

## Study: 44% of Maryland's roads need repair

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Forty-four percent of Maryland's major roads are in bad condition, 25 percent of the state's bridges are deteriorating or obsolete and only an unlikely infusion of federal money can halt the decline, according to a report issued Tuesday.

Like every other state in the nation, Maryland is saddled with a system of aging roads and bridges that cannot be revitalized unless Congress provides the cash, the report by [TRIP](#), a nonprofit national transportation research group, said.

The group estimated that the combination of bad roads, [congestion delays](#) and the crashes caused by both cost Maryland drivers \$7 billion a year.

"The efficiency of Maryland's transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state's economy," the report said. "As Maryland's roads and highways continue to age, they will reach a point where routine paving and maintenance will not be adequate ... and costly reconstruction of the roadway and its underlying surfaces will become necessary."

Armed with the report, Maryland and regional transportation officials will set out on Tuesday to press for federal funding.

Congress normally funds transportation projects through a six-year plan that provides a stable and predictable source of funding. The last multi-year plan expired in 2009, and funding has since

been provided through a series of short-term measures.

With the six-year transportation funding reauthorization bill stalled in Congress, states already strapped for cash can only guess at what will come from Washington as they attempt to plot strategies for highway and mass transit preservation

Fearful about the deficit, Congress seems unlikely to pump out the level of funding deemed necessary in [another report presented last October](#) by a panel co-chaired by two former secretaries of transportation.

The group of about 80 transportation experts, headed by [Norman Y. Mineta](#) and Samuel K. Skinner, estimated that an additional \$134 billion to \$262 billion must be spent per year through 2035 to rebuild and improve the nation's roads, rail systems and air transportation.

As U.S. investment in preservation and development of transportation infrastructure lags far behind that of China, Russia and European nations, they concluded it will lead to "a steady erosion of the social and economic foundations for American prosperity in the long run."

In 2009, China spent an estimated \$350 billion on infrastructure. Europe spent \$350 billion in a five-year period to modernize seaports, expand airports and high-speed rail lines, and reconfigure city centers. Brazil has invested more than \$240 billion in infrastructure in the past three years and expects to exceed that amount by \$100 billion over the next three years.

Maryland's dilemma, as expressed in the TRIP report, is a microcosm of the national plight.

"Today's business culture demands that an area have well-maintained and efficient roadways and bridges if it is to remain economically competitive," the TRIP report said. "The quality of a region's transportation system has become a key component in a business's ability to compete locally, nationally and internationally."

Maryland received about \$5.8 billion in federal funding for road, highway and bridge improvements, and \$2.1 billion in funding for public transit from 2000 to 2009. Federal dollars accounted for 28 percent of the money the [Maryland Department of Transportation](#) used to pay for road, highway and bridge construction, repairs and maintenance.

But much of the state's network of interstate highways, including the heavily traveled Capital Beltway, now is 50 years old.

TRIP said 7 percent of Maryland bridges suffer from deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. An additional 18 percent no longer meet current highway design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment.

Drawing on data from 2008, the report said 26 percent of the state's roads showed signs of deterioration, including rutting, cracks and potholes. Another 18 percent were showing wear significant enough to require resurfacing, although some might need more extensive reconstruction.