



Report: 65-year-old U.S. Interstate system heavily traveled, congested and deteriorating



Published by Liz Carey
Thursday, June 24, 2021

According to a new report, the U.S. Interstate system, at 65-years-old, needs to be reconstructed and modernized due to heavy travel, congestion, and deterioration.

The report, released by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit, found that fixing or replacing the roads to meet the country's growing transportation needs would require an investment almost double what it is today.

"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 for the 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 urge bipartisan solutions this year to address this critical issue."

The "America's Interstate Highway System at 65: Meeting America's Transportation Needs with a Reliable, Safe & Well-Maintained National Highway Network" report looked 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.

In the 2019 TRB report, the interstate system was found to have a persistent and growing backlog of physical and operational deficiencies due to age, use, and deferred reinvestment. That report indicated the system needs major reconstruction and modernization and that investment into the Interstate Highway System should be increased from \$23 billion to \$57 billion annually over the next two decades.

The report found that 47 percent of urban Interstate highways are considered congested during peak hours. Additionally, it found that travel by combination trucks on the Interstate increased 43 percent between 200 and 2019, while vehicle travel increased only 19 percent during the same time period.

"Our rapidly deteriorating infrastructure is a clear and present danger to our nation's supply chain. Breakdowns in the Interstate Highway System add an annual \$75 billion to the cost of freight transportation, and 67 million tons of excess carbon dioxide emissions are released into the atmosphere every year from trucks stuck in traffic congestion," said Chris Spear, president and CEO of the American Trucking Associations. "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."

The report also found that while the smoothness of the pavement on most segments is acceptable, crumbling highway foundations need to be reconstructed. Continued resurfacing, rather than addressing underlying foundation issues, will result in diminishing returns, the report said.