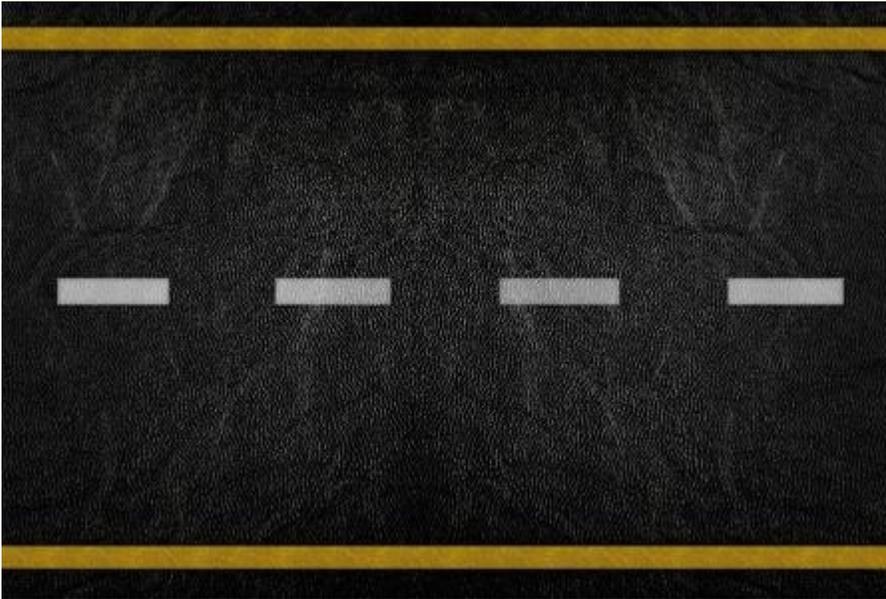


VEHICLE TRAVEL SURPASSES PRE-COVID LEVELS IN 15 STATES, NEW REPORT SAYS

Overall vehicle travel has returned to near pre-pandemic 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 today by [TRIP](#), a national transportation research nonprofit.

The TRIP report, [“Transportation Impact and Implications of COVID-19,”](#) finds that U.S. [vehicle miles traveled](#) (VMT) dropped in April 2020 at a level 40% below that in April 2019. By March 2021, VMT had rebounded to just 3% below March 2019 levels. In fact, by March 2021, vehicle travel in 15 states had surpassed VMT rates

in March 2019. 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.

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% in April 2019 to a peak of 29% in April 2020 and back to 22% 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% between April 2019 and April 2020. But by March 2021 the total number of daily trips had rebounded to only 12% below that in April 2019. The appendix of the TRIP report includes state-by-state data for the share of population staying home and average daily trips for April 2019, April 2020, and March 2021.

The TRIP report suggests 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 tele-medicine; 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,” Dave Kearby, TRIP’s executive director, [said in a statement](#). “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.”

SOURCE: TRIP