

THE TOP FIVE TRANSPORTATION HEADACHES

Posted by [Tina Barbaccia](#) under [Associations](#), [Government](#), [Transportation](#), [Uncategorized](#), [economy](#).

We all get frustrated while being stuck in traffic.

Congestion has been a continual problem, and it doesn't look like it's going to significantly improve any time soon.

Though we all have transportation issues of our own, here is a list of the top five congestion headaches (or should we say migraines?), according to a joint report produced by [1] [TRIP](#), a national transportation research group, and [2] [American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials \(AASHTO\)](#).

The groups produced the report, "America's Top Five Transportation Headaches and Their Remedies — The nation's greatest challenges in providing a well-maintained, efficient and safe highway, bridge and transit system and the best opportunities for gaining transportation headache relief," to garner support for a major transportation infrastructure component to the federal economic stimulus package currently being debated.

Here's what the report noted as the biggest transportation headaches across the nation:

1. Aging bridges, crumbling pavements, and deteriorating transit. Deteriorated and aging pavements provide American drivers with a rough ride, contributing to increased vehicle maintenance costs, particularly for urban motorists, as urban pavement deficiency rates are significantly higher than in non-urban areas.

2. Congested roads, highways, and transit systems. Congestion is increasing across the nation, and "rush hour" is getting longer, slowing commuting and commerce, not only in the nation's largest urban areas, but also in mid- and smaller-size cities.

Increasing traffic congestion is costing the nation's freight transportation network nearly \$8 billion per year, reducing the productivity of the U.S. economy. Trucking is the backbone of the nation's freight transportation system, transporting virtually everything we eat, drink or buy. Higher transportation costs mean higher prices for consumers.

3. Traffic fatalities and injuries. Although the number of traffic fatalities in 2008 is likely to be the lowest in nearly half a century, traffic crashes remain a significant source of deaths and major injuries. Some 41,000 lives were lost on highways in 2007.

Several factors are associated with vehicle crashes that result in fatalities, including vehicle and roadway characteristics and driver behavior. Highway safety experts estimate that roadway characteristics such as the number of lanes, whether traffic traveling in opposite directions is separated, lane widths and intersection design are a factor in approximately one-third of all fatal traffic accident

4. Demand is stressing the system. Travel on the nation's roadways and public transit systems has increased significantly since 1990 and is expected to continue to increase as population and economic activity grow. Increased travel results in additional wear and tear on our nation's roads, highways, bridges and public transit systems.

- The U.S. population increased 41 percent from 1990 to 2008, and is expected to grow another 19 percent by 2030.
- Vehicle travel has grown along with population, increasing 41 percent from 1990 to 2007 – jumping from approximately 2.1 trillion vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 1990 to approximately 3 trillion VMT in 2007. Even with soaring fuel prices for much of 2008, motorists still logged 2.9 trillion miles on the nation's highways.
- By 2030, vehicle travel in the U.S. is projected to increase another 38 percent, to approximately 4.2 trillion vehicle miles of travel (VMT), based on a Federal Highway Administration forecast of an annual VMT growth of 1.4 percent.
- Passenger miles of travel on the nation's public transit systems increased by 41 percent between 1995 and 2008.

5. Everyone's costs are rising. Roads and highways that are congested, deficient, or lack desirable safety features cost Americans \$249 billion annually in the form of lost lives, time and money.

- The average urban motorist in the U.S. is paying \$413 annually in additional vehicle operating costs as a result of driving on roads in need of repair. The total cost nationally of driving on substandard roads is estimated at \$65 billion annually. Driving on roads in rough condition increases consumer costs by accelerating vehicle deterioration, increasing the frequency of needed maintenance and increasing fuel consumption and tire wear.
- The Texas Transportation Institute reported in its 2007 Urban Mobility Report that the cost of traffic congestion in lost time and wasted fuel is \$78 billion annually.
- The cost of fatal and injury causing traffic crashes in which roadway design was a factor is approximately \$106 billion per year. These costs include medical, emergency services, police services, lost productivity and property damage.