

REPORT: Kalamazoo, Battle Creek drivers lose nearly \$2K to poor roads each year

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Drivers in the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area lose about \$1,950 each year because of deteriorating roads, traffic congestion, and vehicle repairs, according to a new report from the national transportation research group, TRIP. (File/WWMT)

WEST MICHIGAN — Drivers in the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area lose about \$1,950 each year because of deteriorating roads, traffic congestion, and vehicle repairs, according to a new report from the national transportation research group, TRIP.

The TRIP report finds that throughout Michigan, 40% of major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor or mediocre condition.

The TRIP report also finds that 30% of major locally and state-maintained roads in the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek urban area are in poor condition and another 17% are in mediocre condition.

"Unless the State of Michigan, but also local governments, can increase their transportation and investments, what the public will see is literally their major roads and highways crumbling, bridges starting to be closed. And also looking at a roadway system that's not as safe as it should be," Rocky Moretti, TRIP director of policy, said.

In the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area, 12% (59 of 495 bridges) of bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient, with significant deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Statewide, 11% of Michigan's

bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient, the ninth-highest share in the nation.

Traffic congestion in the Kalamazoo-Battle Creek urban area causes 15 annual hours of delay for the average motorist and costs the average driver \$442 each year in lost time and wasted fuel. Kalamazoo-Battle Creek drivers waste an average of eight gallons of fuel per motorist annually due to congestion.

"In terms of safety where we see in Kalamazoo an average of 68 people are killed annually," Moretti said. "If you make the investments to make the roadway safe for motorists, but also pedestrians and bicyclists, you can begin to bring those numbers down."

While the additional state and federal funding has been helpful, the Growing Michigan Together Council submitted a report in 2023 to Governor Whitmer, the Michigan House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate noting that the state still faces an annual transportation funding gap of \$3.9 billion.

If maintenance is deferred and repairs become more costly over time, that number could be even higher.