

# Key facts about the condition, performance and funding the U.S. surface transportation system

March 2022

For more information, see TRIP's full report: [Funding America's Transportation System](#). Data for all 50 states can be found in the report's [Appendix](#).

*The bipartisan [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\)](#), which is funded largely by motor fuel taxes paid into the federal Highway Trust Fund (HTF), will provide a significant boost in federal investment in roads, bridges and transit and offers an opportunity for the nation to make progress in improving the safety, reliability and condition of America's transportation system.*

- The IIJA will provide \$454 billion over the five-year period from 2022 to 2026 for investment in roads, bridges and transit, resulting in a 38% increase in federal investment in 2022.
- A 2021 macroeconomic [analysis](#) of the IIJA by [IHS Markit](#) found that the additional spending provided by the IIJA will result in an additional \$488 billion of cumulative GDP by 2027 and an increase in annual employment through 2027 of approximately 200,000 people per year.
- Despite the increase in transportation funding provided by the IIJA, the nation's roads, bridges and transit systems remain significantly underfunded and will require increased investment for needed improvements and repairs.

## *The federal Highway Trust Fund*

- Fees on highway users continue to be a critical source of funding for the preservation and improvement of the nation's Interstate Highway System, other critical roads and bridges eligible for federal-aid, and the nation's public transit systems. The Highway Trust Fund is deficit proof, financing road, bridge and transit improvements on a pay-as-you-go basis. By law, its expenditures for road, bridge and mass transit capital improvement cannot exceed its income.
- The federal motor fuel tax is 18.4 cents per gallon for gasoline and 24.4 cents per-gallon for diesel fuel. The federal motor fuel tax for gasoline and diesel has been increased five times since 1956, with the most recent increase in 1997.

*With vehicle travel returning to pre-COVID-19 levels, the nation's highways are again congested, hampering the movement of people and goods.*

- Vehicle miles of travel (VMT) has rebounded significantly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S., with national VMT now nearing pre-pandemic levels and vehicle travel in 24 states exceeding pre-pandemic levels. By December of 2021, U.S. VMT was just 1% below December 2019 levels (the most recent pre-COVID December).
- Forty-two percent of the nation's Interstates, freeways and expressways experience congestion during peak travel times.
- Traffic congestion can increase the cost of goods and services as a result of increased delays. The Texas Transportation Institute in its [2021 Urban Mobility Report](#) estimated that increasing traffic congestion resulted in a 77% increase in traffic delays for commercial trucks from 2000 to 2019, increasing from 219 million hours to 387 million hours.

***U.S. traffic fatality rates are rising, underscoring the need for improved roadway safety.***

- A total of 38,824 people were killed in traffic crashes in the U.S. in 2020. From 2016 to 2020, a total of 186,074 people were killed in traffic crashes, an average of 37,215 fatalities each year.
- The nation's traffic fatality rate of 1.34 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2020 is significantly higher than the 2019 rate of 1.11 and is the highest fatality rate in the last 10 years.
- The U.S. has a \$146 billion backlog in needed roadway safety improvements, according to a 2017 report from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. The [report](#) found implementing these cost-effective and needed roadway safety improvements on U.S. roadways would save approximately 63,700 lives and reduce the number of serious injuries as a result of traffic crashes by approximately 350,000 over a 20 year period.

***The nation's highways, bridges, and transit systems have significant deficiencies, imposing additional vehicle operating costs on motorists.***

- Nationwide, 40% of major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. The nation's urban roads, which carry 69% of all vehicle travel, are even more deteriorated. Thirty-two percent of U.S. major locally and state-maintained urban roads and highways have pavements rated in poor condition and 24% are in mediocre condition.
- TRIP estimates that additional vehicle operating costs borne by U.S. motorists as a result of deteriorated road conditions is \$141 billion annually, an average of \$621 per driver. These additional vehicle operating costs (VOC) include accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional vehicle repair costs, increased fuel consumption and increased tire wear.
- Seven percent (43,586 of 619,622) of the nation's locally and state-maintained bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition. Forty-eight percent of U.S. locally and state-maintained bridges are rated in fair condition.
- The nation's 2,250 transit systems provide access to employment, education, health care, shopping, recreation and social activities. In 2020, 20% of transit vehicles, including buses, rail cars and demand response vehicles, had met or exceeded their useful service life.

***Improving the condition and performance of the nation's network of roads, highways, bridges and transit systems will require a significant increase in investment levels to offset the large backlog in needed funding.***

- According to the [Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges and Transit: Conditions and Performance Report](#) to Congress released by the United States Department of Transportation in 2021, the U.S. would need to increase annual road, highway and bridge investment by 55% to make significant improvements in road and bridge conditions, reduce traffic congestion and improve traffic safety. The report also found that the U.S. would need to increase annual transit investment by 31% to make significant improvements in the condition of transit vehicles and facilities and to increase ridership.