

# Key facts about Rhode Island'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 Rhode Island'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 Rhode Island motorists to travel 6.9 billion miles annually and moving a significant portion of the \$84 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 Rhode Island dropped by 39% in April 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (as compared to the same month the previous year), but rebounded to 12% above November 2019 levels by November 2021.
- The design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in Rhode Island supports approximately 12,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the state economy. Approximately 206,000 full-time jobs in Rhode Island in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are completely dependent on the state's transportation network.

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

- A total of 75% of Rhode Island's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on deteriorated roads costs Rhode Island motorists \$634 million a year – \$833 per driver – in the form of additional repairs, accelerated vehicle depreciation, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.
- A total of 17% of Rhode Island's bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition, meaning there is significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge. A total of 69% of the state's bridges are at least 50 years old, an age when many bridges require significant rehabilitation or replacement.
- 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 [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) (IIJA), signed into law by President Biden in November 2021, will provide \$2.06 billion in state funds for highway, bridge and transit investments in Rhode Island over the next five years, including a 42% funding increase in FY 2022. IIJA investment in Rhode Island's roads and transit system will add an additional \$412 million in state GDP each year. The increased economic activity will benefit Rhode Island residents – increasing disposable income by \$156 million each year, an average of \$368 per household.

## *Roadway improvements can reduce traffic crashes and save lives*

- From 2015 through 2019, 295 people died on the state's highways, an average of 59 annual fatalities. Rhode Island's traffic fatality rate of 0.75 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is lower 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.*

