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Road inefficiencies

The road network in the North East imposes inefficiency on the region's motorists and its economy worth £422million per year, according to a new study by the Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE).

The new study, *Funding Roads*, identifies factors contributing to this figure, including the cost of repairing vehicles damaged by poor road surfaces, time lost in congestion, and the cost of

petrol used by motorists held up by congestion.

It suggests that if government could reduce congestion by just one minute per vehicle per day, drivers across England would save as much as £277million a year in reduced fuel costs. The same improvement would also benefit the economy by £1.9billion in reducing unproductive journey times.

David Hodgson, ACE North East chairman, said: "Historically, government has always spent only a fraction of the mon-

ies collected in Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and in fuel duty on roads. This represents a missed opportunity to dramatically improve the economic performance of ambitious regions like the North East while also reducing the local cost of living.

"Relatively small but regular additional investment in roads could have a significant positive impact on both business in the region, and on drivers' pockets."

The report goes on to suggest that VED be ring-fenced for use on roads investment and

maintenance, with an increase to match need balanced by an equivalent reduction in fuel duty. Road pricing could then be considered as a way to simply encourage more road use at less congested times.

Chairman of ACE's roads sector interest group, Mike Llywelyn-Jones, said: "Over recent months, industry has been pleased to see the Government acknowledging that previous cycles of stop-start investment have been very detrimental to the country's road network."



ACE suggests that Vehicle Excise Duty be ring-fenced for road investment.