

Report: Ky. a national freight leader, but underfunded transportation could hinder economic growth



FRANKFORT, Ky. — Kentucky freight shipments are currently among the nation’s highest and are expected to increase by nearly two-thirds in the coming years. However, without adequate infrastructure funding for needed transportation improvements, Kentucky’s continued economic growth could be at risk.

Kentucky’s freight system currently moves more than \$578 billion worth of freight each year, the 14th highest rate in the nation. By 2045, freight moved annually in Kentucky by trucks alone is expected to increase 65% by value (inflation-adjusted dollars), according to a report by [TRIP](#), a national transportation research nonprofit.

TRIP’s [report](#), which examines projected and current freight movement across America, credited the increased demand in freight transportation to economic growth, changing business and retail models, an increased reliance of e-commerce by businesses and households, among other factors.

“Kentucky celebrated record-breaking economic investment over the last few years and must meet the infrastructure demands these new investments create in order to reach full potential,” said Ashli Watts, president and CEO of the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Kentucky Infrastructure Coalition. “The TRIP report clearly shows infrastructure maintained in top condition is a key requirement to a healthy economy and without increased investment, Kentucky will quickly fall behind. The road to Kentucky’s future must be paved.”

The TRIP report also found 21% of travel on Kentucky’s rural Interstate highways is by combination trucks, the 20th highest share in the nation.

“TRIP’s report makes an important contribution to a growing body of evidence that our deteriorating infrastructure is putting the brakes on our economy,” said Chris Spear, president and CEO of the American Trucking Association. “The cost of doing nothing is too high and will only get higher if our leaders do not step up and put forward a comprehensive investment package backed by real funding.”

From 2013 to 2017, traffic fatalities as a result of crashes involving large trucks (10,000 lbs. or greater) increased 20% and in Kentucky, an average of 19 people per one million were killed annually in large truck crashes, the 14th highest rate nationwide.

Infrastructure issues also lead to increased shipping costs, delayed delivery times and decreased productivity for U.S. manufacturers. Traffic congestion is increasing the cost for moving freight and reducing the economic competitiveness and efficiency of businesses that require reliable, affordable freight transportation.

In 2016, traffic congestion resulted in an additional \$74.5 billion in operational costs to the trucking industry including commercial trucks being stuck in traffic for 1.2 billion hours.

“It’s clear that safe and efficient movement of goods and services depends on a well-funded national transportation system,” said Jim Tymon, executive director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials. “Without strong investment from our federal partners, state departments of transportation won’t be able to meet the growing demands of the system.”