition, according to TRIP.

“Adequate transportation funding is critical for Kentucky’s counties,” Jim Henderson, executive director and CEO of the Kentucky Association of Counties, said in a statement. “Counties maintain over 50 percent of the public road miles and own a third of the bridges across the Commonwealth. Never has it been more important to invest in our transportation infrastructure.”

OTHER URBAN AREAS IN KENTUCKY HAVE HIGHER COSTS

Out of the five largest urban areas in Kentucky, Lexington’s extra costs from poor roads and traffic were the cheapest except for Owensboro (\$1,390). Northern Kentucky drivers paid the most additional costs at \$2,154, followed by Louisville at \$1,884, per TRIP.

Statewide, poor road conditions costs drivers \$4.7 billion, according to TRIP. TRIP said additional investment at all levels of government could help relieve the extra expenses.

As a part of its study, TRIP also found that more than one-quarter of major-local and state-maintained roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Kentucky also has the fourth highest rate of traffic fatalities in the nation, per TRIP.

Transportation efficiency and road conditions are “critical” to Kentucky’s economy, according to TRIP. There are \$587 billion in goods shipped to and from Kentucky each year, according to TRIP. States which have highly-congested and poorly maintained roads could also lose businesses located in those states.

“Approximately 907,000 full-time jobs in Kentucky 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 TRIP spokesperson said.

John Cox, the director of public affairs at the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, said the chamber plans to advocate for continued infrastructure improvements.

“It’s easy to see from this report why Kentucky needs further investment in our roads and bridges across the Commonwealth,” Cox said in a statement.