



Rhode Island Faces \$4.5 Billion Transportation Funding Shortfall Over Ten Years

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Road And Bridge Conditions Face Increasing Deterioration Without Additional Funding –Deficient Roads Cost Each Providence Driver Nearly \$1,300 Per Year –

A new report finds that Rhode Island faces a [\\$4.5 billion transportation funding shortfall](#) over the next ten years. This is at a time when nearly a quarter of state-maintained roads are in need of repair, nearly half of Rhode Island's bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, congestion is increasing and the rural traffic fatality rate is more than three times higher than on all other roads in the state. The report, released today by [TRIP](#), a Washington, DC based national transportation organization, finds that roadways that lack some desirable safety features, have inadequate capacity to meet travel demands or have poor pavement conditions cost the state's motorists nearly \$1 billion annually and the average Providence area motorist pays \$1,298 each year.

The [report](#), "*Future Mobility in Rhode Island: Meeting the State's Needs for Safe and Efficient Mobility*," finds that a total of 24 percent of the state-maintained roads are in poor or mediocre condition, and that pavement conditions will deteriorate in the future under current funding levels. In addition to deteriorated road conditions, 21 percent of Rhode Island's bridges are structurally deficient and an additional 27 percent are functionally obsolete. These bridges are inspected regularly and are safe for travel, but many are in need of rehabilitation. The state's roads are also becoming increasingly crowded, as commuting and commerce are constrained by growing traffic congestion on Rhode Island's major urban roads. In 2008, 37 percent of the state's urban highways were congested during peak travel times. Rhode Island's rural, non-Interstate roads have a traffic fatality rate that is more than triple that of all other roads in the state. Increased investment in the state's transportation infrastructure could improve road and bridge conditions, ease congestion, enhance safety and support long-term economic growth.

"Rhode Island's transportation system faces many challenges, including growing traffic volumes, harsh weather and even impacts from natural disasters such as the floods we experienced this March," said Rhode Island Department of Transportation Director Michael P. Lewis. "Economic support, such as the State bonds and Federal stimulus, enable the Department to continually reinvest in our vital infrastructure network of roads, bridges, rail and bike paths."

TRIP estimates that Rhode Island's roadways that lack some desirable safety features, have inadequate capacity to meet travel demands or have poor pavement conditions cost the state's drivers approximately \$978 million annually in the form of traffic crashes, additional vehicle operating costs and congestion-related delays. TRIP calculates that in the Providence metro area this cost is \$1,298 per motorist each year. A breakdown of these costs can be found in the TRIP report.

The TRIP report contains [lists of needed transportation projects](#) throughout the state that would repair and replace deficient bridges and increase roadway capacity. However, these projects won't move forward without additional transportation funding.

Last year's federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provided approximately \$137.1 million in stimulus funding for highway and bridge improvements and \$29.6 million for public transit improvements in Rhode Island. This funding has served as an important down payment on needed road, highway, bridge and transit improvements but is not sufficient to allow the state to proceed with numerous projects needed to modernize its surface transportation system. The federal surface transportation program, which expires on December 31, 2010, remains a critical source of funding for road and bridge repairs and transit improvements in Rhode Island.

With unemployment in Rhode Island more than doubling from 5.4 percent in August 2007 to 11.8 percent in August 2010, making needed improvements to the state's roads, highways, bridges and transit could provide a significant boost to the state's economy by creating jobs and stimulating long-term economic growth as a result of enhanced mobility and access.

"While the state has put a combination of federal and state funds to good use in the past, in the coming years, many additional needed projects will remain stranded on the drawing board because of insufficient funding," said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "It is critical that Rhode Island adequately fund its transportation system and that Congress produces a timely and adequately funded federal surface transportation program. Thousands of jobs and the state's economy are riding on it."

FUTURE MOBILITY IN RHODE ISLAND:

Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility TRIP Report

Executive Summary

Rhode Island's system of roads, highways, bridges and public transit provides the state's residents, visitors and businesses with a high level of mobility. As the backbone that supports the Ocean State, Rhode Island's surface transportation system provides for travel to work and school, visits with family and friends, and trips to tourist and recreation attractions while simultaneously providing businesses with reliable access for customers, suppliers and employees. Rhode Island must improve its system of roads, highways, bridges and public transit to foster economic growth, keep business in the state, and ensure the safe, reliable mobility needed to improve quality of life in Rhode Island.

As Rhode Island looks to rebound from the current economic downturn, the state will need to enhance its surface transportation system by improving the physical condition of its transportation network and enhancing the system's ability to provide efficient and reliable mobility for residents, visitors and businesses. With unemployment in Rhode Island more than doubling from 5.4 percent in August 2007 to 11.8 percent in August 2010, making needed improvements to the state's roads, highways, bridges and transit could provide a significant boost to the state's economy by creating jobs and stimulating long-term economic growth as a result of enhanced mobility and access.

Over the next ten years, Rhode Island faces a transportation-funding shortfall of more than \$4.5 billion. Without a substantial increase in transportation funding at the local, state and federal level, the state will be unable to complete numerous projects, leading to deteriorated road and bridge conditions, increased urban congestion and lost opportunities for economic growth.

- The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) projects that over the next ten years, the state will face a transportation-funding shortfall of more than \$4.5 billion. This lack of sufficient state transportation funding will lead to deteriorated road and bridge conditions, increased urban congestion, a lack of desirable safety features and lost opportunities for economic recovery and growth.
- A lack of available transportation funding in the future is projected to lead to more deteriorated state-maintained roadways. While 44 percent of state-maintained roads are currently in good condition, by 2020 only 31 percent will be in good condition.
- TRIP estimates that Rhode Island's roadways that lack some desirable safety features, have inadequate capacity to meet travel demands or have poor pavement conditions cost the state's drivers approximately \$978 million annually in the form of traffic crashes, additional vehicle operating costs and congestion-related delays.
- TRIP estimates that roadways that lack some desirable safety features, have inadequate capacity to meet travel demands or have poor pavement conditions, cost the average Providence area motorist \$1,298 annually. The report contains a breakdown of the three components of the cost to motorists.
- To ensure that federal funding for highways and bridges in Rhode Island and throughout the nation continues beyond the expiration of SAFETEA-LU, Congress needs to approve a new long-term federal surface transportation program by December 31, 2010.
- The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provides approximately \$137.1 million in stimulus funding for highway and bridge improvements and \$29.6 million for public transit improvements in Rhode Island.
- ARRA funding can serve as a down payment on needed road, highway, bridge and transit improvements, but it is not sufficient to allow the state to proceed with numerous projects needed to modernize its surface transportation system. Meeting Rhode Island's need to modernize and maintain its system of roads, highways, bridges and transit will require a significant, long-term boost in transportation funding at the federal, state or local levels.

Despite the current economic downturn, population increases and economic growth in Rhode Island over the past two decades have resulted in increased demands on the state's major roads and highways.

- Rhode Island's population reached nearly 1.1 million in 2009, an increase of five percent since 1990. The state's population is expected to increase 14 percent by 2030.
- Vehicle travel in Rhode Island increased 17 percent from 1990 to 2008 – from seven billion vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 1990 to 8.2 billion VMT in 2008.
- By 2025, vehicle travel in Rhode Island is projected to increase by another 15 percent.
- From 1990 to 2008, Rhode Island's gross domestic product, a measure of the state's economic output, increased by 34 percent, when adjusted for inflation.

Nearly a quarter of state-maintained roads in Rhode Island are in poor or mediocre condition, providing motorists with a rough ride.

- According to RIDOT, a total of 24 percent of Rhode Island's state-maintained roads are rated in poor or mediocre condition. Six percent of state-maintained roads are in poor condition, while 18 percent are in mediocre condition
- Pavement conditions are projected to worsen under current funding conditions. While 44 percent of state-maintained roads are currently in good condition, by 2020 only 31 percent will be in good condition.
- Roads in need of repair cost each Rhode Island motorist an average of \$467 annually in extra vehicle operating costs – \$350 million statewide. Costs include accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.
- In the Providence metropolitan area, where 28 percent of major roads are rated in poor condition and 30 percent are rated in mediocre condition, driving on roads in need of repair costs motorists \$421 each year in extra vehicle operating costs. This is one component of the \$1,298 that Providence motorists lose each year as a result of deficient roads.
- The functional life of Rhode Island's roads is greatly affected by the state's ability to perform timely maintenance and upgrades to ensure that structures last as long as possible. It is critical that roads are fixed before they require major repairs because reconstructing roads costs approximately four times more than resurfacing them.
- This report contains a list of the most deteriorated sections of roadways in the state that are in need of significant repair or rehabilitation.

Nearly half of the bridges in Rhode Island showed significant deterioration or do not meet current design standards.

- Twenty-one percent of Rhode Island's bridges were structurally deficient in 2010. A bridge is structurally deficient if there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Structurally deficient bridges are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including commercial trucks, school buses and emergency services vehicles.
- Twenty-seven percent of Rhode Island's bridges were functionally obsolete in 2010. Bridges that are functionally obsolete no longer meet current highway design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment.
- Bridges that are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete are safe for travel and are monitored on a regular basis by the organizations responsible for maintaining them.
- This report contains a list of state-maintained bridges that have the lowest sufficiency rating and are in need of replacement or rehabilitation.

Rhode Island's rural traffic fatality rate is more than three times higher than the fatality rate on all other roads in the state. Improving safety features on Rhode Island's roads and highways would likely result in a decrease in traffic fatalities in the state. Roadway characteristics are likely a contributing factor in approximately one-third of all fatal and serious traffic accidents.

- Between 2004 and 2008, 385 people were killed in traffic accidents in Rhode Island, an average of 77 fatalities per year.
- Rhode Island's traffic fatality rate was 0.79 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2008, lower than the national average of 1.25 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel.
- The traffic fatality rate in 2008 on Rhode Island's non-Interstate rural roads was 2.34 traffic fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel, which is more than three times the traffic fatality rate of 0.70 on all other roads and highways in the state.
- Several factors are associated with vehicle accidents that result in fatalities, including driver behavior, vehicle characteristics and roadway design.
- TRIP estimates that roadway characteristics, such as lane widths, lighting, signage and the presence or absence of guardrails, paved shoulders, traffic lights, rumble strips, obstacle barriers, turn lanes, median barriers and pedestrian or bicycle facilities, are likely a contributing factor in approximately one-third of all fatal and serious traffic crashes.
- Where appropriate, highway improvements can reduce traffic fatalities and accidents while improving traffic flow to help relieve congestion. Such improvements include removing or shielding obstacles; adding or improving medians; adding rumble strips, wider lanes, wider and paved shoulders; upgrading roads from two lanes to four lanes; and better road markings and traffic signals.

- The cost of serious traffic crashes in Rhode Island in 2008, in which roadway design was likely a contributing factor, was approximately \$238 million; in the Providence area, the annual cost was approximately \$311 per driver. This is one component of the \$1,298 that Providence motorists lose each year as a result of deficient roads. The costs of serious crashes include lost productivity, lost earnings, medical costs and emergency services. .
- The Federal Highway Administration has found that every \$100 million spent on needed highway safety improvements will result in 145 fewer traffic fatalities over a 10-year period.

Traffic congestion levels are rising as a result of population and economic growth, leading to increasing travel delays in Rhode Island's urban areas.

- In 2008, 37 percent of Rhode Island's urban Interstates and other highways or freeways were considered congested, carrying a level of traffic that is likely to result in significant delays during peak travel hours.
- The average rush hour trip in the Providence metro area takes approximately 17 percent longer to complete than during non-rush hour.
- According to a report by the Reason Foundation, by 2030, unless additional highway capacity is added, traffic delays in the Providence area will more than double, with the average rush hour trip taking 36 percent longer to complete than during non-rush hour. This level of traffic delay is equivalent to what is currently experienced in Phoenix, Dallas-Fort Worth and Baltimore.
- The statewide cost of traffic congestion in lost time and wasted fuel is approximately \$390 million annually. Drivers in the Providence area lose \$566 each year due to congestion. . This is one component of the \$1,298 that Providence motorists lose each year as a result of deficient roads.

The efficiency of Rhode Island's transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state's economy. Businesses are increasingly reliant on an efficient and reliable transportation system to move products and services. Expenditures on highway repairs create a significant number of jobs.

- Annually, \$29 billion in goods are shipped from sites in Rhode Island and another \$28 billion in goods are shipped to sites in Rhode Island, mostly by trucks.
- Seventy-nine percent of the goods shipped annually from sites in Rhode Island are carried by trucks and another 18 percent are carried by parcel, U.S. Postal Service, or courier services, which use trucks for part of the deliveries.
- A 2007 analysis by the Federal Highway Administration found that every \$1 billion invested in highway construction would support approximately 27,800 jobs, including approximately 9,500 in the construction sector, approximately 4,300 jobs in industries supporting the construction sector, and approximately 14,000 other jobs induced in non-construction related sectors of the economy.

Sources of information for this report include the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the U.S. Census, The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Reason Foundation and the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI). All data used in the report is the latest available.