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SF Bay Area road, bridge conditions, congestion and safety examined in new report

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Source: TRIP

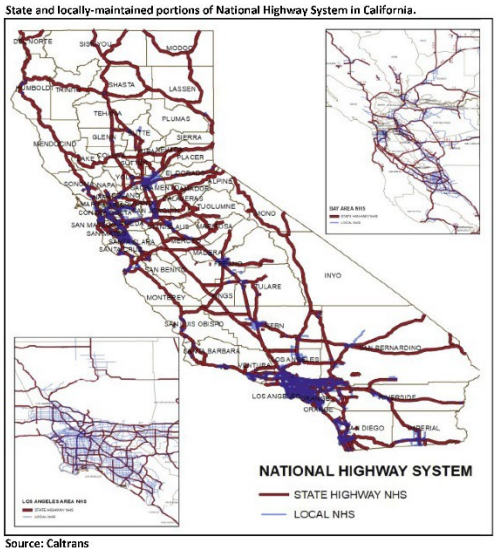
Existing transportation funding strained by rising construction costs, population growth, potential decrease in state gas tax revenue

"115 of 1,374 bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient, with significant deterioration" – TRIP Report

By Carolyn Bonifas Kelly, Director of Communication & Research, TRIP

San Francisco, CA – While additional state and federal transportation funding is allowing California to repair and improve roads and bridges, a new report documents looming challenges including population growth, rising congestion, construction cost inflation and declining fuel-tax revenue. The report by The Road Information Program, TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit based in Washington, DC, examines California's road and bridge conditions, congestion and reliability, highway safety, economic development, vehicle travel trends, and the impact of recent state and federal transportation funding increases.

The TRIP report, *"Keeping California Mobile: Providing a Modern, Sustainable Transportation System in the Golden State,"* finds that throughout the state, traffic fatalities have increased significantly in the last decade despite recent downward trends, 50 percent of major roads are in poor or mediocre condition, five percent of locally and state-maintained bridges (20 feet or more in length) are rated poor/structurally deficient, and traffic congestion costs the state's drivers $55 billion annually in lost time and wasted fuel. In addition to statewide data, the TRIP report includes regional pavement and bridge conditions, congestion data, highway safety data, and cost breakdowns for the Los Angeles, Riverside-San Bernardino, Sacramento, San Diego, San Francisco-Oakland and San Jose urban areas.



Source: Caltrans

The TRIP report finds that 73 percent of major locally and state-maintained roads in the San Francisco-Oakland urban area are in poor or mediocre condition, costing the average motorist an additional $1,106 each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. Statewide, 28 percent of California's major roads are in poor condition and 22 percent are in mediocre condition. TRIP estimates that the state's drivers lose $24.2 billion annually in extra vehicle operating costs as a result of driving on deteriorated roads.

In the San Francisco-Oakland area, eight percent of bridges (115 of 1,374 bridges) are rated poor/structurally deficient, with significant deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components. This includes locally and state-maintained bridges that are 20 feet or longer. Statewide, five percent of California's bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient. Most bridges are designed to last 50 years before major overhaul or replacement. In California, 54 percent of the state's bridges were built in 1969 or earlier.

According to the TRIP report, traffic congestion in the San Francisco-Oakland area causes 111 annual hours of delay for the average motorist and costs the average driver $3,406 annually in lost time and wasted fuel. On average, San Francisco-Oakland drivers waste 38 gallons of fuel annually due to congestion. Statewide, drivers lose $55 billion annually because of lost time and wasted fuel due to traffic congestion. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, vehicle travel in California dropped by as much as 41 percent in April 2020 (as compared to vehicle travel during the same month the previous year). By 2025, vehicle miles of travel in California had rebounded to five percent below 2019's pre-pandemic levels. Congestion reduces job accessibility significantly. In California's six largest metros, the number of jobs accessible within a 40-minute drive during peak hours were reduced by 44 percent in 2023 as a result of traffic congestion.

Source: TRIP

Traffic crashes in California claimed the lives of 24,508 people from 2019 to 2024. The state's 2024 traffic fatality rate of 1.19 fatalities for every 100 million miles traveled was slightly lower than the national average of 1.2. The number of traffic fatalities and the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in California spiked dramatically in 2020 and 2021 before falling each year from 2022 to 2024. But, despite recent progress, from 2014 to 2024 the number of traffic fatalities in California increased 24 percent and the state's traffic fatality rate increased 29 percent. From 2019 to 2023, 30 percent of those killed in California crashes involving motorized vehicles were pedestrians or bicyclists. In the San Francisco-Oakland area, 36 percent of traffic fatalities between 2019 and 2023 (306 of 934) were pedestrians or bicyclists.

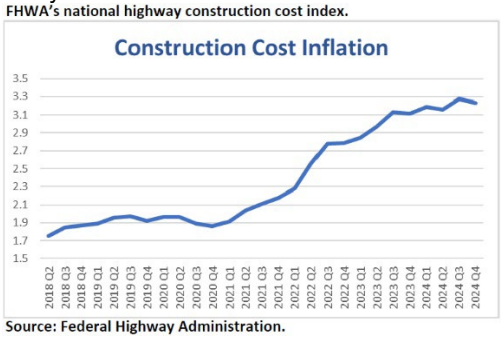
"California's future depends on transportation infrastructure that can withstand the challenges of a changing climate and a growing population," said Senator Dave Cortese, chair of the California Senate Transportation Committee. "These investments don't just move people and goods—they cut emissions, strengthen communities, create jobs, and spur economic growth. The TRIP report makes clear that smart infrastructure investments are among

the most powerful tools we have to support California's workforce and drive long-term economic prosperity."

Improvements to California's roads, highways and bridges are funded by local, state and federal governments. In April 2017, the California legislature enacted SB 1 — the Road Repair and Accountability Act. SB 1 increased state revenues for transportation by increasing the state's gasoline and diesel taxes, implementing a transportation investment fee on vehicles and initiating an annual fee on zero emission vehicles. SB 1 is estimated to increase state revenues for California's transportation system by an average of $5.2 billion annually through to 2027. In addition to state transportation funding, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), signed into law on November 2021, provides $25.3 billion in federal funds to the state for highway and bridge investments in California over five years, representing a 29 percent increase in annual federal funding for roads and bridges in the state over the previous federal surface transportation program. The IIJA is set to expire on September 30, 2026.

"California's transportation system is the backbone of our daily lives, connecting millions of people to work, school, and opportunity," said Assemblymember Lori Wilson, chair of the California State Assembly Transportation Committee. "The TRIP report provides the proof points behind what we already know: our infrastructure needs are urgent and growing. As we transition to cleaner vehicles and more sustainable mobility, we must secure fair and reliable funding solutions to ensure tomorrow's infrastructure serves Californians better than today's."

FHWA's national highway construction cost index.



Source: Federal Highway Administration.

The ability of revenue from California's motor fuel tax – a critical source of state transportation funds – to keep pace with the state's future transportation needs is likely to erode as a result of increasing vehicle fuel efficiency, the increasing use of electric vehicles and inflation in highway construction costs. The Federal Highway Administration's national highway construction cost index, which measures labor and materials cost, increased by 48 percent from the beginning of 2022 through the fourth quarter of 2024.

The California Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) found that steps taken by California to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including programs and policies that are targeted at increasing the adoption of zero-emission vehicles (ZEVs), increasing the use of lower-carbon fuels, and reducing the number of vehicle miles traveled will reduce state transportation revenues by $4.4 billion over the next decade. This reduction in state transportation spending which is projected to result in poorer road conditions. However, the recent federal rollbacks to California strict emissions requirements will impact these programs and policies.

"Our deteriorating transportation system costs Californians lives, time, and money," said California Transportation Commissioner Joseph Cruz. "Every investment in improving and maintaining our roads, bridges, and transit networks is an investment in people. These projects don't just build infrastructure – they create good jobs, support local economies, and ensure California's workforce is at the center of the solution."

Source: TRIP

The efficiency and condition of California's transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state's economy. In 2023 California's freight system moved 1.4 billion tons of freight, valued at $2.8 trillion. From 2022 to 2050, freight moved annually in California by trucks is expected to increase 65 percent by weight and 100 percent by value (inflation-adjusted dollars). The design, construction and maintenance of transportation infrastructure in California supports approximately 420,000 full-time jobs across all sectors of the state economy. Approximately 7.1 million full-time jobs in California in key industries like tourism, retail sales, agriculture and manufacturing are dependent on the quality, safety and reliability of the state's transportation infrastructure network.

"California's transportation dollars are already being stretched thin by increased inflation in construction costs and declining fuel tax revenue," said Dave Kearby, TRIP's executive director. "Without additional transportation investment, needed projects that would make the state's roads safer, smoother and more efficient will not move forward."