

# Key facts about Montana's surface transportation system

May 2024

## *Investing in Montana's surface transportation system improves road and bridge conditions and reduces driver costs*

- A total of 28% of Montana's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on deteriorated roads costs Montana motorists \$507 million a year – \$583 per driver – in the form of additional repairs, accelerated vehicle depreciation, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.
- A total of 7% of Montana'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 the state's bridges are at least 50 years old, an age when many bridges require significant rehabilitation or replacement.
- Vehicle travel in Montana dropped by 31% in April 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (as compared to the same month the previous year), but rebounded to 6% above pre-pandemic levels by 2023. Since 2000, vehicle travel on Montana's roads increased 39% and the state's population increased 26%.
- The [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) (IIJA), signed into law in November 2021, will provide \$3.1 billion in state funds for highway and bridge investments in Montana over five years, including a 37% funding increase over the first three years of the program from FY 2022 to FY 2024. Federal funds currently support at least 80% of the state's transportation department spending on highway and bridge improvements.
- 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 37% 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, 1,052 people died on Montana's highways, an average of 210 annual fatalities. Montana's traffic fatality rate of 1.49 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is higher than the national average of 1.26.
- A total of 891 people were killed in traffic crashes in work zones in the U.S. in 2022, an 18% increase since 2018. There were 22 Work zone fatalities in Montana from 2018 to 2022. 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 Montana imposed a total of \$1.4 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 \$472 million in economic costs in the state 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 Montana'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 Montana motorists to travel 13.7 billion miles annually and moving a significant portion of the \$88 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.
- The design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in Montana supports approximately 17,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the state economy. Approximately 214,000 full-time jobs in Montana in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are completely dependent on the state's transportation network.

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

