

Non-profit TRIP finds Capital Region drivers losing money due to degraded roadways

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TRIP's Director of Policy and Research Rocky Moretti says deteriorated roadways result in the average motorist in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy area paying \$532 each year in extra vehicle operating costs including increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

A new report finds funding shortfalls and rising inflation are making it difficult to maintain and improve New York's transportation infrastructure, making it costlier for motorists.

[The report issued by TRIP](#), a transportation nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C., finds local, state and federal investments in New York's roads, highways and bridges are falling short.

The report says that means a \$38 billion annual cost to motorists due to congestion, rough roads, and traffic crashes. Key findings include nearly \$3,500 annually for New York metro motorists and \$1,800 for the Capital District. The report notes that 30% of major roads in the metro area are in poor condition, with similar percentages in other regions. Bridges fared slightly better.

Capital Region Chamber and the Center for Economic Growth Vice President of Government Relations Tom O'Connor says the poor condition of the areas roads and bridges negatively impacts the local economy.

"If you're getting off of 787 onto, say, Water Street, which is basically the first exit into the capital, and you're going towards DEC, every single year you hit potholes. So if I'm a CEO or a site selector coming into this region, I'm going to have lots of questions. If you're not even fixing your transportation, your surface transportation, what else aren't you doing? And it really does have that first impression, and that really sets a tone in our ability to attract new businesses," said O'Connor.

Ashley Ranslow is the New York State Director for the National Federation of Independent Business.

"Infrastructure spending, making sure that we have dependable infrastructure is very important to make sure that the state's economy continues to move. It's important to make sure that goods and services are getting where they need to go in a timely and efficient manner. So transportation infrastructure is incredibly important to just make sure that New York's economy moves in the right direction," Ranslow said.

TRIP's Director of Policy and Research Rocky Moretti says deteriorated roadways result in the average motorist in the Albany-Schenectady-Troy area paying \$532 each year in extra vehicle operating costs including increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

"If the regions don't have adequate funding, either from the state funded transportation or from local governments to maintain this aging system, then that has repercussions to the public," Moretti said. "Obviously, it means you're driving on roads in worse condition, and that's causing that's costing you money, because your vehicles are deteriorating. From an economic perspective, New York State is in competition with the rest of the country to attract businesses and to keep businesses, and certainly they look at the quality of infrastructure is one of the factors that impacts their decisions."

Moretti says ever-increasing vehicle traffic continues to stress the aging transportation system. The report notes \$1.3 trillion of goods is shipped annually in and out of New York, which is expected to double over the next 25 years — likely requiring further investment.

"In 2021 the federal government approved the bipartisan infrastructure bill that has been critical to increasing funding to New York State. But in reality, from 2022 to 2023 capital improvements by the New York Department of Transportation for road and highway pavements actually dropped by 29% and by bridges by 20%. Certainly, one of the challenges faced by the New York Department of Transportation has been a significant increase in the rate of inflation for highway construction; it has increased by 46% since the beginning of 2022," said Moretti.

In her State of the State address, Governor Kathy Hochul highlighted proposed investments in statewide transit and roads. Her budget will be presented Tuesday.

The report also found that in the Capital Region, the average commuter is spending an additional 47 hours annually stuck in traffic due to traffic congestion and wasting an additional 23 gallons of fuel.

The report says during the pandemic, vehicle travel in New York dropped by as much as 45 percent in April 2020 (as compared to vehicle travel during the same month the previous year). By 2024, vehicle miles of travel in New York had rebounded to 7 percent below pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

The report cites New York State Department of Transportation data estimating that vehicle travel statewide will increase by 23 percent by 2040.

UPDATE 1/17/25: DOT responded to a request for comment via an email statement:

"New York State is investing more in the modernization of its transportation infrastructure than at any other point in the state's history and Governor Hochul, as part of her recently-announced State of the State agenda, has proposed augmenting the State Department of Transportation's already record-setting, \$33 billion, five-year Capital Plan to account for rising construction costs, which will ensure that projects remain on track. The TRIP report highlights the need for continued federal partnership and continued commitment to a long-term national strategy to address infrastructure needs. Support for roads and bridges is critical to the economic competitiveness of New York and the northeast, as this region faces unique challenges that other states do not face, including the age of the existing infrastructure; extreme weather and high traffic volumes."