



For immediate release
Wednesday, February 18, 2015
Report available at: tripnet.org

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DEFICIENT, CONGESTED ROADWAYS COST EACH ATHENS AREA DRIVER MORE THAN \$700 ANNUALLY, A TOTAL OF \$7.9 BILLION STATEWIDE. COSTS WILL RISE AND TRANSPORTATION WOES WILL WORSEN WITHOUT INCREASED FUNDING

Eds.: The report includes regional pavement and bridge condition, congestion and highway safety data, and cost breakdowns for Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Gainesville, Macon and Savannah.

Athens, GA – Roads and bridges that are deficient, congested or lack desirable safety features cost Georgia motorists a total of \$7.9 billion statewide annually – more than \$700 per driver in the Athens urban area - due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion-related delays. Increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels could relieve traffic congestion, improve road and bridge conditions, boost safety, and support long-term economic growth in Georgia, according to a new report released today by [TRIP](http://tripnet.org), a Washington, DC based national transportation organization.

The TRIP report, “[Georgia Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility](#),” finds that throughout Georgia, 10 percent of major locally and state-maintained urban roads and highways are in poor condition. In the Athens urban area, 22 percent of major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Sixteen percent of Georgia’s bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. The state’s major urban roads are becoming increasingly congested, with drivers wasting significant amounts of time and fuel each year. And, more than 6,000 people were killed in crashes on the state’s roads in the last five years.

Driving on deficient roads costs each Athens area driver \$742 per year in the form of extra vehicle operating costs (VOC) as a result of driving on roads in need of repair, lost time and fuel due to congestion-related delays, and the cost of traffic crashes in which roadway features likely were a contributing factor. The TRIP report calculated the cost to motorists of insufficient roads in Georgia’s largest urban areas: Athens, Atlanta, Augusta, Columbus, Gainesville, Macon and Savannah. A breakdown of the costs per motorist in each area along with a statewide total is below.

Location	VOC	Safety	Congestion	TOTAL
Athens	\$206	\$156	\$380	\$742
Atlanta	\$545	\$260	\$1,120	\$1,925
Augusta	\$455	\$399	\$405	\$1,259
Columbus	\$461	\$348	\$390	\$1,199
Gainesville	\$237	\$275	\$445	\$957
Macon	\$410	\$564	\$420	\$1,394
Savannah	\$762	\$498	\$540	\$1,800
Statewide Total	\$1.7 Billion	\$2.4 Billion	\$3.8 Billion	\$7.9 Billion

The TRIP report finds that a total of 22 percent of major roads in the Athens urban area are in poor or mediocre condition, costing the average Athens motorist an additional \$206 each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. Traffic congestion in the area is worsening, causing 20 annual hours of delay for the average Athens motorist and costing each driver \$380 annually in lost time and wasted fuel.

“Motorists expect and deserve safe, well maintained roads and bridges no matter if they are traveling on the Interstates or rural roads,” said Garrett Townsend, public affairs director for AAA- The Auto Club Group. “Legislators must act to provide a sustainable solution to ensure that Georgia can continue to make necessary infrastructure investments that will benefit all travelers.”

A total of 16 percent of Georgia’s bridges show significant deterioration or do not meet modern design standards. Five percent of Georgia’s bridges are structurally deficient, with significant deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components. An additional 11 percent of the state’s bridges are functionally obsolete, which means they no longer meet modern design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment. In the Athens urban area, 25 percent of local bridges are functionally obsolete.

“This report provides yet more data proving that we cannot afford to wait to address our transportation funding needs,” said Seth Millican, director of Georgia Transportation Alliance. “It clearly demonstrates the cost of doing nothing - which will only increase the longer we delay needed maintenance and investment in our infrastructure.”

Georgia’s overall traffic fatality rate of 1.08 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is slightly lower than the national average of 1.09. Traffic crashes in Georgia claimed the lives of 6,122 people between 2009 and 2013. From 2010 to 2013, an average of seven traffic fatalities occurred annually in the Athens area.

The efficiency and condition of Georgia’s transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state’s economy. Annually, \$378 billion in goods are shipped from sites in Georgia and another \$413 billion in goods are shipped to sites in Georgia, mostly by truck.

The Federal surface transportation program is a critical source of funding in Georgia. From 2008 to 2012, the federal government provided \$1.23 for road improvements in Georgia for every dollar the state paid in federal motor fuel fees. In July 2014 Congress approved an eight-month extension of the federal surface transportation program, which will now run through May 31, 2015. The legislation will also transfer nearly \$11 billion into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) to preserve existing levels of highway and public transportation investment through the end of May 2015.

“These conditions are only going to get worse if greater funding is not made available at the local, state and federal levels,” said Will Wilkins, TRIP’s executive director. “Congress can help by approving a long-term federal surface transportation program that provides adequate funding levels, based on a reliable funding source. If not, Georgia is going to see its future federal funding threatened, resulting in fewer road and bridge improvements, loss of jobs, and a burden on the state’s economy.”