



California's rural roads high in fatalities in U.S., backlog of repairs totals \$180 million

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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

Graphic Courtesy of TRIP

Roads, highways, rails and bridges in the nation's rural areas face a number of significant challenges: they lack adequate capacity; they fail to provide needed levels of connectivity to many communities; and, they cannot adequately support growing freight travel in many corridors.

Rural roads and bridges have significant deficiencies and deterioration. They lack many desirable safety features and rural, non-Interstate roads experience fatal traffic crashes at a rate far higher than all other roads and highways.

The adjacent chart ranks states based on their rate of rural pavements in poor condition, share of rural bridges that are rated poor/structurally deficient, and fatality rates on non-Interstate, rural roads.

The rate of traffic fatalities on California's non-Interstate, rural roads is nearly two and a half times the fatality rate on all other roads in the state – 2.62 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel vs. 1.08 – and is the seventh highest in the nation.

There were 1,035 fatalities on California's non-Interstate, rural roads in 2020.

Rural roads are more likely to have narrow lanes, limited shoulders, sharp curves, exposed hazards, pavement drop-offs, steep slopes and limited clear zones along roadsides. Seven percent of California's rural bridges are rated in poor/structurally deficient condition – the 20th highest rate in the nation.

Bridges rated poor/structurally deficient have significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge and are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including agricultural equipment, commercial trucks, school buses and emergency services vehicles. The report finds that 12 percent of California's rural roads are rated in poor

condition and 16 percent are in mediocre condition.

America's rural transportation system provides the first and last link in the supply chain from farm to market, connects manufacturers to their customers, supports the tourism industry, and enables the production of energy, food and fiber.

Rural Americans are more reliant on the quality of their transportation system than their urban counterparts, with vehicle travel in rural communities averaging approximately 50 percent higher than in urban communities.

"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 Jake Nelson, AAA traffic safety advocacy & research director.

"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," he said.

Signed into law in November 2021, the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#) (IIJA) 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 highways and transit, resulting in a 38 percent increase in federal investment in 2022. The IIJA includes a \$2 billion [Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program](#) that will support projects to improve and expand the surface transportation infrastructure in rural areas to increase connectivity, improve the safety and reliability of the movement of people and freight, and generate regional economic growth and improve quality of life.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – America's rural transportation system is in need of repairs and modernization to support economic growth and improve traffic safety, but the U.S. faces a \$180 billion backlog in funding for needed repairs and improvements to the rural transportation system.

This is according to a new report released Thursday by [TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit](#). The [Rural Connections: Examining the Safety, Connectivity, Condition and Funding Needs of America's Rural Roads & Bridges](#) report evaluates the safety and condition of the nation's rural roads and bridges, and finds 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.

"Farmers and ranchers depend on rural roads, highways and bridges to bring critical inputs like fertilizer and feed onto the farm and to move their products to market," said Zippy Duvall, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

"As recent supply chain challenges have highlighted, transportation delays and costs take a bite out of our profitability and competitiveness and impact the quality of rural life," he said. "Enactment of the IIJA will provide a significant boost to federal investment in roads and bridges and offers an opportunity to improve the safety, reliability and condition of America's transportation system."

An analysis of the [Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges and Transit Conditions and Performance Report, 23rd 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.

"A reliable, safe, and well-connected transportation network is critical for American businesses, farmers and producers to reach important markets for their goods and to ensure the continued support and strengthening of our nation's economy," said John Drake, vice president for transportation, infrastructure, supply chain policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

"The significant boost in federal investments to our highways, bridges, and ports provided by the IIJA will be vital for these Americans' ability to remain competitive in the global marketplace," Drake said, "while providing much needed improvements to our nation's transportation system."

"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," he said.