

NJ INTERSTATES ARE JAMMED AND FALLING APART, REPORT FINDS



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[David Matthau](#) | July 14, 2020

A [new report](#) finds New Jersey has some of the most crowded highways in the nation, and the condition of our roads and bridges is a lot worse than most other states.

Rocky Moretti, the author of the report and director of policy and research for TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit organization, said New Jersey interstate roads rank third for congestion, "with more than three quarters of its urban interstates carrying heavy congestion."

He noted during the COVID-19 pandemic travel has gone down, but it's starting to come back — which means crowding on the roads is going to get worse.

He said the report also finds over the past 20 years New Jersey had a 32% increase in vehicle travel on its interstate systems, one of the highest levels in the country. The state ranks fourth for the share of interstates with pavements in poor condition," he said.

Moretti said about one of every 12 miles of highway in New Jersey is starting to fall apart, which means "these are roads and highways that are going to need major reconstruction. There's a diminishing return to just putting a simple overlay on these pavements."

Moretti said while the increase in vehicle travel translates to more traffic jams, it's also a sign of economic growth and activity.

The report also finds the Garden State ranks 19th in the nation for having bridges that are structurally deficient.

Moretti said many highways in Jersey are in fairly poor condition because the interstate system is 64 years old.

"Due to age, due to heavy use and a lack of adequate investment, it's a worn out system," he said.

He also pointed out "New Jersey obviously as a northern state has a freeze-thaw cycle that's also a challenge to its transportation system and its infrastructure."

He noted last year the National Academy of Science issued a report calling for a major overhaul of roads, bridges and interchanges that are part of the interstate highway system.

He added it is estimated there has been a \$50 billion loss in state transportation revenue because of the COVID-19 pandemic leading to decreased gas consumption and driving, a shortfall that he said needs to be addressed by federal lawmakers.

"The federal surface transportation program that's a critical source of interstate funding in New Jersey expires at the end of September of this year," he said. "And Congress needs to put in place a long-term well funded program that is flexible and allows states like New Jersey how best to spend those funds."

The state with the most congested urban interstates in America is California, according to the report. The state with interstate pavement in the worst condition, it says is Hawaii. Rhode Island is listed as the state with the highest percentage of interstate bridges that are in poor or structurally deficient condition.

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