More than one-third of Rochester’s major roads are in poor or mediocre condition, while over two-fifths of the area’s bridges are deficient or do not meet modern design standards, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a Washington, DC based national transportation organization. Increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels could improve road and bridge conditions, enhance safety, relieve traffic congestion and support long-term economic growth in New York.

According to the TRIP report, throughout the state 37 percent of major locally and state-maintained urban roads and highways are in poor condition. An additional 43 percent of the state’s major urban roads have pavements in mediocre or fair condition, and the remaining 20 percent are in good condition. In the Rochester urban area, 21 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor condition, 16 percent are in mediocre condition, 24 percent are rated in fair condition and the remaining 40 percent are in good condition. Driving on rough roads costs all New York State motorists a total of $6.3 billion annually in extra vehicle operating costs (VOC). The average driver in the Rochester urban area loses $402 each year as a result of driving on rough roads. Costs include accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

More than one-third – 39 percent -- of locally and state-maintained bridges (20 feet or longer) in New York show significant deterioration or do not meet current design standards often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment. Twelve percent of New York’s bridges are structurally deficient. A bridge is structurally deficient if there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Structurally deficient bridges are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including commercial trucks and emergency services vehicles. Twenty-seven percent of
the state’s bridges are functionally obsolete. Bridges that are functionally obsolete no longer meet current highway design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment. In the Rochester urban area, nine percent of bridges are structurally deficient and 33 percent are functionally obsolete.

New York State’s overall traffic fatality rate of 0.92 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is lower than the national average of 1.09. Traffic crashes in New York claimed the lives of 5,892 people between 2009 and 2013, an average of 1,178 fatalities each year. From 2011 to 2013, an average of 40 traffic fatalities occurred annually in the Rochester urban area. Where appropriate, roadway improvements can reduce traffic fatalities and crashes while improving traffic flow to help relieve congestion. Such improvements include removing or shielding obstacles; adding or improving medians; improved lighting; adding rumble strips, wider lanes, wider and paved shoulders; upgrading roads from two lanes to four lanes; and better road markings and traffic signals.

The efficiency and condition of New York’s transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state’s economy. Annually, $550 billion in goods are shipped from sites in New York and another $597 billion in goods are shipped to sites in the state, mostly by truck.

The Federal Highway Administration estimates that each dollar spent on road, highway and bridge improvements results in an average benefit of $5.20 in the form of reduced vehicle maintenance costs, reduced delays, reduced fuel consumption, improved safety, reduced road and bridge maintenance costs and reduced emissions as a result of improved traffic flow.

“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. “Without additional transportation funds, the state's pavement and bridge conditions will continue to decline, needed safety improvements will not be made, congestion will worsen and the state will lose out on opportunities for economic growth.”