

Report: NY-area drivers spend over \$3,700 each on congested, poor, unsafe roads



Poor road conditions and potholes on the Long Island Expressway ramp at Exit 87 in December 2018. T toRAMP181203

Credit: Debbie Egan-Chin

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Drivers lose nearly \$4,000 annually on New York City, Long Island and New Jersey roads due to congested and deteriorated roads, according to a transportation nonprofit's report on Thursday.

The national transportation research nonprofit group known as TRIP said drivers in the metro area, which includes Long Island and parts of New Jersey, spend about \$3,755 per vehicle due to higher costs, traffic crashes and congestion delays. Statewide, those expenses total \$40.3 billion, according to the group's report.

"A lack of adequate investment in transportation and increasing inflation in construction costs could hamper New York's ability to make needed improvements to its transportation network," the organization said in the Thursday report.

Those figures are up from about \$3,500 per vehicle in last year's report. Specific data for Long Island roads was not available.

Nearly half of major highways and local roads statewide, officials said, are listed "in poor or mediocre condition," costing drivers an additional \$718 in gas and maintenance expenses. In the metro area, about 35% of roads are considered in good condition and 31% of roads are in poor condition, according to the report.

The report also found that 435 bridges, comprising 7% of bridges in the region, were in poor condition and in need of immediate repairs. Another 68% of bridges, or 4,562 bridges, were in fair condition.

Officials said the cost of highway repairs had increased, while state transportation spending had dropped. Inflation in highway construction costs nationally has increased by more than 70% since 2020, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

The report said the state transportation department reduced spending on pavement, bridge conditions and safety improvements by 8% statewide, spending \$262 million less from 2023 to 2024, from \$3.36 billion to \$3.1 billion.

"New York's roads, highways and bridges are funded by investments from local, state and federal governments. Increasing inflation in the cost of highway construction and declining capital threaten the state's ability to deliver needed improvements road and bridge conditions, safety and reliability," the report states. "Meanwhile, the need for repairs is growing."

New York City and Long Island drivers are also losing time and money commuting, according to the report. The nonprofit estimates the average driver loses 99 hours each year in delays. Commuting also costs average drivers about \$2,662 in lost time and fuel, according to the report.

The average driver wastes about 31 gallons of fuel due to congestion, totaling \$20 billion statewide. Analysts said New York City area traffic had returned to pre-pandemic 2019 levels and the state Department of Transportation estimates a 23% increase in traffic by 2040, officials said.

Officials with the New York State Association of Town Superintendents of Highways called for an increase in state funding for roads, including a request of \$250 million for Consolidated Local Street and Highway Improvement Program, known as Chips funding.

"Flat funding in the face of skyrocketing costs is effectively a cut that will result in crumbling infrastructure and huge preventable outyear replacement costs," said Town of Clarence Highway Superintendent James A. Dussing, president of the association.

Newsday's Peter Gill contributed to this report