

Report: Average New York driver loses \$632 per year to road wear and tear

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Potholes seem to just be a fact of life in New York, so it might not be a surprise that a recent report ranked the state 10th overall when it comes to pothole problems.

Both Buffalo and Albany landed in the 20s when it comes to the worst pothole cities.

"I've seen mufflers fallen off. I've seen bumpers fall off, I see a lot of damage to tires and wheels," said Michael Licata, a driver in Erie County.

Potholes and rundown infrastructure can cause a lot of problems and cost a lot of money.

"I hit it and did, you know, \$700 damage on a tire," recalled Licata.

Many New York State drivers have lived the story.

"It doesn't make me very happy, especially when you take very good care of your car," said Licata.

He comes to Collision Masters, where they see their fair share of this kind of damage.

"The car actually went off the road and actually hit a concrete embankment," said Collision Masters President and CEO Frank Todaro, pointing to a car damaged on one corner.

Todaro knows how much this can cost drivers.

"If we take this car right here, I can factor in it's about \$4,500," he explained.

A 2022 report by TRIP found the average driver in New York loses \$632 per year to tire wear, repairs and depreciation because of deteriorating roads and bridges.

It's not just money. Drivers can be put in some scary situations, like when Todaro himself drove over a broken bridge joint.

"I was on the center lane when I actually hit it," he recalled. "The front wheel started to go left and right really uncontrollably, where I had to actually try to slow it down and gain control back."

That's a situation we could see more of if roads aren't fixed. Almost half of major local and state-maintained roads and highways are in poor or mediocre condition, according to TRIP.

Breaking those numbers down — that's 38% in Albany, 40% in Buffalo, 33% in Rochester and a whopping 48% in Syracuse.

They're still functional, but if they don't get fixed sooner rather than later, the cost could quadruple, which means the government pays more to fix the roads and bridges and you'll pay more if your car ends up in the shop.

"I've seen roads that have to be completely redone, but it's about funding. So where's the funding come from," questioned Todaro.

Annual investment from the state DOT went up 37% over the last three years, according to TRIP, but income from motor fuel tax is going down. That's not great news since the nation is looking at a more than \$760 billion backlog in infrastructure funding.

Talks are ongoing on the federal level.

Gov. Kathy Hochul said she wants to put \$1 billion into pothole repairs in the state. Whether that will be enough, though, is another question.

The report by TRIP notes that fixing roads will add short-term jobs and could help long-term economic growth from increased mobility.