

South Carolina Interstate System’s Rate of Fatalities, Bridge Deterioration, Travel Increase and Congestion Among Highest in U.S.

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As the U.S. Interstate Highway System reaches 64 years old, it faces increasing congestion, unprecedented levels of travel – particularly by large trucks – and insufficient funding to make needed repairs and improvements. America’s most critical transportation link will need to be rebuilt and expanded to meet the nation’s growing transportation needs, according to a report released today by [TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit](#). The report, [Restoring the Interstate Highway System: Meeting America’s Transportation Needs with a Reliable, Safe & Well-Maintained National Highway Network](#), looks at the Interstate system’s use, condition and benefits, and the findings of a [2019 report](#) prepared by the [Transportation Research Board \(TRB\)](#), at the request of Congress as part of the [Fixing America’s Surface Transportation \(FAST\) Act](#), on the condition and use of the Interstate system and on actions required to restore and upgrade the Interstate system.

The chart below ranks states whose Interstate systems are the most congested, have experienced the greatest increase in vehicle miles of travel (VMT) since 2000, carry the greatest share of commercial trucks, have the largest share of pavement in poor condition and bridges in poor/structurally deficient condition, and have the highest fatality rate. Data for all states can be found in the [Appendix](#).

RANK	Congested Urban Interstates	2000-18 Interstate VMT Increase	Interstate Travel by Commercial Trucks	Interstate Pavement in Poor Condition	Interstate Bridges Poor/Structurally Deficient	Interstate Fatality Rate	
1	California	86%	Nevada 72%	Arkansas 30%	Hawaii 19%	Rhode Island 17%	Arizona 1.09
2	Maryland	82%	Louisiana 60%	Wyoming 29%	Delaware 11%	West Virginia 14%	Mississippi 1.00
3	New Jersey	78%	North Carolina 54%	Iowa 19%	Wyoming 9%	Illinois 8%	Texas 0.97
4	Delaware	73%	Utah 54%	West Virginia 19%	New Jersey 8%	Massachusetts 6%	Idaho 0.96
5	Florida	70%	Colorado 51%	North Dakota 18%	Louisiana 7%	New York 6%	New Mexico 0.90
6	Massachusetts	70%	Texas 45%	South Dakota 18%	Michigan 7%	Missouri 5%	South Carolina 0.87
7	Rhode Island	67%	North Dakota 45%	Missouri 17%	Washington 6%	Michigan 5%	Montana 0.86
8	Connecticut	64%	Idaho 43%	Mississippi 17%	Colorado 6%	Colorado 5%	Wyoming 0.85
9	Hawaii	62%	Wisconsin 42%	Kansas 17%	California 6%	Connecticut 4%	Kansas 0.79
10	Washington	58%	Mississippi 39%	Montana 17%	Indiana 6%	California 4%	Arkansas 0.79
11	Colorado	57%	Florida 37%	Louisiana 16%	Maryland 5%	Idaho 4%	Oklahoma 0.77
12	Texas	56%	South Carolina 35%	Maine 16%	New York 5%	Pennsylvania 4%	West Virginia 0.74
13	New Hampshire	56%	Montana 34%	Oregon 16%	Wisconsin 4%	Washington 4%	Alabama 0.73
14	Minnesota	56%	Arkansas 33%	Tennessee 16%	Pennsylvania 4%	Maine 4%	Colorado 0.71
15	Georgia	53%	New Jersey 32%	Illinois 16%	Oklahoma 3%	South Carolina 4%	Louisiana 0.69
16	Virginia	53%	Alabama 32%	Nebraska 16%	Arkansas 3%	Montana 4%	Florida 0.69
17	Kentucky	50%	Tennessee 30%	Indiana 15%	Massachusetts 3%	Louisiana 3%	Nebraska 0.67
18	South Carolina	49%	Kentucky 26%	Oklahoma 15%	West Virginia 3%	North Carolina 3%	Georgia 0.64
19	Utah	49%	Iowa 26%	Idaho 15%	Minnesota 3%	New Jersey 3%	Missouri 0.63
20	Ohio	47%	South Dakota 25%	Michigan 15%	Ohio 3%	Wyoming 3%	North Dakota 0.63
	U.S Average	47%	U.S Average 25%	U.S Average 11%	U.S Average 3%	U.S Average 3%	U.S Average 0.58

According to the [TRB report](#), the U.S. Interstate system has a persistent and growing backlog of physical and operational deficiencies as a result of age, heavy use and deferred reinvestment, and is in need of major reconstruction and modernization. The TRB report concludes that annual investment in the Interstate Highway System should be increased approximately two-and-a-half times, from \$23 billion in 2018 to \$57 billion annually over the next 20 years.

“South Carolina’s economy runs most safely and efficiently for cars and trucks – whether for commuters, tourists, or businesses – with a modern and well-maintained Interstate system,” said Rick Todd, president and CEO of the South Carolina Trucking Association. “For commerce, whether by car or truck, the safest and most efficient Interstate System is one that provides for structural integrity, capacity, and safety. The longer Congress kicks the can down the deteriorating road, the more expensive and divisive it’s going to be for the nation and the states.”

The design of the Interstate – which includes a separation from other roads and rail lines, a minimum of four lanes, paved shoulders and median barriers – makes South Carolina’s Interstates more than two-and-a-half times as safe to travel on as all other roadways. The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel on South Carolina’s Interstate in 2018 was 0.87 – the sixth highest in the U.S.- compared to 2.20 on the state’s non-Interstate routes. TRIP estimates that additional safety features on South Carolina’s Interstate Highway System saved 248 lives in 2018.

“The report released by TRIP confirms what American businesses experience every day—our Interstate highway system, which was once the envy of the world, is in serious need of modernization,” said Ed Mortimer, vice president of transportation infrastructure, U.S. Chamber of Commerce. “Commitment to modernization must be shared by federal, state and local leaders as well as the private sector. The Interstate system plays a key

national role in economic success and quality of life for every American, and we continue to urge bipartisan solutions to address this critical issue.”

The TRIP report found that since 2000, travel on the U.S. Interstate system, the importance of which has been heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, has increased at a rate nearly triple that at which new lane capacity is being added. In South Carolina, 49 percent of urban Interstate highways are considered congested during peak hours, the 18th greatest share in the U.S. Vehicle travel on South Carolina’s Interstates increased 35 percent from 2000 to 2018, the 12th fastest rate in the nation. Nine percent of Interstate travel in South Carolina is by combination trucks.

“A safe and well-maintained Interstate Highway System can strengthen America’s economy, enhance personal mobility and facilitate more efficient movement of goods, but the future of this network could be in jeopardy without increased federal investment,” said Kathleen Bower, AAA senior vice president of public affairs and international relations. “All states benefit from a modern, accessible Interstate Highway System. AAA urges Congress and the current administration to prioritize transportation investments to ensure safe, efficient and reliable mobility across the United States.”

TRIP’s report finds that while pavement smoothness on most segments of the U.S. Interstate system is acceptable, the crumbling foundations of most highway segments need to be reconstructed, and that continued resurfacing rather than addressing underlying foundational issues provides diminishing returns and results in shorter periods of pavement smoothness.

As the aging system’s foundations continue to deteriorate, most Interstate highways, bridges and interchanges will need to be rebuilt or replaced. Four percent of South Carolina’s Interstate bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition, the 15th highest share in the U.S. Nine percent of South Carolina’s Interstate bridges are in need of repair or Replacement. According to the TRIP report, pavements on one percent of South Carolina’s Interstate highways are in poor condition.

Restoring and upgrading the Interstate Highway System to meet the nation’s 21st Century transportation needs will require strong federal leadership and a robust federal-state partnership to reestablish the Interstate Highway System as the nation’s premier transportation network. The current federal surface transportation program, [Fixing America’s Surface Transportation \(FAST Act\)](#), the primary source of Interstate highway funding, expires on September 30, 2020, and the reauthorization of a new long-term, adequately and reliably funded long-term federal program will be needed to ensure that a strong federal program supports the restoration of the Interstate system.

“With the expiration of the FAST Act rapidly approaching, this report reaffirms how critical it is for lawmakers to prioritize reauthorizing a long-term, fully funded federal highway program this year,” said Rod Schrader, chairman and CEO of Komatsu’s North American operations and chair of the Association of Equipment Manufacturers CE Sector. “Meeting the critical equipment and supply needs of essential industries including construction and agriculture requires a dependable, modernized national transportation network. Equipment manufacturers are working hard to keep these vital industries properly supplied in the midst of COVID-19 and we need lawmakers to do their part to support these essential supply chains now and for the long haul.”

The ability of states to invest in Interstate highway repairs and improvements will be hampered by the tremendous decrease in vehicle travel that has occurred due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is estimated to reduce state transportation revenues by at least 30 percent – approximately \$50 billion – over the next 18 months.

Based on the findings of the TRB Interstate report, TRIP has provided a set of recommendations for the restoration of the Interstate Highway System, which includes: the foundational reconstruction of Interstate highways, bridges and interchanges; improvement to roadway safety features; system right-sizing, including upgrading of some roadway corridors to Interstate standards; adding needed additional highway capacity on existing routes; adding additional corridors; and, modifying some urban segments to maintain connectivity while remediating economic and social disruption. “The long-term vision that helped establish the current Interstate system nearly 65 years ago is needed again today,” said Dave Kearby, TRIP’s executive director. “In order to rebuild the nation’s economy, maintain personal and commercial mobility, and improve quality of life, adequate transportation investment and a sustainable, long-term funding source for the federal surface transportation program must remain a priority.”