

Report: New Mexico's deficient roads cost Santa Fe drivers over \$2,100 a year

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Traffic backs up along Interstate 25 during rush hour Nov. 11 in Albuquerque as construction crews work on the Comanche Road bridge as part of a major road-widening project.

Jim Weber/New Mexican file photo

Deteriorated, congested or unsafe roads and bridges across New Mexico cost drivers \$3.3 billion every year — and insufficient funding will make it hard to maintain and improve the state's transportation infrastructure, a national research nonprofit says a new report.

This financial toll — \$2,133 annually per driver in the Santa Fe area — is the result of higher vehicle operating costs incurred while driving on rough roads, facing congestion-related delays and experiencing crashes, according to the [report](#) released Thursday by Washington, D.C.-based TRIP.

The \$7.5 billion gap between funding needed for the New Mexico Department of Transportation to proceed with roadway infrastructure projects and the revenue available for the work has grown substantially in the past decade, the report found — something likely to come up during the legislative session that starts Tuesday.

In 2017, the Transportation Department identified \$1.315 billion in necessary but underfunded projects, according to the report, titled "New Mexico Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the state's need for safe, smooth and efficient mobility."

The department's major priority during the legislative session is securing \$1.5 billion in bonding capacity for major road construction projects across the state, *The New Mexican* reported in November.

TRIP's report found 30% of major locally and state-maintained roads in the Santa Fe area are in "poor condition" and 13% are in "mediocre condition." Statewide, 34% of New Mexico's roads are in poor condition and 22% are in mediocre condition, according to the report.

At a news conference Thursday, New Mexico House Minority Leader Gail Armstrong, R-Magdalena, said the stability and growth of the state's economy depends on its roads.

"It's critical," Armstrong said. "We are in critical decision-making time right now, and the Legislature really needs to support — which I will be doing — getting more funding and possibly some way that we could have recurring funding into our DOT and roads in New Mexico."

Sen. George Muñoz, D-Gallup, said at the news conference the agency will see the \$1.5 billion package come to fruition early in the session. But with the funding, he added, the agency needs to have "a little better performance as we move forward."

"You're going to see a large amount of money in the budget for DOT for transportation projects," Muñoz said. "But in that, DOT — and I'm going to put some of the blame on the agency, where it needs to be — has to get these projects moving a lot quicker. We can't fund something and wait three years for a road to get fixed or repaired."

The Transportation Department's annual budget is about \$1.3 billion, composed of state and federal funding. The agency's budget request for fiscal year 2027 — similar to the Legislative Finance Committee's recommendation — includes about \$550.6 million to be used for "plan, study, design and right-of-way acquisition, road construction and rehabilitation."

The TRIP report identified specific transportation infrastructure projects across New Mexico and their respective costs. This includes \$961 million for projects in Northern New Mexico and the northern Rio Grande corridor, like [design improvements](#) for Cerrillos Road from St. Michael's Drive to St. Francis Drive in Santa Fe — a \$48 million project that began in 2020.

The report also highlighted the \$195 million needed to rehabilitate a 37-mile stretch of U.S. 64 from Taos to Tres Piedras, and \$115 million needed to replace the historic Shiprock bridge — decommissioned in 2017.

"Legislators need to know that the quality of their roads matter," Muñoz said.