

# Key facts about North Carolina's surface transportation system

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

- Investments in the surface transportation system will boost North Carolina'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 North Carolina motorists to travel 122.5 billion miles annually and moving a significant portion of the \$672 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 North Carolina dropped by 38% in April 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (as compared to the same month the previous year), but rebounded to 12% below the previous year's volume in January 2021.
- The design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in North Carolina supports approximately 110,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the state economy. Approximately 1.9 million full-time jobs in North Carolina in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are completely dependent on the state's transportation network.

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

- A total of 37% of North Carolina's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on deteriorated roads costs North Carolina motorists \$3.8 billion a year – \$500 per driver – in the form of additional repairs, accelerated vehicle depreciation, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.
- A total of 8% of North Carolina's bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition, meaning there is significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge. A total of 38% 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 North Carolina's roads increased 37% and the state's population increased 30%.
- According to the [Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges, and Transit, 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 the state and is set to expire on September 30, 2021. The FAST-Act provided \$6.7 billion to North Carolina from fiscal years 2016 to 2021, an average of \$1.1 billion per year. From 2014 to 2018, the federal government provided \$1.02 for road improvements in North Carolina for every \$1.00 state motorists paid in federal highway user fees. From 2014 to 2018, federal funds provided the equivalent of 39% of the amount of North Carolina 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, 7,051 people died on the state's highways, an average of 1,410 annual fatalities. The state's traffic fatality rate of 1.12 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.

