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Report shows fifteen states exceed pre-Covid vehicle travel levels

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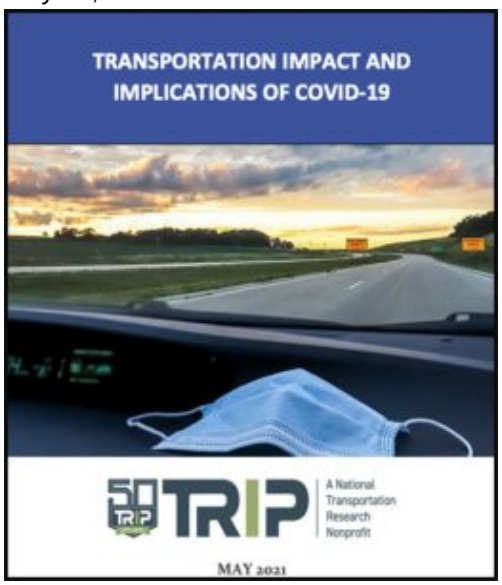

As the summer travel season begins and the U.S. continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, vehicle travel has returned to near pre-pandemic levels and has surpassed pre-COVID levels in 15 states, according to a new report released by TRIP, a Washington, D.C. based national transportation research nonprofit.

The TRIP report, *"Transportation Impact and Implications of COVID-19,"* finds that, while U.S. vehicle miles of travel (VMT) bottomed out in April 2020 at a level 40 percent below that in April 2019, by March 2021, VMT had rebounded to just three percent below March 2019 levels (the most recent March not impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic).

In fact, by March 2021, vehicle travel in 15 states had surpassed VMT rates in March 2019. The chart below shows the 15 states with the highest rate of growth in VMT between March 2019 and March 2021. The report's appendix includes vehicle travel data for each state for March 2019, April 2020 and March 2021.

The COVID-19 pandemic also altered weekday traffic congestion patterns. While vehicle travel and congestion were drastically reduced in the early stages of the pandemic, by early Spring 2021, evening rush hours had largely returned to pre-pandemic levels, while morning rush hours continue to be reduced and mid-day traffic volumes remain higher than before the pandemic. An April 2021 report from INRIX found that evening rush hours in 45 of the nation's 100 largest metro areas have returned to pre-pandemic levels, while morning rush hour traffic levels have returned to only five of the 100 largest metro areas.

Estimates by the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) show that the share of Americans who report staying home and avoiding any trips has also returned nearly to pre-pandemic levels – from 21 percent in April 2019 to a peak of 29 percent in April 2020 and back to 22 percent in March 2021. BTS also has found that the total number of daily trips, defined as a trip that included at least one destination that resulted in a stop of at least 10 minutes, declined by 38 percent between April 2019 and April 2020. But by March 2021 the total number of daily trips had rebounded to only 12 percent below that in April 2019. The appendix of the TRIP report includes state-by-state data for the share of the population staying home and average daily trips for April 2019, April 2020 and March 2021.

The use of e-commerce, largely for home deliveries, has continued to increase during the pandemic. During the last quarter of 2019, e-commerce's share of U.S. retail sales was 13 percent. E-commerce's share of U.S. retail sales increased to 15 percent by the second quarter of 2020 and reached 16 percent by the fourth quarter of 2020, double the eight percent share in 2015.

Both employers and employees have largely found remote working to be positive and are likely to support a significant share of work post-pandemic continuing to be from home, further impacting travel trends and migration trends. In 2018, five percent of U.S. workers were working from home. By September 2020, workers in 58 percent of U.S. households that had at least one employed member reported that they had substituted some or all of their in-person work for telework, a share that increased to 62 percent in March 2021. In addition to altering commuting patterns, the likelihood that remote work will continue to untether a significant share of workers is also anticipated to result in a significant migration of Americans who, given greater geographic freedom, will tend to move from areas with higher density and housing costs to areas with lower density and housing costs.

The TRIP report finds that transportation policy post-pandemic will need to be flexible to reflect emerging trends. Post-pandemic factors that are likely to impact U.S. travel patterns include reductions in commuting, business travel, and in-person meetings; increased use of e-commerce and telemedicine; and, evolving preferences for travel modes due to relative changes in the competitive attributes of travel options, such as increased auto use due to increased highway reliability or additional parking availability.

"While future transportation trends in a post-COVID-19 world will likely take several years to fully emerge, we already see that vehicle travel is almost back to pre-pandemic levels – it is already higher in 15 states," said Dave Kearby, TRIP's executive director. "Meeting the nation's post-COVID-19 mobility needs will require that increased federal and state transportation funding provide state and local governments the flexibility to determine how best to improve their transportation system."

Read the full report
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5x2lqJDrPQU

States Exceeding Pre-Pandemic Vehicle Travel - March 2019 to March 2021					
1	Montana	13.3%	9	Utah	3.2%
2	South Dakota	12.7%	10	Tennessee	2.6%
3	Idaho	11.7%	11	Wyoming	1.9%
4	Arizona	9.6%	12	Texas	1.3%
5	Nebraska	7.8%	13	Alaska	0.7%
6	Oklahoma	5.0%	14	Kentucky	0.7%
7	Missouri	4.9%	15	Iowa	0.2%
8	Arkansas	4.3%	U.S. Average: - 3%		