America’s rural transportation system is in need of repairs and modernization to support economic growth and improve traffic safety in the nation’s Heartland, but the U.S. faces a $211 billion backlog in funding for needed repairs and improvements to the rural transportation system.

This is according to a new report released by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit. The report, Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America’s Heartland, evaluates the safety and condition of the nation’s rural roads and bridges and finds that America’s rural transportation system is in need of immediate improvements to address deficient roads and bridges, high crash rates, and inadequate connectivity and capacity.

The importance of the rural transportation system as the backbone of the nation’s energy, food and fiber supply chain has been heightened during the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing traffic safety in the nation’s Heartland, but the U.S. faces a $211 billion backlog in funding for needed repairs and improvements to the rural transportation system.

This report reinforces what many rural Americans already know – our country’s rural infrastructure is crumbling. The competitiveness of our farmers and ranchers relies on an aging network of roads, bridges, waterways and railways that need an immediate infusion of investment dollars,” said Todd Van Hoose, president and CEO of the Farm Credit Council. “That’s why we have partnered with more than 250 national, state and local organizations through the Rebuild Rural Coalition. Previous funding opportunities have overlooked our rural infrastructure in the past. We must invest in the appropriate network that drives the $36 billion annually, to improve their condition, reliability and safety.

This report shows infrastructure investment must go beyond our nation’s major cities, and be made in America’s rural communities where our food, fiber, and fuel is produced and much of our equipment is manufactured,” said Dennis Slater, president of the Association of Equipment Manufacturers. "Manufacturers depend on the roads, bridges, and highways in rural America to supply the equipment our economy relies on and that infrastructure is in desperate need of repair and modernization. This is especially true today as our nation fights the COVID-19 pandemic and hopefully looks to rebuild the economy in the long-term. The health of the nation’s economy and the safety and quality of life in America’s small communities and rural areas ride on our rural transportation system. The nation’s rural roads and bridges already faced a significant funding shortfall, and that will only be exacerbated by the looming reduction in state transportation revenues as a result of decreased vehicle travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic," said Dave Kearby, executive director of TRIP. "The economic recovery from the pandemic could be hastened by significant rural investment, which we hope our lawmakers to prioritize policies that support the movement of essential people and goods now more than ever. Improving and modernizing the nation’s rural transportation system will require addressing the significant reduction in state transportation revenues, including motor fuel taxes and tolls, as a result of a significant reduction in travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring that the current federal surface transportation program, which expires on Sept. 30, be reauthorized at funding levels that are adequate and reliable. The health of the nation’s economy and the safety and quality of life in America’s small communities and rural areas ride on our rural transportation system. The nation’s rural roads and bridges already faced a significant funding shortfall, and that will only be exacerbated by the looming reduction in state transportation revenues as a result of decreased vehicle travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic, said Dave Kearby, executive director of TRIP. "The economic recovery from the pandemic could be hastened by significant rural investment, which we hope our lawmakers to prioritize policies that support the movement of essential people and goods now more than ever. Improving and modernizing the nation’s rural transportation system will require addressing the significant reduction in state transportation revenues, including motor fuel taxes and tolls, as a result of a significant reduction in travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring that the current federal surface transportation program, which expires on Sept. 30, be reauthorized at funding levels that are adequate and reliable. The health of the nation’s economy and the safety and quality of life in America’s small communities and rural areas ride on our rural transportation system. The nation’s rural roads and bridges already faced a significant funding shortfall, and that will only be exacerbated by the looming reduction in state transportation revenues as a result of decreased vehicle travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic," said Dave Kearby, executive director of TRIP. "The economic recovery from the pandemic could be hastened by significant rural investment, which we hope our lawmakers to prioritize policies that support the movement of essential people and goods now more than ever. Improving and modernizing the nation’s rural transportation system will require addressing the significant reduction in state transportation revenues, including motor fuel taxes and tolls, as a result of a significant reduction in travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, said Dave Kearby, executive director of TRIP. "The economic recovery from the pandemic could be hastened by significant rural investment, which we hope our lawmakers to prioritize policies that support the movement of essential people and goods now more than ever. Improving and modernizing the nation’s rural transportation system will require addressing the significant reduction in state transportation revenues, including motor fuel taxes and tolls, as a result of a significant reduction in travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, said Dave Kearby, executive director of TRIP. "The economic recovery from the pandemic could be hastened by significant rural investment, which we hope our lawmakers to prioritize policies that support the movement of essential people and goods now more than ever. Improving and modernizing the nation’s rural transportation system will require addressing the significant reduction in state transportation revenues, including motor fuel taxes and tolls, as a result of a significant reduction in travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic."