

# The Times-Picayune

## Louisiana's interstate highways among worst in U.S., study says



An image of traffic on Interstate 10 eastbound on the Bonnet Carre Spillway bridge on Wednesday (Jan. 13). (Image via DOTD)



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Louisiana's interstate highways are in worse condition than those in all but three states. And they saw the highest increase in vehicle travel from 2000 to 2014.

Those two conclusions came in a report released Monday (June 27) by a Washington-based transportation organization. It said 26 percent of Louisiana's interstate highway miles are in poor or mediocre condition, the fourth highest rate in the United States, and that there was a 43 percent increase in the state's vehicle travel during the 14-year period, according to the report.

The report was issued by [TRIP](#), which is partially funded by highway construction companies. The organization says it is "sponsored by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, distributors and suppliers, businesses involved in highway and transit engineering and construction, labor unions and organizations concerned with an efficient and safe surface transportation network that promotes economic development and quality of life."

TRIP found the 2014 national fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel on interstate highways was 0.54, in contrast to 1.26 on non-interstate routes. Although Louisiana's expressways are some of the fastest growing in traffic volume and deterioration, its 0.77 interstate fatality rate was only eighth in the U.S.

The report marks the 60th anniversary of the interstate highway system. It details the Top 10 states where interstates have the highest share of pavements in poor or mediocre condition, the largest increases in vehicle travel and the highest fatality rates. Will Wilkins, TRIP's executive director, stressed the "long-term vision that helped establish the current interstate system 60 years ago is needed again today" to maintain the country's mobility. His thoughts were echoed by Ken Naquin, chief

executive officer of the Louisiana Associated General Contractors.

### Interstate highway leaders in the U.S.

State	Pavement in poor or mediocre condition	State	Increase in vehicle travel, 2000-14
Hawaii	57 percent	Louisiana	43 percent
California	30	Nevada	43
Nevada	28	North Dakota	40
Louisiana	26	Colorado	33
Delaware	24	North Carolina	32
Colorado	22	Utah	30
Wisconsin	21	Montana	25
New Jersey	19	Texas	24
Michigan	18	Florida	21
New York	17	New Jersey	21

Source: TRIP analysis of U.S. Department of Transportation data

"While the creation of America's interstate system will go down as one of the great engineering and construction feats of the world, ranking with the great pyramids, the lack of continued funding for the system at both the state and federal levels may make the interstate go the way of the great pyramids – crumbling and in disrepair," Naquin said.

The deterioration of the state's expressways comes as the travel on the Interstates increase two times faster than new lane capacity being added to them, the report said. Researchers said 32 percent of Louisiana's urban Interstates experience congestion during peak travel times. The first three months of 2016 travel on the Interstate Highway System are already five percent higher than the first three months of 2015, the report said. Researchers also wrote that last year's vehicle miles of travel on the Interstates were four percent higher than in 2014.

The U.S. Department of Transportation estimates \$189 billion is the price tag for the current backlog of needed improvements to Interstates. The current investment in national transportation, however, is less than two-thirds, or 61 percent, of the amount needed to keep them in good condition.