

Key facts about Alaska's surface transportation system

May 2021

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

- Investments in the surface transportation system will boost Alaska'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 Alaska motorists to travel 5.9 billion miles annually and moving a significant portion of the \$75 billion worth of commodities shipped to and from the state 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.
- Vehicle travel in Alaska dropped by 34% in April 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (as compared to the same month the previous year), but rebounded to 1% above March 2019 levels by March 2021.
- The design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in Alaska supports approximately 18,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the state economy. Approximately 162,000 full-time jobs in Alaska in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are completely dependent on the state's transportation network.

Investing in Alaska's surface transportation system improves road and bridge conditions and reduces driver costs

- A total of 25% of Alaska's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on deteriorated roads costs Alaska motorists \$215 million a year – \$402 per driver – in the form of additional repairs, accelerated vehicle depreciation, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.
- A total of 9% of Alaska's bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition, meaning there is significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge. A total of 17% of the state's bridges are at least 50 years old, an age when many bridges require significant rehabilitation or replacement.
- Since 2000, vehicle travel on Alaska's roads increased 27% and the state's population increased 17%.
- According to the [Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges, and Transit, 23rd Edition](#), submitted to Congress by the USDOT in 2019, the U.S. faced a \$786 billion backlog in needed repairs and improvements to its roads and bridges. The report recommended increasing the nation's current \$105 billion investment in roads and bridges by 29% to \$136 billion annually to improve the conditions of roads and bridges, relieve congestion, and improve traffic safety.
- The current federal transportation legislation, [Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act \(FAST Act\)](#), is a major source of funding for road and bridge repairs in Alaska and is set to expire on September 30, 2021. The FAST-Act provided \$3.2 billion to Alaska from fiscal years 2016 to 2021, an average of \$534 million per year. From 2015 to 2019, the federal government provided \$5.92 for road improvements in Alaska for every \$1.00 state motorists paid in federal highway user fees. From 2015 to 2019, federal funds provided the equivalent of 65% of the amount of Alaska capital outlays on road and bridge projects, including construction, engineering and right-of-way acquisition.

Roadway improvements can reduce traffic crashes and save lives

- From 2015 through 2019, 375 people died on Alaska's highways, an average of 75 annual fatalities. Alaska's traffic fatality rate of 1.14 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is higher than the national average of 1.11.
- A 2017 AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety [report](#) found that every \$100 million spent on needed roadway safety improvements would reduce the number of traffic fatalities by 44 and serious traffic injuries by 760 over a 20-year period. Safety improvements needed include adding passing lanes, widening lanes and shoulders, adding medians, adding turn lanes, clearing roadside objects, installing barriers, adding centerline or shoulder rumble strips, adding a bicycle lane or path, improving pedestrian safety features, converting intersections to roundabouts, providing grade separation at intersections, improving intersection signalization, and improving rail crossings.

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

