

Key facts about Rhode Island's surface transportation system

April 2020

Investing in our nation's surface transportation system improves safety and generates jobs; Making needed highway improvements fosters economic recovery and growth

- 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 eight billion miles annually and moving a significant portion of the \$73.3 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 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 surface transportation system Improves road and bridge conditions and reduces the cost to motorists of driving on deficient roads

- A total of 79 percent of Rhode Island's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on deteriorated roads costs Rhode Island motorists \$640.7 million a year – \$851 per motorist – in the form of additional repairs, accelerated vehicle depreciation, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.
- A total of 22 percent 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 percent 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, 23rd Edition](#), submitted to Congress by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) in 2019, the U.S. faced a \$786 billion backlog in needed repairs and improvements to its roads, highways and bridges. The nation's current \$105 billion investment in roads, highways and bridges should be increased by 29 percent to \$136 billion annually to improve the conditions of roads, highways and bridges, relieve traffic congestion, and improve traffic safety, according to the USDOT report.

Roadway improvements can save lives and reduce traffic crashes

- From 2014 through 2018, 290 people died on Rhode Island's highways, an average of 58 annual fatalities.
- Rhode Island's traffic fatality rate of 0.74 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is lower than the national average of 1.13.
- Fatal and serious motor vehicle crashes in which the lack of adequate roadway safety features was likely a contributing factor cost Rhode Island motorists \$549 million per year in medical costs, lost productivity, travel delays, workplace costs, insurance costs and legal costs.
- 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, a national transportation research nonprofit based in Washington, D.C.