

Old, Crowded Highways Need Double the Federal Funds, Group Says

- Most of interstate system needs reconstructing, TRIP finds
- Lawmakers push to advance infrastructure in multiple avenues

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Substantial money will be needed to repair the “deteriorating” interstate highway system, a report suggests as lawmakers negotiate over hundreds of billions of dollars for infrastructure funding.

More than double the current annual federal spending would be required to reconstruct and modernize the 65-year-old highway system as roads become more congested and bridges and pavement fall into poor condition, the nonprofit transportation research organization TRIP said in [a report](#) Tuesday, doubling down on its assessments from previous years.



Photographer: Joe Raedle/Getty Images
Construction workers build the “Signature Bridge,” replacing and improving a busy Miami highway intersection at I-95 and I-395 on April 13, 2021.

A modernized system is “critical to the nation’s ability to fully recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and will require adequate investment in a federal surface transportation program” Dave Kearby, TRIP’s executive director, said in a statement.

Lawmakers in both chambers of Congress are working to advance proposals for surface transportation reauthorization, which was last enacted in 2015 under [Public Law 114-94](#). The programs face a Sept. 30 expiration. The administration is also pushing forward on its infrastructure plan, which originally proposed trillions of dollars in new spending.

Groups are using the report to urge Congress to increase annual infrastructure spending. The interstate highway system should spend \$57 billion a year over the next two decades, up 146% from \$23 billion in 2018, the report says, based on estimates from Transportation Research Board.

The analysis “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,” Ed Mortimer, vice president of transportation and infrastructure at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, said in a statement.

Worst in California, Maryland

Travel on the highway system has increased by 26% from 2000 to 2019, leading to 47% of highways being congested during peak hours.

The analysis breaks down which states are most congested and traveled, with California and Maryland ranking at the top. Meanwhile, Hawaii and Delaware have the highest rate of pavement in need of repair, and West Virginia and Rhode Island rank at the top for percentage of bridges in poor condition.

Interstate travel from large freight-carrying trucks, which can cause significant wear and tear on roads, increased at a rate more than double that of overall vehicle travel between 2000 and 2019, the report also found.

“Our rapidly deteriorating infrastructure is a clear and present danger to our nation’s supply chain,” Chris Spear, president and CEO of the industry group American Trucking Associations, said in a statement.

“This report quantifies how severe this crisis has become, and it underscores the urgent need for Congress to make real infrastructure investments that are backed by a fair and equitable user-based revenue source.”

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