

TRIP Releases New Report Evaluating the Safety of Rural Roads and Bridges

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The status of our rural roads is not looking great



[The National Transportation Research Nonprofit \(TRIP\)](#) released a new report on America's rural transportation system. [The report, Rural Connections: Examining the Safety, Connectivity, Condition and Funding Needs of America's Rural Roads & Bridges](#) evaluates the safety and condition of the nation's rural roads and bridges.

TRIP presents in the report that the nation's rural transportation system is in need of immediate improvements to address deficient roads and bridges, high crash rates, and inadequate connectivity and capacity.

According to TRIP, rural roads and bridges have significant deficiencies and deterioration, they lack many desirable safety features, and they experience fatal traffic crashes at a rate far higher than all other roads and highways. The report looks at the condition, use and safety of the nation's rural transportation system, particularly its roads, highways and bridges, and identifies needed improvements.

Arkansas ranks the worst state in terms of poor rural pavement conditions, with 33% of their total pavements in poor condition, followed by Rhode Island and New Mexico at 32%.

When looking at rural bridges that are structurally deficient and in poor condition, Iowa ranked first at 21%, followed by west Virginia at 20% and South Dakota at 18%.

Lastly, when looking at the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on rural roads, South Carolina takes the lead with 4.13 fatalities per 100M VMT, followed by Oregon at 3.12 fatalities, and Arizona at 2.78 fatalities.

RANK	STATE	Rural Pavements in Poor Condition	STATE	Rural Bridges Poor/ Structurally Deficient	STATE	Fatality Rate per 100M VMT on Rural Non-Interstate Roads	Fatality Rate per 100M VMT on All Other Roads
1	Arkansas	33%	Iowa	21%	South Carolina	4.13	0.99
2	Rhode Island	32%	West Virginia	20%	Oregon	3.12	1.00
3	New Mexico	32%	South Dakota	18%	Arizona	2.78	1.42
4	West Virginia	31%	Pennsylvania	15%	Georgia	2.74	1.13
5	Hawaii	30%	Rhode Island	15%	Louisiana	2.72	1.36
6	Mississippi	24%	Maine	15%	Tennessee	2.64	1.30
7	Connecticut	22%	Louisiana	14%	California	2.62	1.08
8	Washington	22%	Michigan	12%	Montana	2.58	0.96
9	Missouri	20%	North Dakota	11%	Kentucky	2.56	1.15
10	Maine	20%	New York	10%	West Virginia	2.54	1.09
11	Alaska	19%	Oklahoma	10%	North Carolina	2.52	1.01
12	Vermont	19%	Missouri	10%	Florida	2.51	1.48
13	Pennsylvania	18%	Hawaii	9%	Texas	2.48	1.23
14	Wisconsin	17%	Illinois	9%	Mississippi	2.45	1.40
15	Louisiana	15%	New Jersey	8%	Virginia	2.32	0.74
16	Colorado	15%	Nebraska	8%	Nevada	2.30	1.11
17	Michigan	13%	North Carolina	8%	Kansas	2.29	1.08
18	New Hampshire	13%	Alaska	8%	Delaware	2.28	1.11
19	Indiana	13%	New Hampshire	8%	Indiana	2.23	0.77
20	Massachusetts	12%	California	7%	Alabama	2.19	0.99
	US AVERAGE	12%	US AVERAGE	8%	US AVERAGE	2.17	1.09

“Roadway safety countermeasures like median cable barriers, rumble strips and guardrails are among the most cost-effective ways to prevent traffic crashes and to save lives when they do happen,” said AAA traffic safety advocacy & research director, Jake Nelson. “At a time when our nation is recording record high traffic deaths, transportation investments ought to prioritize curbing traffic injuries where we can make the greatest impact—rural roads.”

An analysis of the [Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges and Transit Conditions and Performance Report, 24th Edition](#) report, submitted by the USDOT to Congress in 2021, indicates that the U.S. faces a \$180 billion backlog in needed repairs and improvements

to the nation's rural roads, highways and bridges. This includes a \$109 billion backlog for rural road and highway rehabilitation, a \$35 billion backlog for needed rural bridge rehabilitation, and a \$36 billion backlog for needed rural roadway enhancements.

“The health of the nation's economy and the safety and quality of life in America's small communities and rural areas ride on our rural transportation system,” said Dave Kearby, executive director of TRIP. “Providing the nation with a rural transportation network that supports rural America's economy and will support its future development will require that the U.S. invest in a rural transportation system that is safe, efficient, and well-maintained, and that provides adequate mobility and connectivity to the nation's rural communities.”