

Michigan's Transportation Woes Cited

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Deficient roads, highways and bridges and crowded or congested roads, highways and transit routes in Michigan are causing headaches for residents, visitors, businesses, and state and local governments in the form of lost time, increased vehicle operating costs and the financial burden of making needed transportation improvements. This is according to a recent report released by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group.

The TRIP report, titled "Michigan's Top 100 Transportation Headaches: The Roads, Highways, Bridges and Transit Routes that Provide the State's Greatest Challenge in Meeting Michigan's Need for Reliable Mobility," ranked Michigan's top 100 surface transportation headaches, which include 24 segments of the state's major roads and highways that have significant levels of traffic congestion, eight heavily-crowded public transit routes, 40 sections of major roads or highways that have significant pavement deterioration and may need to be reconstructed, and 28 major bridges in the state that have significant deficiencies and may need to be rebuilt or reconstructed.

According to the TRIP report, the top transportation headache in Michigan is a portion of Interstate 94 in Wayne County, MI, that is severely congested during peak periods and needs to be widened to accommodate additional travel. The remaining top five are severely congested portions of Interstate 696 and Interstate 96 in Oakland County, MI, and portions of Interstate 69 in Genesee County, MI, and Interstate 75 in Monroe County, MI, that have significant deterioration and need to be reconstructed. TRIP reported that the top bridge headache in the state is a 51-year-old bridge on Interstate 96 in Oakland County that needs to be replaced. And Michigan's top transit headache is the crowded Woodward and Woodward Express bus route in Wayne County, which is the state's most heavily traveled transit route and is under consideration for the construction of a light rail line.

The efficiency of Michigan's transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state's economy. As Michigan continues to experience a significant economic downturn, leading the nation in job losses since 2000 and claiming the nation's highest unemployment rate, the modernization of its transportation system could play an important role in the state's economic recovery. Improving Michigan's transportation infrastructure can provide critically needed jobs in the short term and can improve the productivity and competitiveness of the state's businesses in the long term. In fact, every \$1 billion invested in highway construction would support a total of approximately 27,800 jobs.

"At a time when Michigan is facing severe economic challenges, these transportation headaches further hinder economic recovery and personal mobility. Investing in improving Michigan's transportation system will create jobs, stimulate the state's economy and get Michigan residents and businesses back on the road to good economic health," said Will Wilkins, TRIP's executive director.

The TRIP report found that more than a quarter — 26 percent — of Michigan's bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. In 2007 (the latest year for which data is available), 14.5 percent of Michigan's bridges were structurally deficient and 11.9 percent were functionally obsolete. In addition to declining bridge conditions, Michigan's roads and highways are increasingly deteriorated, with 25 percent of the state's major roads and highways in poor condition in 2007. TRIP estimates that additional vehicle operating costs borne by Michigan motorists as a result of poor road conditions are \$2.6 billion annually, or \$455 per motorist in the Detroit, MI, urban area, \$443 per motorist in the Grand Rapids, MI, urban area, \$504 per motorist in the Lansing, MI, urban area, and an average of \$366 per motorist elsewhere in the state.

Additional TRIP Report Findings

- Michigan's population reached 10.1 million residents in 2007, and is expected to increase to 10.7 million residents by 2025. Vehicle travel on Michigan's major highways increased 28 percent between 1990 and 2006, and is expected to increase another 25 percent by 2025.
- Since 2000, Michigan has lost 496,900 jobs and is tied with Rhode Island with the nation's highest unemployment rate of 9.3 percent.
- 39 percent of Michigan's urban interstates and other highways or freeways are considered congested, because they carry a level of traffic that is likely to result in significant delays during peak travel hours.
- The average rush hour trip in Detroit takes approximately 29 percent longer to complete than during non-rush hour. According to a recent report by the Reason Foundation, by the year 2030, unless additional highway capacity is added, traffic congestion delays in Detroit will almost double, with the average rush hour trip taking 50 percent longer to complete than during non-rush hour. This level of traffic delay is equivalent to those currently experienced in Los Angeles, CA, and Chicago, IL.
- Further compounding Michigan's transportation funding challenges is the escalation of the cost of roadway improvements due to rapid increases in the price of key materials needed for highway and bridge construction. Over the five-year period from April 2003 to April 2008, the average cost of materials used for highway construction — including asphalt, concrete, steel, lumber and diesel — increased by 59 percent.