

Key facts about Tennessee'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 Tennessee'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 Tennessee motorists to travel 76.4 billion miles annually and moving a significant portion of the \$812 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 Tennessee dropped by 37% in April 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic (as compared to the same month the previous year), but rebounded to 9% above November 2019 levels by November 2021.
- The design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in Tennessee supports approximately 72,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the state economy. Approximately 1.4 million full-time jobs in Tennessee in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are completely dependent on the state's transportation network.

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

- A total of 14% of Tennessee's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on deteriorated roads costs Tennessee motorists \$1.2 billion a year – \$227 per driver – in the form of additional repairs, accelerated vehicle depreciation, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.
- A total of 4% of Tennessee's bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition, meaning there is significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge. A total of 37% 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 Tennessee's roads increased 26% and the state's population increased 20%.
- 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 [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) (IIJA), signed into law by President Biden in November 2021, will provide \$6.86 billion in state funds for highway, bridge and transit investments in Tennessee over the next five years, including a 30% funding increase in FY 2022. IIJA investment in Tennessee's roads and transit system will add an additional \$1.42 billion in state GDP each year. The increased economic activity will benefit Tennessee residents – increasing disposable income by \$529 million each year, an average of \$182 per household.

Roadway improvements can reduce traffic crashes and save lives

- From 2015 through 2019, 5,215 people died on Tennessee's highways, an average of 1,043 annual fatalities. The state's traffic fatality rate of 1.37 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.

