

The Detroit News

Monday, February 17, 2025 | detroitnews.com

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OPINION

Coppersmith: It's time for action to fund and fix Michigan's roads

Rob Coppersmith | The Detroit News
Published 8:00 p.m. Feb. 16, 2025

Michigan has underfunded road and bridge construction for decades. Potholes, crumbling roads, and bridges in disrepair have become all too common across the state.

In 2023, it was found that Michigan was falling behind in funding for maintaining our roads and bridges by \$3.9 billion per year, a staggering gap that continues to grow due to inflation and the increased number of roads that need repairs.



As funds continue to dry up for fixing our roads, construction companies face the prospect of laying off thousands of workers, the author writes. *Katy Kildee, The Detroit News*

Despite efforts in recent years to address the problem — including Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's Rebuilding Michigan program and the federal government's enactment of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act — Michigan has continued to fall further behind on fixing our roads as inaction in Lansing has failed to provide the much-needed funding to address it.

Now, as 2025 barrels ahead, we face a new crisis for our roads and bridges as we approach a funding cliff that will devastate the road construction industry.

As funds continue to dry up for fixing our roads, construction companies face the prospect of laying off thousands of workers. The funding cliff at the end of this year is forecasted to wreak havoc on construction workers, many of whom are just beginning their careers and receiving employment benefits like healthcare for the first time. These good-paying jobs in a critical industry are at risk of being eliminated if

Michigan's leaders fail to act now. The jobs at risk of being lost are highly-paid, highly-skilled careers that will move to other states that do properly invest in their infrastructure, exasperating Michigan's population decline even further.

Even worse, failing to fund and fix Michigan roads threatens household budgets across the state, as driving on roads in poor or unsafe conditions heightens auto repair needs and increases congestion. Data from the [2024 TRIP report](#) found that drivers in the Detroit area face an annual cost of \$3,005 per driver due to our crumbling roads. And it's not just Detroit. Across Michigan, motorists face costs ranging from \$1,500 to \$3,000 each year due to driving on roads in poor condition. This is unacceptable.

Having safe, reliable roads is critical to Michigan's economy. Our infrastructure network helps move [more than \\$837 billion](#) in goods each year, and 76% of that happens on trunkline roads. Our deteriorating roads put this economic activity at risk, driving up transportation costs, hindering business growth, and threatening Michigan's competitiveness in the global economy.

This begs the question of why we continue to gamble with our safety, economy, and the good paying jobs that many young families rely on. Don't Michigan residents deserve safe and reliable infrastructure to get to work, school, and vacation?

It's time for Michigan's leaders to get together and get the job done. With the governor's recent announcement of her plan to fund and fix Michigan's roads, we now have two competing plans for consideration, including Speaker Matt Hall's proposal. Funding infrastructure should be a bipartisan issue, bringing together members of both parties looking for constructive solutions.

It's long past time for everyone in Lansing to work out a long-term plan that keeps Michigan's roads safe while protecting the good jobs that make road repairs possible.

We look forward to seeing quick action in Lansing on a long-term, equitable, and sustainable infrastructure plan that will save thousands of jobs and put our state back on the right track. Michigan cannot afford to wait any longer.

Rob Coppersmith is executive vice president of the Michigan Infrastructure and Transportation Association.