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Interstates celebrate 60 with more traffic, congestion

 [Bart Jansen](#), USA TODAY



WASHINGTON – The interstate highway system hits 60 – years, not miles per hour – this week amid unprecedented travel, growing congestion and a backlog for repairs, according to research report Monday.

Since President Eisenhower signed the system into law June, 29, 1956, the number of miles traveled each year grew from 626 billion to about 3 trillion, according to the report from research group TRIP of Federal Highway Administration figures. The number of vehicles tripled from 65 million to 260 million, the report said.

The system has only 2.5% of the miles of lanes nationwide, but carries 25% of the traffic, the report said. Since 2000, travel has grown at twice the rate of new lanes, the report found.

That growth has led to congestion. About 43% of the country’s urban interstates, or 8,020 out of 18,567 miles, are considered congested because traffic has significant delays during peak hours, according to FHA figures.

The system has a \$189 billion backlog of needed improvements, according to Transportation Department estimates. That figure includes \$100 billion for expansion and enhancement, \$59 billion

to improve pavement and \$30 billion to improve bridges.

“Drivers are frustrated with the condition of the nation’s transportation system,” said Jill Ingrassia, AAA’s director of government relations. “While a record 36 million travelers plan to hit the road for Independence Day weekend, nearly 70% are concerned that roads and bridges are not in great driving condition.”

Bud Wright, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, said at the 60th anniversary of the interstate system “it’s clear that our investments in preserving the system are not keeping up even s our nation continues to grow.”

The states to see the biggest increase in vehicle-miles traveled from 2000 to 2014 were Louisiana and Nevada at 43%, and North Dakota at 40%.

The states with the most congestion in 2014 were California with 85% of its urban interstates suffering serious delays during peak hours, Maryland with 75% and New Jersey with 73%.

The states with the most fatalities on interstates per 100 million miles traveled in 2014 were New Mexico at 1.26, Wyoming at 1.24 and Montana at 1.11.