NEW TRIP REPORT: COLORADO'S ROADS & BRIDGES ARE INCREASINGLY CONGESTED & DETERIORATED, THREATENING ECONOMIC GROWTH & RECOVERY & QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS

Posted on **March 2, 2021** by Greg

Colorado's congested and deteriorated transportation network threatens to diminish quality of life and hamper economic growth and recovery in one of the fastest growing states in the nation, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a Washington, DC-based national transportation research nonprofit. Increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels could relieve traffic congestion, improve road, bridge and transit conditions, boost safety, and support long-term economic growth in Colorado,

The TRIP report, *"Keeping Colorado Mobile,"* finds that Colorado's major urban roads are congested, causing significant delays and choking commuting and commerce. Nearly half of Colorado's major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor or mediocre condition, five percent of locally and state-maintained bridges (20 feet or more in length) are rated poor/structurally deficient, and more than 3,000 people lost their lives on the state's roads from 2015 to 2019.

Congested roads, highways and bottlenecks choke commuting and commerce and cost Colorado drivers $3.5 billion each year in the form of lost time and wasted fuel. From 2000 to 2019, vehicle travel in Colorado increased by 31 percent, the ninth highest rate in the country. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, vehicle travel in Colorado dropped by as much as 42 percent in April 2020 (as compared to vehicle travel during the same month the previous year) but rebounded to ten percent below the previous year's volume in November 2020. Traffic congestion causes up to 62 annual hours of delay for the motorists in some urban areas and costs drivers as much as $1,242 annually in lost time and wasted fuel. The chart below lists Colorado's 10 most congested highway segments based on measuring volume of traffic carried by a roadway compared to its capacity. A chart of the 25 most congested highway segments in Colorado is included in the report.

Rank	Route	Urban area	Segment	Length (Miles)	Avg. Daily Traffic
1	SH 470	Littleton, Lone Tree	From NW of SH 85, (Santa Fe Drive) to Yosemite St.	10.8	104,959
2	I-25	Denver	From N of SH 30 & SH 285 (Hampden Ave. to Speer Boulevard)	9.9	236,182
3	SH 83, (Parker Road)	Aurora	From S of Hampden Ave. to Cornell St. and Dartmouth Ave.	2.5	79,662
4	SH 88, (Arapahoe Road)	Greenwood Village, Aurora	W of I-25 to SH 83 (Parker Rd.)	4.5	65,656
5	I-25	Lone Tree, Denver	From N of Lincoln Ave. to SH 30 and 285 (Hampden Ave.)	8.6	242,249
6	I-70	West Vail, Vail	From W of Chaonix Rd. to Vail Rd.	4.6	45,000
7	SH 85, (Santa Fe Drive)	Littleton	From S of Blakeland Dr. to Mineral Ave.	2.3	43,455
8	SH 24, (Powers Blvd.)	Colorado Springs	From N of Fountain Blvd. to Platte Ave.	1.7	61,909
9	SH 85, (Santa Fe Drive)	Englewood, Denver	From N of SH 285 (Hampden Ave,) to I-25	4.0	93,128
10	SH 287, (Federal Blvd.)	Westminster	From S of SH 36 to 104TH Ave.	3.0	39,047

The TRIP report finds that 22 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in Colorado are in poor condition and another 25 percent are in mediocre condition, costing the state's drivers an additional $2.8 billion each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. Eighteen percent of Colorado's major roads are in fair condition and the remaining 34 percent are in good condition.

"Our struggling transportation systems hurt the great quality of life that draws businesses and people to our communities," said Rachel Beck, vice president of government affairs for the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce and EDC. "Sitting in traffic for an extra twenty minutes commuting to and from work has real opportunity and social costs for Colorado Springs families. That time could be much better spent helping our students out with homework, going to the gym, coaching a child's sports team, or enjoying meals around the family dinner table. There also are real costs to business. As businesses consider relocations or corporate expansions, quality roads to efficiently move goods and people rank high in the site selection process. We all lose out when businesses don't choose Colorado for their home."

Five percent of Colorado's bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition. Bridges that are rated poor/structurally deficient have significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Fifty-four percent of the state's bridges are rated in fair condition and the remaining 40 percent are in good condition. Most bridges are designed to last 50 years before major overhaul or replacement, although many newer bridges are being designed to last 75 years or longer. In Colorado, 33 percent of the state's bridges were built in 1969 or earlier.

"Weather, traffic crashes, avalanche mitigation, and a transportation system meant to support 3.5 million residents instead of today's 5.8 million are constant sources of frustration and a huge expense for families and companies located west of the Continental Divide," said Robin Brown, executive director of the Grand Junction Economic Partnership. "For Coloradans on the West Slope, a shutdown of I-70 costs time, money, and resources that we need to survive, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rural areas are in desperate need of safe

roads and alternate routes to keep the flow of goods and people at optimal pace and it's time to pass a solution to Colorado's pressing transportation needs."

Traffic crashes in Colorado claimed the lives 3,030 people from 2015 to 2019. Colorado's overall traffic fatality rate of 1.09 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2019 is slightly lower than the national average of 1.11. Traffic crashes in Colorado imposed a total of $6.5 billion in economic costs in 2019. TRIP estimates that roadway features, while not the primary cause, were likely a contributing factor in approximately one-third of all fatal traffic crashes, resulting in $2.2 billion in economic costs in Colorado in 2019.

"The new TRIP report reinforces one simple fact: too many Coloradans are wasting too much of their time and money stuck on congested and potholed roads," said Mike Kopp, president and CEO of Colorado Concern. "We can't encourage our state leaders enough on this point. Don't let our prosperity get choked off because we can't get our act together and bring about a solution. And the pathway to getting this done is abundantly clear to all, it's through the legislature. The business case for prolonging the problem doesn't exist. It's time for the Colorado Legislature to roll up their sleeves, come to the table, and do the hard work that Colorado families need and deserve."

The efficiency and condition of Colorado's transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state's economy. Approximately 1.1 million full-time jobs in Colorado in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are dependent on the quality, safety and reliability of the state's transportation infrastructure network. Annually, $305 billion in goods are shipped to and from Colorado, relying heavily on the state's network of roads and bridges. The value of freight shipped to and from sites in Colorado, in inflation-adjusted dollars, is expected to increase 82 percent by 2045 and by 68 percent for goods shipped by trucks, placing an increased burden on the state's network of roads and bridges. The TRIP report includes lists of the highway segments in Colorado carrying the greatest number of large commercial trucks daily, and the highway segments where large commercial trucks make up the largest share of daily vehicle travel.

"These conditions are only going to get worse, increasing the additional costs to motorists, if greater investment is not made available at the federal, state and local levels of government," said Dave Kearby, TRIP's executive director. "Without adequate funding, Colorado's transportation system will become increasingly deteriorated and congested, hampering economic growth, safety and quality of life."

"Every year we talk about transportation funding. Every year the situation becomes increasingly dire – costing Coloradans time and money, putting our safety at risk and digging ourselves into a deeper and deeper hole. This year, perhaps more than any other time in the last two decades we have an opportunity to invest in our infrastructure and dig ourselves out of the economic devastation that has accompanied the pandemic," said Tony Milo, executive director of the Colorado Contractors Association. "Today, once again, we applaud the focus on transportation by legislative leaders. More importantly, we also want to emphasize the urgency of the problem. The TRIP report accurately and succinctly describes the demise of transportation in Colorado. If we don't solve the problem, our economic future as a state is at a severe risk. We simply can't afford to do nothing."

KEEPING COLORADO MOBILE

Executive Summary

Accessibility and connectivity are critical factors in a state's quality of life and economic competitiveness. The growth and development of a state or region hinges on efficient and safe access to employment, customers, commerce, recreation, education and healthcare via multiple transportation modes. The quality of life in Colorado — one of the fastest growing states in the country — and the pace of the state's economic growth are directly tied to the condition, efficiency, safety and resiliency of its transportation system.

An adequate and reliable source of transportation funding is critical to providing the system of roads, highways and bridges that can support commerce within Colorado and connect the state to markets around the globe, while providing the safe, smooth and efficient mobility that residents require.

TRIP's "Keeping Colorado Mobile" report examines the condition, use, safety and efficiency of Colorado's surface transportation system and the importance of reauthorization of the federal surface transportation program. Sources of information for this report include the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the U.S. Census Bureau, the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), the American Road & Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), the University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

COLORADO'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND FUNDING

Investment in Colorado's roads, highways and bridges is funded by local, state and federal governments. A lack of sufficient funding at all levels will make it difficult to adequately maintain and improve the state's existing transportation system.

The ability of revenue from Colorado's motor fuel tax – a critical source of state transportation funds – to keep pace with the state's future transportation needs is likely to erode as a result of increasing vehicle fuel efficiency and the increasing use of electric vehicles. The average fuel efficiency of U.S. passenger vehicles increased from 20 miles per gallon in 2010 to 24.5 miles per gallon in 2020. Average fuel efficiency is expected to increase another 31 percent by 2030, to 32 miles per gallon, and increase 51 percent by 2040, to 37 miles per gallon. The share of electric vehicles of total passenger vehicle sales in the U.S. is expected to increase to five percent by 2023 and to 60 percent by 2040, by which time electric vehicles will represent approximately 30 percent of the passenger vehicle fleet.

The current federal transportation legislation, Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), was set to expire on September 30, 2020. Congress extended it by one year to September 30, 2021. The FAST Act is a major source of funding for road, highway and bridge repairs in Colorado. Throughout the FAST-Act – fiscal years 2016 to 2021 – the program provided $3.4 billion to Colorado for road repairs and

improvements, an average of $571 million per year. From 2014 to 2018, the federal government provided $1.19 for road improvements in Colorado for every $1.00 state motorists paid in federal highway user fees, including the federal state motor fuel tax.

From 2014 to 2018, federal funds provided for highway improvements were the equivalent of 65 percent of the amount of Colorado state capital outlays on road, highway and bridge projects, including construction, engineering and right-of-way acquisition.

TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN COLORADO

Congested roads, highways and bottlenecks choke commuting and commerce and cost Colorado drivers $3.5 billion each year in the form of lost time and wasted fuel. From 2000 to 2019, vehicle travel in Colorado increased by 31 percent, the ninth highest rate in the country. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, vehicle travel in Colorado dropped by as much as 42 percent in April 2020 (as compared to vehicle travel during the same month the previous year) but rebounded to ten percent below the previous year's volume in November 2020. The chart below details the annual hours lost to congestion, congestion costs per driver and the average amount of fuel per driver wasted annually due to congestion in the state's largest urban areas.

Location	Hours Lost to Congestion	Annual Cost Per Driver	Gallons of Fuel Wasted Per Driver
Colorado Springs	44	$838	19
Denver	62	$1,242	26
Northern Colorado	22	$460	9
Mesa County	11	$230	4
Pueblo	20	$431	7

While traffic congestion is largely constrained to the state's urban areas, increasing congestion on Colorado's major urban highways and roads hampers the state's ability to support economic development and quality of life by reducing the reliability and efficiency of personal and commercial travel, including the transport of goods and services. Traffic congestion robs commuters of time and money and imposes increased costs on businesses, shippers and manufacturers, which are often passed along to consumers. Increased levels of congestion can also reduce the attractiveness of a location when a company is considering expansion or deciding where to locate a new facility. The chart below lists Colorado's 10 most congested highway segments based on measuring volume of traffic carried by a roadway compared to its capacity. A chart of the 25 most congested highway segments in Colorado is included in the report.

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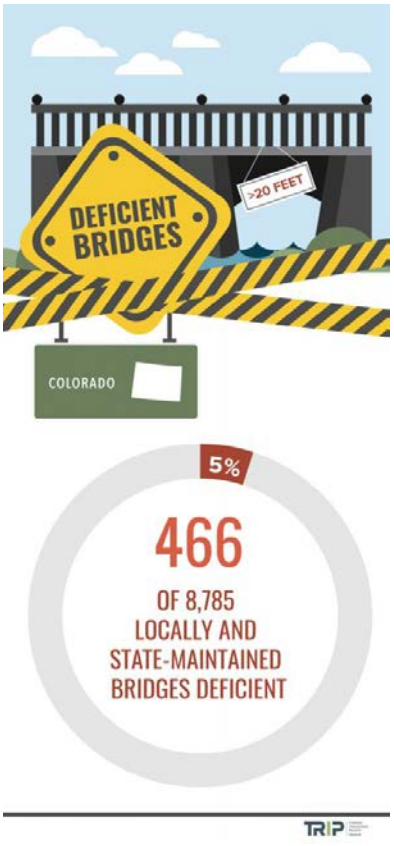
A 2018 report by the Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota found that of the approximately 1.7 million jobs accessible to residents of the Denver metro area within a one-hour drive, only 47 percent are accessible within 30 minutes. The report also found that the number of jobs accessible within 30 minutes during peak commuting times in the Denver area was reduced by 39 percent as a result of traffic congestion.



ROAD CONDITIONS IN COLORADO

Statewide, 47 percent of Colorado's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Twenty-two percent of Colorado's major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor condition and 25 percent are in mediocre condition. Eighteen percent of Colorado's major roads are in fair condition and the remaining 34 percent are in good condition.

Driving on rough roads costs Colorado's drivers an average of $651 each annually, a total of $2.8 billion statewide. The chart below details pavement conditions on major urban roads in the state's largest urban areas and statewide, and the average annual additional Vehicle Operating Costs (VOC) per regional driver as a result of driving on rough roads.

Location	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good	VOC
Colorado Springs	30%	25%	18%	27%	$644
Denver	37%	26%	15%	22%	$732
Northern Colorado	22%	22%	19%	38%	$517
Mesa County	26%	26%	14%	34%	$583
Pueblo	35%	24%	19%	21%	$710
Colorado Statewide	**22%**	**25%**	**18%**	**34%**	**$651**

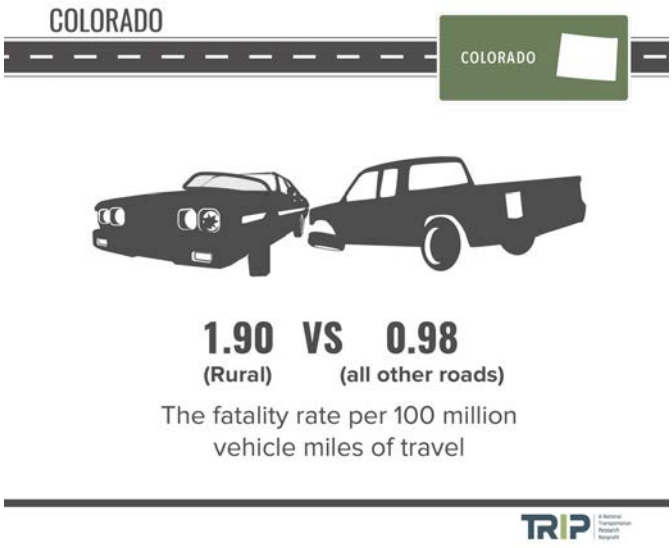
BRIDGE CONDITIONS IN COLORADO

Five percent of Colorado's bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition. Bridges that are rated poor/structurally deficient have significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Fifty-four percent of the state's bridges are rated in fair condition and the remaining 40 percent are in good condition. Most bridges are designed to last 50 years before major overhaul or replacement, although many newer bridges are being designed to last 75 years or longer. In Colorado, 33 percent of the state's bridges were built in 1969 or earlier. The chart below details bridge conditions statewide and in the state's largest urban areas.

Location	Poor/Structurally Deficient		Fair		Good		Total
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	Bridges
Colorado Springs	27	4%	355	53%	283	43%	665
Denver	51	4%	668	50%	618	46%	1,337
Northern Colorado	66	6%	645	56%	445	38%	1,156
Mesa County	10	3%	174	56%	126	41%	310
Pueblo	19	7%	150	58%	89	34%	258
Colorado Statewide	**466**	**5%**	**4,769**	**54%**	**3,550**	**40%**	**8,785**

TRAFFIC SAFETY IN COLORADO

From 2015 to 2019, 3,030 people were killed in traffic crashes in Colorado. The state's 2019 traffic fatality rate of 1.09 fatalities for every 100 million miles traveled is below the national average of 1.11. The fatality rate on Colorado's non-interstate rural roads in 2019 was more than double that on all other roads in the state (1.83 per 100 million vehicle miles of travel vs. 0.90). Improving safety on Colorado's roadways can be achieved through further improvements in vehicle safety; improvements in driver, pedestrian, and bicyclist behavior; and, a variety of improvements in roadway safety features.



Traffic crashes in Colorado imposed a total of $6.5 billion in economic costs in 2019. TRIP estimates that roadway features were likely a contributing factor in approximately one-third of all fatal traffic crashes, resulting in $2.2 billion in economic costs in Colorado in 2019.

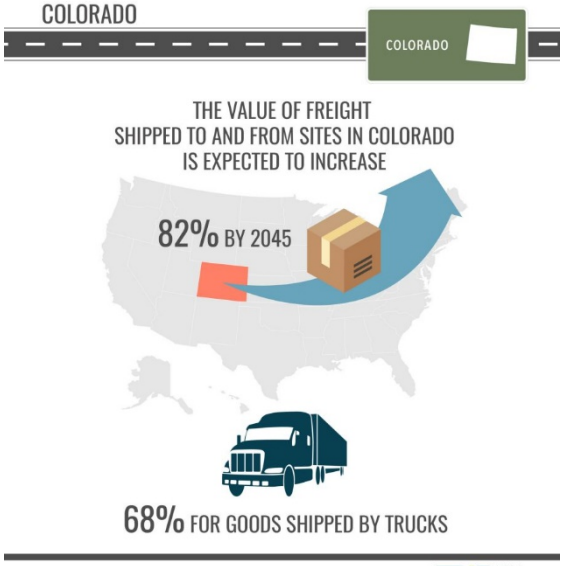
The chart below shows annual traffic fatalities in Colorado from 2015 to 2019.

Year	Statewide Fatalities
2015	546
2016	608
2017	648
2018	632
2019	596
TOTAL	3,030
AVERAGE	606

FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION AND THE IMPACT OF TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT ON ECONOMIC GROWTH IN COLORADO

The health and future growth of Colorado's economy is riding on its surface transportation system. Each year, $305 billion in goods are shipped to and from sites in Colorado.

The amount of freight transported in Colorado and the rest of the U.S. is expected to increase significantly as a result of further economic growth, changing business and retail models, increasing international trade, and rapidly changing consumer expectations that place an emphasis on faster deliveries, often of smaller packages or payloads. The value of freight shipped to and from sites in Colorado, in inflation-adjusted dollars, is expected to increase 82 percent by 2045 and by 68 percent for goods shipped by trucks, placing an increased burden on the state's network of roads and bridges.

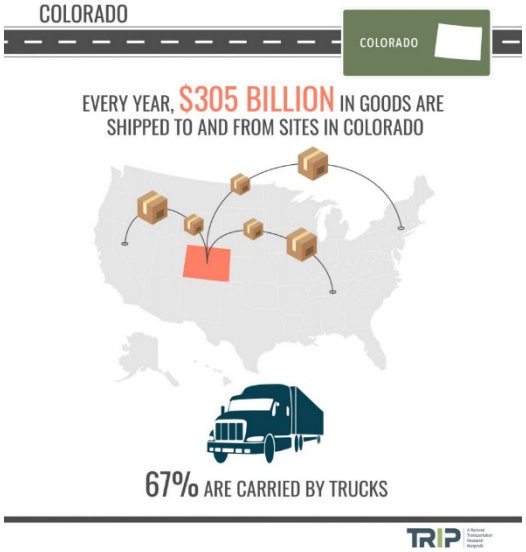


The following two charts show the highway segments in Colorado carrying the greatest number of large commercial trucks daily, and the highway segments where large commercial trucks make up the largest share of daily vehicle travel.

Rank	Route	Urban area	Segment	Avg. Daily Truck Travel	Length (Miles)
1	I-25	Thornton	From S. of SH 6 (6th Ave.) to SH 128 (120th Ave.)	10,301	15.1
2	I-25	Denver	From N of SH 470 to SH 285 (Hampden Ave.)	7,481	7.3
3	I-270	Denver	From SE of I-76 to I-70	6,862	5.8
4	I-70	Aurora	From W of SH 391 (Kipling St.) to SH 40 (Colfax Ave.)	6,802	19.2
5	I-25	Colorado Springs. Monument	From S of SH 24 (Cimarron St.) to SH 105 (2nd St.)	6,411	18.3
6	I-76	Arvada, Brighton	From SW of SH 95 (Sheridan Blvd.) to SH 2 (SABLE Blvd.)	5,758	12.5
7	I-225	Denver, Aurora	From NE of SH 83 (Parker Rd.) to I-70	5,462	8.5
8	I-70	Limon	From W of SH 24 Spur to SH 24 & SH 40	3,619	21.6
9	I-25	Fort Collins, Norfolk	From N of Mountain Vista Interchange to Weld Co Rd. 126	3,483	21.2
10	SH 85 (Sante Fe Dr.)	Littleton, Denver	From SW of SH 88 to I-25	2,638	7.0

Rank	Route	Urban area	Segment	Percent Large Truck Travel	Length (Miles)
1	SH 40	Wild Horse	From NW of SH 94 to CR 6	52%	20.2
2	SH 287	Campo, Springfield	From S of Road H to SH 160	52%	21.6
3	SH 287	Wiley	From N of SH 196 SPUR (7TH ST) to SH 96 E Jct. and CR 43	49%	22.2
4	SH 287	Lamar	From NE of CR F to Memorial Dr. S. Jct.	48%	21.8
5	SH 287	Springfield	From S of SH 116 & CR RR to CR F	48%	21.1
6	SH 40	Wild Horse, Kit Carson	From E of CR 9 to SH 59	42%	19.7
7	SH 40	Hugo	From 4TH ST., NW of 1ST AVE to CR 2W	35%	14.3
8	SH 36	Byers	From W of CR 254 (PRICE Rd.) to CR 269	34%	15.2
9	SH 385	Snyder, Stoneham	From S of CR EE to SH 14 W Jct.	33%	19.3
10	SH 96	Cope	From E of CR LL & CR 9 to NW of SH 59 W Jct.	30%	12.2

Accommodating the significant increase expected in the movement of freight by trucks in Colorado will be further challenged by the significant number of freight routes in the state that are constrained because they have inadequate load carrying capacity to accommodate large trucks.



According to a report by the American Road & Transportation Builders Association, the design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in Colorado supports approximately 77,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the economy. These workers earn $3.4 billion annually. Approximately 1.1 full-time jobs in Colorado in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are completely dependent on the state's transportation network.

Sources of information for this report include the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Official (AASHTO), the American Road and Transportation Builders Association (ARTBA), the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the U. S. Census Bureau, the Center for Transportation Studies, the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), the University of Minnesota Center for Transportation Studies, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). All data used in the report are the most recent available.