

New report says Buffalo-Niagara road conditions cost drivers \$2,200 per year

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File image

A transportation advocacy group [has released a report](#) which states motorists in the Buffalo-Niagara region pay an estimated \$2,200 per year as the result of poor road and bridge conditions. Those backing the report say New York State needs to increase its investment in local roads, in order to save money in the long run. The Road Information Program, or [TRIP](#), estimates statewide the total cost of bad roads is \$40.3 billion. The cost includes crashes, gasoline wasted during congestion delays, and repairs from poor road conditions, such as potholes.

"AAA estimates show that about two out of every 10 drivers who hit a pothole have to go to an auto repair shop for repairs starting at \$400 and up, and we know that those costs are on the rise," said Elizabeth Carey of the AAA of Western and Central New York.

The report also indicates a lack of adequate investment in road and bridge improvement only makes the problem worse. James Dussing,

Highway Superintendent for the Town of Clarence, says 90 percent of the roads within New York State are ineligible for federal infrastructure funds, thus it's up to Albany to take the lead in providing support.

But the problem, as he sees it, is Albany has fallen short when supporting local road improvements.

"New York's local roads and bridges face over \$100 billion in unmet needs, costs that grow and maintenance is delayed," he said. "Properly funded maintenance generates tremendous long-term savings. It costs five times more to rebuild bridges and 16 times more to replace pavement than to preserve them."

According to Dussing, speaking during an online presentation hosted by TRIP, New York last year provided \$800 million for state roads, while providing only \$50 million for the Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program, or CHIPS, leaving local municipalities and counties with fewer dollars for their roadways

Dussing, who is also president of the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways, said he and his colleagues will be pleading with lawmakers in early March to increase funding in the state budget, which is due April 1.

"This year, highway superintendents and the counties and local municipalities are looking for a \$250 million increase to protect the taxpayers, support jobs and to keep our roads safe across New York State," he said. "That's what we are looking for in the New York State budget this year. We're hoping that we receive the support that we need from our legislators."

Also speaking during the presentation was John Ravitz, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for the Business Council of Westchester. He suggests good road quality benefits business, because it means safer commutes to and from work for the employees businesses rely on.

"The time is now to continue to really make sure that people understand the long-term effects of not doing what we need to do to get this funding done. Businesses are watching," Ravitz said. "Businesses are watching to see what New York State is going to do to build this new reliable transportation infrastructure, and we have to be able to demonstrate that we are laser focused on getting this done."

Carey added that increased attention to road quality would also benefit its tourism industry.

"AAA feels that all drivers, New Yorkers, visitors, tourists, deserve safe roads and bridges to drive on. And we do know from the report that tourism and visitors traffic is expected to increase in coming years across New York state, so we need to be prepared for that with an aggressive long term plan focused on transportation infrastructure," she said. "Let's continue to do the right thing and prioritize traffic safety and expand that funding so that we are driving on safe roads and bridges, because that's what everyone deserves."