

Sitting in Hampton Roads traffic costs drivers about \$850 annually, new report finds



Afternoon traffic on Interstate 64 is seen from the Mallory Street overpass near the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel on Wednesday, Oct. 14, 2020, in Hampton.

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Drivers in Hampton Roads are spending about 41 hours in traffic in a year, costing them hundreds of dollars each year, according to a new report from TRIP, a Washington-based transportation research nonprofit.

TRIP's "[Keeping Virginia Mobile](#)" report examines the condition, use, safety, efficiency and funding of Virginia's surface transportation system. Numbers for the study used research from the Texas Transportation Institute at Texas A&M University, and TRIP looked at the cost of the impact of traffic congestion and broke it down by region.

Rocky Moretti, TRIP's director of policy and research, said estimates for the annual cost of traffic to Virginia motorists is \$5 billion, mostly in the value of lost time and the cost of additional fuel wasted because of traffic congestion.

"In the Hampton Roads area, TRIP estimates that each year, the average commuter spends an additional 41 hours annually in traffic due to traffic congestion and 14 gallons of fuel, costing them \$850 annually in the value of lost time and wasted fuel," he said.

The study reports that in northern Virginia, drivers are spending an additional 103 hours annually stuck in traffic, which is causing them to waste 40 gallons of fuel and costing \$2,500 annually. This is costing the average motorist \$629. Richmond drivers are spending an additional \$791 in traffic costs, including 34 hours in traffic each year and 18 gallons of fuel.

Another additional cost for drivers is "rough road conditions," Moretti said. Those costs include accelerated depreciation on vehicles, additional wear and tear and the cost of wasted fuel and additional tire wear. Hampton Roads drivers are spending \$714 each year driving on rough roads, the highest in the state. Moretti said TRIP found that 28% of major pavements are rated in "poor condition" and 29% are rated in "mediocre condition." Across Virginia, rough roads are costing more than \$3 billion.



Traffic is seen stopped at a light coming off of I-64 West towards Phoebus in Hampton, Va. on Thursday, July 20, 2023. (Kendall Warner/The Virginian-Pilot)

TRIP's new report also looks into traffic safety. Traffic crashes in Virginia imposed \$8.9 billion in economic costs in 2022, according to the report.

"We noted that in Virginia, traffic fatalities from 2019 to 2022 increased by 21% from 831 to 1,005," Moretti said. "The significant increase in traffic fatalities, unfortunately, is consistent with what we've seen across the country — as we've seen the significant increase in traffic fatalities, largely starting with the COVID-19 pandemic. Virginia will need to do a lot of work to make sure that roadways are as safe as possible, which have been found to be a significant factor in improved safety."

"The report also notes that over the last five years, 16% of traffic fatalities in Virginia have been between pedestrians and motorists. So really, we need a comprehensive approach really across the country, but also Virginia, to address that."

Improved road conditions, bike and pedestrian facilities and better protocols after a crash has occurred are critical to bringing down the "very unacceptable" number of fatalities, Moretti said.

"It remains to be seen whether technology can mitigate or eliminate distractions arising from technology itself. For now, the driver is still one of the weakest links in our transportation system," said Rich Jacobs, outreach manager at DRIVE SMART Virginia. "The resilience of our transportation infrastructure in the face of extreme weather and environmental changes is crucial. We must ensure our roads bridges and transport systems are prepared for the challenges of the 21st century."

"Our commitment to safety in Virginia must be unwavering. We need to prioritize safer people safer roads, safer vehicles safer speeds and improved post-crash care."

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