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# Inefficient roads 'costing region £1.4bn'

## CLOSE UP

### TRANSPORT

THE North West economy is being held back to the tune of £1.4bn a year because of roads inefficiency, claims a new report.

A new study by the Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE), 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 £277 million a year in reduced fuel costs. The same improvement would also benefit the economy by £1.9 billion in reducing unproductive journey times.

Mike Barber, ACE North West Chairman, said: "Historically, Government has always spent only a fraction of the monies collected in Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) and in fuel duty on roads.

"Reversing the shortfall in roads investment would enable the North West to fully realise economic benefits of ambitious multi-million pound projects like the Mersey Gateway second river crossing and Northern Hub rail scheme. Investment in a balanced and sustainable transport network

could have a sustainable impact on business in the region and improvements in travel

time for drivers."

The report goes on to suggest that VED be used 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.

"The proposals in this ACE report build upon current Government plans, by examining ways of establishing a stable source of funding for both Highways Agency and Local Authority roads to 2040."