Key facts about the U.S. surface transportation system

May 2024

Investing in the surface transportation system improves road and bridge conditions and reduces driver costs

- A total of 39% of major roads in the U.S. are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on deteriorated roads costs motorists $164 billion a year – $718 per driver – in the form of additional repairs, accelerated vehicle depreciation, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

- A total of 7% of U.S. bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition, meaning there is significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge. A total of 43% of U.S. bridges are at least 50 years old, an age when many bridges require significant rehabilitation or replacement.

- Vehicle travel in the U.S. dropped by 40% in April 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (as compared to the same month the previous year), but rebounded to 1% below pre-pandemic levels by 2023. Since 2000, vehicle travel on the nation's roads increased 18% and the population of the U.S. increased 19%.

- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed into law in November 2021, will provide $304 billion in funds for highway and bridge investments in the U.S. over five years, including a 40% funding increase over the first three years of the program from FY 2022 to FY 2024.

- Construction cost inflation, the erosion of motor fuel taxes due to inflation, improved fuel efficiency, and the adoption of hybrid and electric vehicles threaten the state's ability to keep pace with growing transportation needs. The Federal Highway Administration's national highway construction cost index, which measures the rate of inflation in labor and materials cost, increased 36% between 2022 and the first half of 2023 and has increased 59% since the start of 2021.

Roadway improvements can reduce traffic crashes and save lives

- From 2019 through 2023, 201,620 people died on the nation's highways, an average of 40,324 annual fatalities. The U.S. has a traffic fatality rate of 1.26 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel.

- A total of 891 people were killed in traffic crashes in work zones in the U.S. in 2022, an 18% increase since 2018. Work zone safety can be improved through the use of safety countermeasures including improved work zone design, improved driver messaging, high-visibility markings and speed enforcement.

- Traffic crashes in the U.S. imposed a total of $465 billion in economic costs in 2023. TRIP estimates that a lack of adequate roadway safety features, while not the primary factor, was likely a contributing factor in approximately one-third of all fatal traffic crashes, resulting in $155 billion in economic costs nationwide in 2022. These costs include work and household productivity losses, property damage, medical costs, rehabilitation costs, legal and court costs, congestion costs, and emergency services.

Investing in our transportation system generates jobs, fosters economic recovery and growth, and improves safety

- Investments in the surface transportation system will boost the nation's economy in the short-term by creating jobs and in the long-term will enhance economic competitiveness, stimulate sustained job growth, improve access and mobility, improve traffic safety, reduce travel delays, and improve road and bridge conditions.

- Roads and highways are the backbone of our economy, allowing the nation's motorists to travel 3.2 trillion miles annually and moving a significant portion of the $28.2 trillion worth of commodities shipped around the country each year. But, conditions on the system are deteriorating, as the need for transportation improvements far outpaces the amount of state and federal funding available.

- The design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in the U.S. supports approximately 4 million full-time jobs across all sectors of the nation's economy. Approximately 62.9 million full-time jobs in in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are completely dependent on the transportation network.

Latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau, USDOT, FHWA, BTS, ARTBA, NHTSA, and AAA compiled and analyzed by TRIP.

A National Transportation Research Nonprofit

1101 Connecticut Ave., NW, #450 ● Washington, DC 20036 ● 202.466.6706 ● tripnet.org ● @TRIP_Inc