

State Faces \$3.9B Gap In Transportation Funding. It's Expected To Grow

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Despite the recent increase in both state and federal funding for transportation, Michigan still faces an annual \$3.9 billion gap in funding needed to maintain and improve its roads and bridges, a new report from TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit based in Washington, D.C., found.

The [report](#), "Michigan Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State's Need for Safe, Smooth and Efficient Mobility," found that although Michigan has allocated additional funding toward its transportation system in recent years, the state still faces a significant funding gap, which could continue to grow if maintenance is deferred.

"The \$3.9 billion shortfall was just part of a larger picture in Michigan, which is that we understand that good infrastructure is the backbone of any good economy in any great state," Rob Coppersmith, executive vice president of the Michigan Infrastructure and Transportation Association, said during a Tuesday press conference on the report. "We want Michigan to be very competitive in this area, and the way to be competitive is to have a good road system."

Michigan increased its fuel tax to \$0.26 per gallon of fuel, which in turn increased annual spending on infrastructure by \$347 million annually. Similarly, in 2019, the Rebuilding Michigan program provided \$3.5 billion in one-time bonding authority, and in 2021, Congress passed the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, which increased Michigan's funding by about 40 percent.

Despite these increases, the cost of highway construction and repairs has gone up about 43 percent.

The report estimates that the cost of roads in poor condition, that are congested or lack desirable safety features is \$17 billion annually.

When broken down by region, the cost to Detroit area motorists is \$3,005 annually, and 21 percent of roads are in poor condition. In the Grand Rapids, the cost is \$2,297 annually, and 38 percent of roads are in poor condition. Greater Lansing area motorists spend \$1,861 annually because of roads in poor condition, that are congested or lack safety features, and about 40 percent are in poor condition.

When it comes to bridges, 11 percent of bridges in the state are in poor condition and 54 percent are rated in fair condition, making it the eighth worst in the country.

"This is not the Top-10 list you want to be on," said Ed Noyola, chief deputy and legislative director for the County Road Association of Michigan.

Coppersmith said that he hoped the information in the report would motivate policymakers to continue to put money toward improving the state's infrastructure.

"We can slide back quickly if we don't do something to address this gap," he said.

Finding a long-term solution is equally important, Noyola said.

"Unless our leaders act now for a long-term solution – equitable and sustainable investment plan – infrastructure conditions are only going to worsen," he said. "The problem is not going away. Michigan residents and visitors travel our roads and bridges every day – to work, to the grocery store, to home, to explore all of the great features of the state. ... We cannot be complacent with the current condition of our infrastructure."

Noyola and Coppersmith agreed that additional work needs to be done on how to collect enough revenue as transportation changes with hybrid and electric vehicles.

"Those discussions are going to take years to iron out, as far as how you might change how our nation's roads are funded," Coppersmith said. "We have to figure out exactly what we need to do in Michigan to catch up and maintain our momentum in this area, so we certainly will have to have some gap-type measures to keep up on the right trajectory."

Solutions must come soon, Noyola said.

"The high efficiency vehicles, they're the ones that are putting a bigger dent into the lost revenue that we're seeing," he said. "We need to look at something right now, the sooner the better ... to slow this problem down in funding."