

September 24, 2010

TRIP Report: Rough Roads Cost Average Urban Motorist \$402 Annually

Nearly a quarter of the nation's major metropolitan roads have pavements in poor condition that result in rough rides, costing drivers extra vehicle maintenance and repair costs totaling hundreds of dollars per year, the nonprofit transportation research organization TRIP concluded in a report released Wednesday.

While the share of those roads in poor condition fell slightly from 26% in 2007 to 24% in 2008, "potential deficits in state budgets, the completion of federal transportation stimulus projects, and the failure of Congress to approve a long-term federal surface transportation program may lead to worsening urban pavement conditions," according to the "Hold the Wheel Steady: America's Roughest Rides and Strategies to Make Our Roads Smoother" report issued by TRIP.

"America needs a multiyear surface transportation bill as soon as possible," said John Horsley, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. "State departments of transportation cannot invest in long-term projects unless they know the federal funds are going to be there. A sound highway and transit bill will lead to a sustainable recovery and help to solve many of the problems outlined in TRIP's report."

The average urban driver pays \$402 per year in additional vehicle operating costs due to traveling on rough roads, TRIP determined. The report lists the top 20 urban regions where motorists pay the highest vehicle operating costs because of pavements in poor condition.

Through 2025, America faces a shortfall of \$189 billion in the cost to maintain urban roads in their current condition and a gap of \$375 billion in funds to significantly improve those roads, TRIP concludes. State-level transportation funding has been especially hard-hit by the ongoing fiscal challenges nationwide. There was a reduction of approximately \$74 billion in overall state spending in Fiscal Year 2010, according to the report, and the National Governors Association is projecting total state budget shortfalls for 2010 and 2011 of more than \$127 billion.

"With state and local governments facing looming budget deficits and without a long-term federal transportation program in place, road conditions are projected to get even worse in the future," said Will Wilkins, TRIP's executive director.

"Repairing rough urban roads could ease the burden on drivers and provide a smoother ride while creating jobs and boosting the economy."

TRIP's 29-page report is available at bit.ly/TRIP-Wheel.

AASHTO teamed up with TRIP to publish a similar report in May 2009, "Rough Roads Ahead: Fix Them Now or Pay for It Later." That 53-page report is available at bit.ly/AASHTO-roughroads. AASHTO's federal surface transportation reauthorization policy recommendations are available at bit.ly/AASHTO-policyrecs.

Questions regarding this article may be directed to editor@ashstojournal.org.