

## LOCAL

# Poor road conditions cost New Mexico drivers \$3.3 billion per year



[Jason Groves](#)  
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**Key Points**

- A recent report states that poor road conditions cost New Mexico drivers \$3.3 billion annually.
- The New Mexico Department of Transportation has identified over \$7.5 billion in needed but unfunded projects.
- Inflation and rising construction costs have hampered the state's ability to complete necessary road improvements.
- The average driver in Las Cruces pays an extra \$1,985 per year due to road conditions, congestion, and crashes.

The state needs to increase its investment in New Mexico's transportation system, according to a recent report released by transportation research nonprofit TRIP.

According to the report, deteriorated or congested roads and bridges cost New Mexico drivers \$3.3 billion annually and \$1,985 per driver in the Las Cruces urban area due to higher vehicle operating costs, congestion-related delays and the financial costs of traffic crashes.

The full report can be read on [TRIP's website](#).

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) has identified more than \$7.5 billion in needed but unfunded transportation projects throughout the state. The report cites 10 projects identified by NMDOT in southwest New Mexico and the border region with an estimated cost of approximately \$1.5 billion.



Traffic builds on East Lohman Avenue in Las Cruces on Wednesday, Aug. 11, 2021. The city's population was 111,385 in 2020, a 14.1 percent increase in 10 years, according to US Census data released Thursday, Aug. 12. *Nathan J Fish/Sun-News*

"The list of needed projects that are not able to move forward will continue to grow longer and conditions will deteriorate further if the state isn't able to address the significant funding challenges," TRIP executive director Dave Kearby said in a news release.

Increasing inflation has hampered New Mexico's ability to complete needed projects and improvements, according to the report, and the Federal Highway Administration's national highway construction cost index, which measures labor and materials cost,

increased by 45% from the beginning of 2022 through the first quarter of 2025. NMDOT projects that by 2050, construction costs will increase 136% and increases in fuel efficiency are projected to reduce revenue into New Mexico's State Road Fund by \$35.8 million between FY 2024 and FY 2030.

The report also included a breakdown of the costs per motorist in the state's largest urban areas, Albuquerque, Las Cruces and Santa Fe. According to the report, Las Cruces motorists spend \$1,043 in vehicle operating costs, \$460 for safety and \$482 for congestion costs.



Vehicle operating costs include accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. Traffic congestion results in the average driver losing 30 hours annually in traffic delays and wasting six gallons of fuel.

Safety costs are related to costs associated with economic costs of crashes. From 2019 to 2024, 2,653 people were killed in traffic crashes in New Mexico and accounted for a total of \$2.5 billion in economic costs in New Mexico in 2024, according to the report. An average of 26 traffic fatalities occurred each year in the Las Cruces area from 2019 to 2023, according to the report.

"Safe and robust transportation infrastructure is one of the most important drivers of economic development," said New Mexico State Sen. George Munoz in a news release.