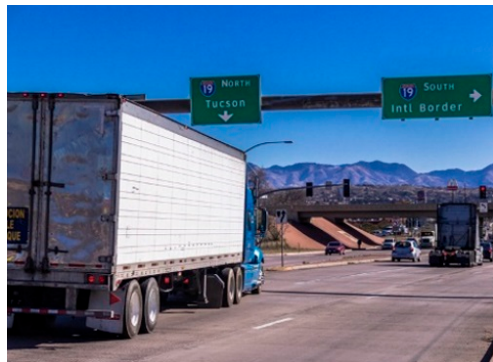


Report: U.S. Freight Transport System Needs More Reliability

editor@aaashto.org | December 17, 2021



According to a new report by research nonprofit TRIP, the U.S. freight transport system needs more “reliability” and calls on states to make additional investments to improve the efficiency and condition of the country’s freight network to minimize supply chain disruptions.

[Above photo by the Arizona DOT]

That report – dubbed [The U.S. Freight Network’s Critical Role in the Supply Chain](#) – examines the latest information on the condition and reliability of supply chains and the critical role of the U.S. freight transportation network in keeping the U.S. economy moving.



Photo by the Ohio DOT

TRIP said that traffic congestion and “decreased or unpredictable reliability” affects freight transport by hindering the timely delivery of goods, supplies, and raw materials. It also disrupts manufacturing supply chains and prolongs the time it takes for customers to receive their orders; increasing the cost of goods and services as well. TRIP’s report noted that the Texas Transportation Institute, in its [2021 Urban Mobility Report](#), found that increasing traffic congestion resulted in a 77 percent increase in traffic delays for commercial trucks from 2000 to 2019, increasing from 219 million hours to 387 million hours.

TRIP also cited a [2021 report](#) by the U.S. Department of Transportation to Congress that annual road, highway, and bridge investment needs to increase by 55 percent over current levels to make “significant improvements” in road and bridge conditions, reduce traffic congestion, and improve traffic safety. As a result, the U.S. currently faces a \$1 trillion backlog in projects needed to improve infrastructure reliability and safety, USDOT said in its report.



TRIP’s David Kearby

“In the short term, improving the performance of the nation’s supply chain will require addressing the many supply chain challenges that are restricting the timely movement of freight,” said Dave Kearby, TRIP’s executive director, in a [statement](#).

“But ensuring that the nation’s long-term goals for economic growth and quality of life are met will require investing adequately in an efficient transportation system that will provide the U.S. with a reliable supply chain,” he said.

Participants in a [panel discussion](#) held during the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials 2021 Annual Meeting in October made a similar argument.

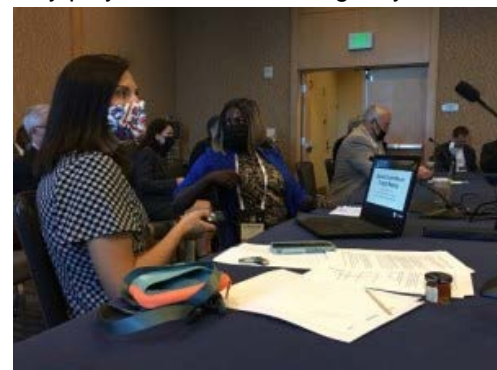
“One of the things we always talked about in the military is that while you can never win a war with logistics, you can certainly lose a war without logistics,” explained Luke Reiner, director of the Wyoming Department of Transportation and a retired Major General with the Wyoming National Guard.



K. Luke Reiner

Reiner – who serves as the chair of AASHTO’s Special Committee on Freight and spoke at that meeting virtually – stressed that the supply chain “supports everyday life and supports everything we do” in America. “As a result, the state DOT touchpoints we have are critical and are very real where the supply chain is concerned.”

Caroline Mays – the committee’s vice chair and director of the freight, trade, and connectivity section within the Texas Department of Transportation – stressed that state DOTs need to expand the role they play in the nation’s freight system.



Caroline Mays above center.

She noted that state DOTs also need to reinforce and expand their partnerships both in government and in the private sector as they work to improve freight flows across the United States.

“We also need to think outside the box and examine what new partnerships we need to build in order to deal with supply chain challenges we are facing,” Mays added.

AASHTO made similar arguments in a [21-page letter](#) sent to USDOT on [October 18](#) containing advice on how to improve the nation’s supply chains and transportation industrial base.

The organization also called for more “flexible ways” to boost highway mileage designations in support of the nation’s surface freight transport needs in a [letter](#) sent to USDOT on November 29.