Traffic deaths in Tennessee increased 16 percent from 2019 to 2021

TRAFFIC / By amolivia90

The number of traffic deaths in the United States increased by 19 percent from 2019 to 2021. Traffic deaths began to increase dramatically in 2020 even as car travel rates declined due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Traffic deaths continued to increase in 2021 as car travel returned to levels close to pre-pandemic levels. This is according to a report released today by TRIP, a national nonprofit research organization, titled Addressing America's Traffic Safety Crisis: Examining the Causes of Increased Traffic Deaths in the United States and Identifying Solutions to Improve Road User Safety. The report documents the increase in road traffic fatality and mortality rates from 2019 to 2021 at the national and state levels, examines potential causes for this increase, and describes a broad and comprehensive approach to reducing road traffic deaths in the United States.

By April 2020, as most activity was scaled back in an attempt to slow the spread of COVID-19, US car travel was 40 percent less than in April 2019. But by October 2020, US car travel had rebounded to within nine percent of October 2019 levels. Total car travel was down In the United States in 2020 it is down 11 percent from 2019, dropping from 3.3 trillion miles of vehicle travel (VMT) to 2.9 trillion miles. However, despite the significant decrease in vehicular traffic from 2019 to 2020, the total number of traffic deaths during the same time increased by eight percent (from 36,096 to 38,824) and the rate of traffic deaths per 100 million miles of car travel by 21 percent (from 1.11 to 1.34).

In 2021, as COVID-related restrictions are gradually lifted, car travel in the United States increased to nearly 3.2 trillion miles, up 10 percent from 2020 levels, but still 3 percent below pre-pandemic levels for 2019. 2019. From 2020 to 2021, the number of traffic deaths increased by about 11 percent (from 38,824 to 42,915), roughly coinciding with a 10 percent increase in vehicle traffic during the same time, and the highest number recorded since 2005. The rate of traffic fatalities in In 2021, there are 1.35 deaths per 100 million miles of car travel.

The chart above shows the number of road traffic deaths in Tennessee, the rate of road traffic deaths per 100 million VMT in Tennessee, and the rate of vehicle travel in the state in 2019, 2020, and 2021. Data for all states can be found here.

Cycling and pedestrian deaths have also increased significantly from pre-pandemic levels. From 2019 to 2021, the number of American infantry fatalities increased by 18 percent (from 6,205 to 7,342) and the number of cyclists killed increased by 16 percent (from 846 to 985). Pedestrian and bicycle deaths accounted for 19 percent of all road traffic deaths in the United States in 2021.

The significant increase in traffic deaths since the onset of the pandemic appears to be largely related to increased risks to drivers. In an October 2021 report, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that "Following the declaration of a public health emergency in March 2020, driving patterns and behaviors in the United States have changed dramatically. Among the drivers who remained on the roads, some engaged in more dangerous behavior, Including speeding, not wearing seat belts, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs."

The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (AAAFTS) has drawn similar conclusions about the role of increased risks taken by drivers during the pandemic. A survey of drivers conducted in October and November 2020 by the AAAFTS asked whether their driving level had decreased, remained the same or increased since the beginning of the COVID-19-related restrictions, and whether the motorist had engaged in a variety of risky driving behaviors in the past thirty days. In a February 2022 summary of the survey, the AAAFTS noted that drivers who maintained or increased their pre-COVID travel levels indicated that they were more likely to engage in risky driving behavior, including speeding, not wearing a seat belt, obstruction and driving. Strongly. The AAAFTS report found that "it is likely that many individuals who were willing to travel — and even increased their travel — despite the health risks associated with the pandemic, were actually more willing than average to take on other risks."

"AAA urges local and tribal leaders to make full use of programs within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to implement a safe system approach when developing their transportation programs," said Jake Nelson, director of traffic safety research and advocacy at AAA. We can only move at this juncture. The AAA calls on government leaders to move beyond claims that "safety is the number one priority" to "real-world actions that prove it".

Data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows that the number of people killed in police-reported alcohol accidents rose by nine percent from 2019 to 2020, and by five percent from 2020 to 2021. Fifteen percent of fatalities 2019 to 2020, and three percent from 2020 to 2021.

The death toll in speed-related traffic accidents rose 11 percent from 2019 to 2020, and five percent from 2020 to 2021.

The severity of traffic accidents has also increased, according to an analysis of the proportion of traffic accident patients treated by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) who are assessed as having serious injuries. In 2020, the proportion of patients treated by EMS in motor vehicle accidents who sustained serious injuries was 21 percent higher than in 2019. During the first eight months of 2021, the proportion of patients who sustained serious injuries was 17 percent higher. than it was in 2019.

To combat the increase in deaths, in early 2022, the US Department of Transportation adopted a comprehensive National Road Safety Strategy, a roadmap to address the nation's road safety crisis based on the Safe System approach, which is also being adopted by state and local transportation agencies. .

The objectives and elements of the approach include:

Safer People: Encouraging safe and responsible behavior by educating about speed, erratic driving, pedestrian behavior and safe cycling; extending and enforcing seat belt laws; and strengthen enforcement and penalties for speeding,

obstructive, aggressive, or distracting driving.

Safer Roads: Design road environments to mitigate human error, consider tolerance for injuries, encourage safer behaviors, and facilitate safe travel for the most vulnerable users.

Safer Vehicles: Expand the availability of vehicle systems and features that help prevent collisions and reduce the impact of a collision on both occupants and non-occupants. Support the development, testing and deployment of connected and autonomous vehicle technology such as collision avoidance, lane departure avoidance systems, and turn detection systems.

Safer Speeds: Where applicable, provide road features to encourage safer speeds, including traffic roundabouts and curb stretches; improved signage and dynamic speed signature in high-risk locations; Education about the consequences of speeding. and increase the speed of enforcement, especially in high-risk locations.

Post-Collision Care: Enhance accident survivability through rapid access to emergency medical care, create a safe work environment for first responders by preventing secondary accidents through robust traffic accident management practices, and increase access to Level 1 or Level 2 trauma centers for critical injuries accident victims.

Increased investment in road safety improvements is likely to pay off in the form of reduced fatal and dangerous traffic accidents. The United States has $146 billion accumulated in needed road safety improvements, according to a 2017 report from the AAAFTS. The report found that implementing cost-effective and needed road safety improvements on US roads would save approximately 63,700 lives and reduce the number of serious road traffic injuries by about 350,000 over a 20-year period.

US states are annually required to submit a state highway safety plan to the NHTSA outlining their plans to improve road safety. Elements of improving road safety outlined in state plans include: converting intersections into intersections; removal or protection of roadside objects; Add left lanes at intersections; improve signals and lighting at intersections; installation of intermediate partitions; improve road lighting; add midline or shoulder straps; improving pedestrian and bicycle facilities, including sidewalks and bike lanes, and providing pedestrian crossing islands; Improving safety measures in the work area; Wider aisles and stacked shoulders; upgrading of roads from two lanes to four lanes; improved lane markings; Modernization of railway crossings. elimination of vertical slopes of sidewalks; Providing large parking spaces for trucks. Additional funding to improve road safety has been provided by the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which provides a significant boost in federal investment in roads, bridges, and transit and provides an opportunity for the nation to make progress in improving the safety, reliability and condition of the U.S. transportation system.

“The dramatic increase in road deaths during the pandemic highlights a national public health crisis that states have worked to resolve for years,” said Jim Timon, executive director of the American Association of Highway and Transportation Officials. “State Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (DOTs) provide opportunities to expand activities in coordination with partners to multiply the integration of safe system approaches and strategies across the IIJA. In addition, increased funding for infrastructure-related improvements and the ability to use a portion of infrastructure safety funds for behavioral safety programs It will promote a much-needed comprehensive safety culture that focuses on zero traffic fatalities and injuries.”

IIJA provides $454 billion over the five-year period from 2022 to 2026 for highway and transit investment, resulting in a 38 percent increase in federal investment in 2022. IIJA provides additional resources to address traffic safety, including $6 billion for Treasury Streets and Roads for All Program, $17 billion for the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), $4 billion to improve collision data and vehicle, behavior and truck safety programs, $300 million for rural road safety, and $120 million for tribal road safety.

“The human error of the driver should not lead to the loss of life – we must recommit to building roads that protect road users and workers alike. The safety investments made at IIJA give state and local governments the financing tools needed to make significant progress in safety infrastructure projects Roads Stakeholders must now work together effectively, efficiently and quickly to deploy these life-saving and cost-effective countermeasures to break the rising trend of traffic fatalities. “As ATSSA Board Member Cindy Williams testified before the Congressional Highway and Transit Subcommittee in early June, cooperation is critical to moving our country toward zero deaths on American roads.”

The Federal Highway Fund is the IIJA’s primary source of revenue and receives its revenue exclusively from highway user fees — taxes on motor fuel and other specified motorist purchases — and from interest on its current balance (owed by the federal government on funds borrowed from the Trust). The HTF is shortfall proof, and funds road, bridge, safety and transit improvements on a pay-as-you-go basis. The federal tax on motor fuel is 18.4 cents per gallon on gasoline and 24.4 cents per gallon on diesel fuel.

“The commitment to eliminate fatal and serious injuries on state roads will require strong investment and coordinated activities by relevant transportation and safety agencies in providing the necessary layers of protection for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists in the country, including users of safe and secure roads,” said Dave Kirby, CEO of Tripp. : “Safe roads and vehicles, safe speeds and high-quality post-crash care.