



## Maryland's deteriorating roads costing motorists

By: **Ben Giles**. 02/01/11

*Examiner Staff Writer*

Congested, deteriorated, and unsafe roads and bridges in Maryland are costing Washington-area drivers about \$2,300 each year, according to a new report, and with 44 percent of major roads in the state in need of repair, the outlook for improving the costly transportation network is grim.

Poor Maryland roads cost drivers statewide \$7 billion each year, as motorists rack up expenses for the accelerated deterioration of their vehicles, lost time and wasted fuel caused by congestion and crashes, according to a report by TRIP, a national transportation research group based in the District.

While state officials have plans to repair roads and improve major highways, such as widening parts of Interstate 70 and improving the I-95/495 interchange, those projects stalled for lack of funding.

Maryland would need a substantial boost in road funding to improve its deteriorating infrastructure, but it's unlikely the state will come up with the money on its own given its estimated \$1.4 billion budget deficit. The federal government will have to make a significant contribution, the report concluded.

"After decades of underinvestment, we are out of time, out of money and out of excuses," said Douglas Duncan, chairman of the Suburban Maryland Transportation Alliance and partner in the report.

"The time to fix this is now, and that means finding new revenues and making sure they are spent on our failing transportation system."

A quarter of Maryland's major roads are in poor condition, the report found. Another 18 percent were rated mediocre. Bridges, too, are falling apart across the state; 7 percent are falling apart, and 19 percent are considered outdated by today's standards. While these bridges are still safe to drive on, it does mean 26 percent are in need of repair.

While major roads are sapping dollars from driver's wallets, poor conditions on rural roads are more likely to cost drivers their lives. The traffic fatality rate on Maryland's rural roads is nearly 2.5 times greater than on other state roads, because rural roads lack the safety features necessary to help correct driver errors, the report found.

"Maryland's deficient transportation system is hitting the state's drivers in the wallet at a time when many can ill afford it," said Will Wilkins, TRIP executive director. "It is much more cost effective to invest in building a sound transportation system than to pass along the cost of a deteriorated system to the state's motorists."

[bgiles@washingtoneXaminer.com](mailto:bgiles@washingtoneXaminer.com)