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South Dakota Roads, Bridges Would Benefit from Additional Investment, Report Says

Roads and bridges across South Dakota are deteriorating and may soon be unable to meet the needs of their users unless additional transportation infrastructure funding is invested, according to a report released Wednesday by the nonprofit transportation organization TRIP.

The report found that 23 percent of the state's locally and state-maintained roadways are in poor or mediocre condition, while 25 percent of state and local bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, making South Dakota the state with the "fifth highest share of structurally deficient bridges in the nation," according to TRIP. This is all occurring while the number of vehicle miles traveled increases. TRIP states that the number of vehicle miles traveled in South Dakota increased almost 30 percent between 1990 and 2011 (from 6.9 billion to 9 billion).

The cost of these transportation infrastructure issues is substantial, as TRIP estimates that South Dakota drivers pay an average of more than \$300 per year in associated costs (such as accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs and fuel use from rough roads, and tire wear). Taken together, the state of South Dakota's roadways and bridges costs drivers \$181 million statewide each year.

The price is not just monetary, however. TRIP found that the fatality rate on the state's rural roadways is more than two times higher than on all other roads in the state (1.71 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel on rural roads, versus .77 fatalities per 100 million vehicles miles on all others).

TRIP said the way to combat these problems is to increase transportation investment, which would provide for a safer and more efficient transportation system while also supporting the economy.

"As the nation rebounds from the current economic downturn, the U.S. will need to modernize its surface transportation system by improving the physical condition of its transportation network and enhancing the system's ability to provide efficient and reliable mobility for motorists and businesses," the report says. "Without a substantial boost in federal, state and local highway funding, numerous projects to improve the condition and expand the capacity of South Dakota's roads, highways and bridges will not be able to proceed, hampering the state's ability to improve the condition of its transportation system and to enhance economic development opportunities in the state."

TRIP's 19-page report, "South Dakota Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," is available [here](#).