

# The Top 40 Transportation Projects to Support Economic Growth and Quality of Life in Arkansas

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*Founded in 1971, [TRIP](#)® of Washington, DC, is a nonprofit organization that researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues. TRIP is sponsored by insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, distributors and suppliers; businesses involved in highway and transit engineering and construction; labor unions; and organizations concerned with efficient and safe surface transportation.*

## Executive Summary

Arkansas' transportation system has played a significant role in the state's development, providing mobility and access for residents, visitors, businesses and industry. The state's roads, highways, rails and public transit systems remain the backbone of the Natural State's economy. Arkansas' transportation system also provides for a high quality of life and makes the state a desirable place to live and visit. The condition and quality of its transportation system will play a critical role in Arkansas' ability to capitalize on its economic advantages and meet the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

To achieve sustainable economic growth, Arkansas must proceed with numerous projects to improve key roads, bridges and highways. Enhancing critical segments of Arkansas' transportation system will boost the state's economy in the short-term by creating jobs in construction and related fields. In the long-term these improvements will enhance economic competitiveness and improve the quality of life for the state's residents and visitors by reducing travel delays and transportation costs, improving access and mobility, improving safety, and stimulating sustained job growth.

In this report, TRIP examines recent transportation and economic trends in Arkansas and provides information on the transportation projects in the state that are most needed to support economic growth. Sources of data include the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD), the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the U.S. Census Bureau. All data used in the report is the latest available.

**TRIP has identified the 40 transportation projects that are most needed to support Arkansas' economic growth. These projects are located throughout the state.**

- The most needed transportation improvements in Arkansas include projects to build, expand or modernize roads, highways and bridges throughout the state. These improvements would enhance economic development opportunities throughout the state by increasing mobility and freight movement, easing congestion, and making Arkansas an attractive place to live, visit and do business.
- TRIP evaluated each transportation project based on the following criteria: short-term economic benefits, including job creation; the level of improvement in the condition of the transportation facility, including safety improvements; the degree of improvement in access and mobility; and the long-term improvement provided in regional or state economic performance and competitiveness.
- Arkansas' 40 most needed transportation projects to support economic development in the state as determined by TRIP follow. The projects are listed geographically and ordered by route number.

## STATEWIDE

- **I-40 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.** This \$465 million project would rehabilitate and reconstruct 228 miles of I-40, including replacing the I-40 bridge over the White River. In recent years, truck traffic has increased significantly and has accelerated the deterioration rate on Arkansas' Interstate system. The I-40 project will improve the conditions of the Interstate, decrease maintenance costs and provide a smoother ride for users.

## CENTRAL ARKANSAS

- **Adding Four Lanes to I-30 in Pulaski County.** This \$300 million project would add two lanes in each direction to a 4.2 mile portion of I-30, from the junction of I-440 and I-530 to the junction of I-40, including the I-30 River Bridge. This segment is frequently congested, creating a bottleneck for travelers. Widening the roadway will improve traffic flow and conditions for both local and through traffic, alleviating travel delay.
- **I-30 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Little Rock.** This \$20 million project includes the rehabilitation and reconstruction of a 2.6 mile section of I-30 between Geyer Springs Road and 65<sup>th</sup> Street. In recent years, increased truck traffic has caused an increase in the deterioration rate of this section of Interstate. This project will improve the condition of the roadway, decrease long-term maintenance costs and improve the rideability for users.
- **Adding Two Lanes to I-30 in Saline County.** This \$75 million project would add two lanes to 4.6 miles of Interstate 30 from Highway 70 to Sevier Street in Benton. This section of roadway consistently creates a bottleneck for residents traveling to Little Rock from the south. The project is a continuation of capacity improvements through the corridor and will improve travel conditions for both local and through traffic.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Interstate 40 in Faulkner County.** This \$32 million project would add two lanes to 13 miles of I-40 from Conway to the Pulaski County Line. This will alleviate the bottleneck of commuters who live north of Little Rock but work in the greater metro area. The project is a continuation of capacity improvements through the corridor and will improve travel conditions for both local and through traffic.
- **Adding Two Lanes to I-40 in Pulaski County.** This \$43 million project would add two lanes to 5.6 miles of I-40 from the Faulkner County Line to I-430. This project is a continuation of capacity improvements through the corridor and will improve travel conditions for both local and through traffic. I-40 consistently creates a bottleneck for motorists traveling to the greater Little Rock area from north of the city.

- **Provide Interchange Modifications on Interstate 430 at Interstate 30, Highway 10, and Interstate 40 in Pulaski County.** This \$28 million project will improve operations at three major interchanges on Interstate 430. This project is a continuation of operational improvements through the corridor and will improve travel conditions for both local and through traffic. These three interchanges consistently create bottlenecks for motorists.
- **Adding Two Lanes and a Center Turning Lane to Highway 64 in White and Faulkner Counties.** This \$59 million project would add two lanes and a center turning lane to 15.8 miles of Highway 64 from the Vilonia Bypass to Highway 67. This project will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and increase the capacity between Conway and Beebe and points beyond. The Highway 64 corridor in East Arkansas is important to the state's economy due to the large amount of agricultural products that are transported. In recent years, this route has also been a very important link when I-40 was closed due to flooding.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 67 from Jacksonville to Cabot.** This \$152 million project would add two lanes to 12 miles of Highway 67 from Jacksonville to Cabot. Highway 67 is consistently a bottleneck for residents who live north of the urban area but work in the greater Little Rock area. This project is a continuation of capacity improvements throughout the corridor and will improve travel conditions for both local and through traffic.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 70 in Garland and Saline Counties.** This \$60 million project would add two lanes to 17.6 miles of Highway 70, from Hot Springs to Interstate 30. This project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system, increase capacity between Hot Springs and I-30 and increase safety.
- **Adding Two Lanes and a Center Turning Lane to Highway 270 near Hot Springs.** This \$13 million project would add two lanes and a center turning lane to three miles of Highway 270 near Hot Springs. This project will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will improve travel conditions through the area, increase the capacity between the Hot Springs and Mt. Ida, improve safety and address the increase in seasonal tourist traffic.
- **I-440 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Pulaski County.** This \$60 million project would rehabilitate or reconstruct 6.6 miles of Interstate 440 between I-30 and I-40. In recent years, increased truck traffic has caused an increase in deterioration on this section of Arkansas' Interstate system. The I-440 project will improve the condition of the Interstate, decrease long-term maintenance costs and improve the rideability for users.
- **I-530 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Pulaski, Saline and Jefferson Counties.** This \$132 million project would rehabilitate and reconstruct 37 miles of deteriorated sections of I-530, from I-30 in Little Rock to Highway 65 in Pine

Bluff. Recent increases in truck traffic have resulted in significant deterioration to this section of the state's Interstate system. This project will improve the condition of the Interstate, decrease maintenance costs and provide a smoother ride for users.

- **Adding Two Lanes to I-630 in Little Rock.** This \$50 million project would add two lanes to 2.3 miles of I-630 from Baptist Hospital to University Avenue in Little Rock, a section of roadway that is consistently congested. This project is a continuation of capacity improvements on the I-430/I-630 Interchange and will improve travel conditions for both local and through traffic.
- **Pavement Restoration on I-630 in Little Rock.** This \$32 million project would restore pavement on 3.2 miles of I-630 from I-30 in Little Rock to Cedar St./Pine St. Increased truck traffic has caused deterioration on this section of Interstate. This rehabilitation will decrease long-term maintenance costs and improve the rideability for users.

### **NORTHWEST ARKANSAS**

- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 65 in Boone and Newton Counties.** This \$45 million project would increase capacity on seven miles of Highway 65 from Highway 412 to Western Grove. It will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and increase capacity between Clinton and Harrison and points beyond. The Highway 65 Corridor is a very important shipping route for products that are headed to central Missouri. These improvements will also improve safety through the mountainous region of the state.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 65 in Van Buren County.** This \$60 million project would increase capacity on 12.5 miles on Highway 65 between Dennard and Clinton. The Highway 65 project would help complete the state's four-lane grid system and increase the capacity between Clinton and Harrison and points beyond. The Highway 65 Corridor is a very important shipping route for products that are headed to central Missouri. The expansion of the corridor will also improve safety through the mountainous region of the state.
- **Construct Phase I of the Bella Vista Bypass.** This \$100 million project would complete Phase I of the 12 mile Bella Vista Bypass (Highway 71). Phase I will construct two of the ultimate 4-lane Interstate facility from I-540 in Bentonville to the Missouri State Line. This project is part of the future Interstate 49 Corridor that will eventually connect New Orleans to Kansas City and improve travel conditions throughout the area by separating the local commuters from through traffic.
- **Construct Phase I of the Springdale Bypass.** This \$150 million project involves the construction of a four-lane divided highway (Highway 412) from I-540 in Springdale to the planned Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport Access

Road. This roadway is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system. The Highway 412 corridor is the main east-west route in the northern portion of the state. This project will relieve congestion in the growing Springdale area.

- **Adding Two Lanes to I-540 in Washington and Benton Counties.** This \$125 million project would add two lanes to 15 miles of I-540 from Fayetteville to Bentonville. I-540 regularly experiences severe congestion due to the high volume of traffic traveling between Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers and Bentonville. This corridor is a vital link in the northwest part of the state. Increased capacity will make the roadway safer and more efficient.
- **I-540 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.** This \$260 million project will rehabilitate and reconstruct 23 miles of roadway and eight interchanges on I-540 in Sebastian, Crawford, Washington and Benton Counties. Due to significant increases in truck traffic, this portion of the state's Interstate system has deteriorated rapidly and is in need of repair. This project will improve the condition of the Interstate, decrease maintenance costs and provide a smoother ride for users. The modifications to interchanges will accommodate the widening of I-540 in the future.

## **NORTHEAST ARKANSAS**

- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 18 in Craighead and Mississippi Counties.** This \$60 million project would increase capacity on six miles of Highway 18 from Lake City to Highway 181. The project would help complete the state's four-lane grid system and increase capacity between Jonesboro and Blytheville while providing a critical link between I-55 and the rest of Northeast Arkansas. These improvements will increase regional mobility and the freight movement through the area.
- **I-55 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Crittenden and Mississippi Counties.** This \$150 million project would rehabilitate or reconstruct approximately 60 miles of I-55, from I-40 to Highway 61 near Blytheville, and from Highway 18 in Blytheville to the Missouri State Line. This section of I-55 has experienced deterioration due to increased truck traffic. This project will improve the condition of the Interstate, decrease long-term maintenance costs and improve the rideability for users.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 64 in Crittenden County.** This \$50 million project would add two lanes to 14 miles of Highway 64, from the Cross County Line to Highway 147. The Highway 64 project is needed to help complete the state's four lane grid system and to increase capacity between Marion and Wynne and points beyond. Increased capacity on this vital economic corridor will help farmers get their produce to markets in the Memphis area. This route is adjacent to the access point for a critical intermodal facility.

- **Construction of Highway 67 to Interstate Standards.** This \$27 million project will complete the upgrade of Highway 67 to Interstate standards between Little Rock and Walnut Ridge. It is a continuation of corridor improvements that will provide a more direct connection from Little Rock to St. Louis.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 167 in Independence County.** This \$36 million project would add two lanes to 9.7 miles of Highway 167 from Highway 394 to Cave City. The Highway 167 project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system and increase capacity between Batesville and Cave City. Highway 167 is the main north-south route through the central part of the state and is a vital freight route that connects rural areas to the urban center of the state.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 226 in Craighead County.** This \$41 million project will complete the widening of Highway 226 from the new location of Highway 67 to Highway 49. This 3.4 mile project would help complete the state's four-lane grid system and provide a critical link between Little Rock and Jonesboro. These improvements will increase regional mobility and the freight movement through the area.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 412 in Lawrence and Greene Counties.** This \$70 million project would add two lanes to 14.7 miles of Highway 412 from Highway 67 to Highway 141. This project will help complete the state's four-lane grid system, increase capacity between the Paragould and Walnut Ridge, and increase freight movement through the northeastern part of the state. The Highway 412 corridor is the main east-west corridor in the northern part of the state.
- **Construct Two Lanes of the Paragould Bypass in Greene County.** This \$29 million project would construct two lanes of an ultimate four-lane principle arterial on new location for a distance of 10.4 miles. The project will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will decrease congestion in Paragould. The Highway 412 corridor is the main east-west corridor in the northern part of the state. This project will increase freight movement through the northeastern part of the state.

## **SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS**

- **Rehabilitation and Reconstruction on I-30.** This \$164 million project would rehabilitate and reconstruct 93 miles of I-30 from the Texas state line to the Social Hill Rest Area. Increased truck traffic in recent years has accelerated the deterioration of this portion of the state's Interstate system. The I-30 project will improve the condition of the interstate, decrease maintenance costs and provide a smoother ride for users.
- **Constructing Highway 71 to Interstate Standards.** This \$16 million project will complete 4.5 miles of Highway 71 to Interstate standards from Doddridge to

the Louisiana state line. This will finish Arkansas' portion of the future Interstate 49 corridor from Texarkana to Shreveport and improve freight movements and regional travel between the two areas.

- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 82 in Columbia and Union Counties.** This \$127 million project would add two lanes to 22.5 miles of Highway 82 from west of Magnolia to El Dorado. The Highway 82 corridor is the main east-west connector in south Arkansas. It will help complete the state's four-lane grid system, increase the capacity between Magnolia and El Dorado and allow access to I-69 once it is constructed.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 167 in Calhoun County.** This \$120 million project would add two lanes to 18 miles of Highway 167 from Hampton to Highway 79. The Highway 167 Corridor is the main north-south route through the central part of the state and is a vital freight route connecting rural areas to the urban center of the state. This project will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will increase capacity between the Fordyce and El Dorado and points beyond.
- **Adding Two Lanes and Widening the Ouachita River Bridge on Highway 167 in Union and Calhoun Counties.** This \$106 million project would add two lanes to 25.1 miles of Highway 167 from El Dorado to Hampton. The Highway 167 project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system and increase capacity between Fordyce and El Dorado and points beyond. The Highway 167 corridor is the main north-south route through the central part of the state and is a vital freight route that connects rural areas to the urban center of the state.

## **SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS**

- **Add Two Lanes to Highway 1 in Lee County.** This \$18 million project would add two lanes to 5.4 miles of Highway 1 from Cypress Corner to County Road 216. The Highway 1 project is a continuation of corridor improvements in the area along Highway 1 and Highway 49. It will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will increase capacity between Forrest City and Helena-West Helena.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 1 in Lee and Phillips County.** This \$36 million project would add two lanes to seven miles of Highway 1, from Walnut Corner to Cypress Corner. The Highway 1 project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will increase capacity between Forrest City and Helena-West Helena and points beyond.
- **Construction of the initial Arkansas portion of I-69 in Drew County.** This \$51 million project will construct 20 miles of the first section of I-69 in Arkansas, which will connect Houston to Detroit. Interstate 69 will be a vital route for most

freight movements through the central United States. Rural economies in the southern portion of the state will benefit greatly from increased access.

- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 82 in Ashley County.** This \$27 million project would add two lanes to 6.1 miles of Highway 82 from County Road 411 to Highway 425. The Highway 82 project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system and to increase capacity between Crossett and Highway 425. The Highway 82 corridor is the main east-west connector in south Arkansas. This section will connect the cities of El Dorado and Lake Village to Interstate 69 when it is built.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 167 in Cleveland and Dallas Counties.** This \$34.3 million project would add two lanes to the segment from Highway 273 to Peters Road. The Highway 167 project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system. It will also increase capacity between Fordyce and Little Rock. The Highway 167 Corridor is the main north-south route through the central part of the state and is a vital freight route connecting rural areas to the urban center of the state.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 82/425 in Ashley County.** This \$70 million project would add two lanes to 15 miles of Highway 82/425 from the Louisiana State Line to Hamburg. This project will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will increase capacity between the Louisiana State Line and Crossett. This is a continuation of corridor improvements and will connect I-20 to I-69 to accommodate the anticipated increase in freight movements through this area.

**Transportation projects that improve the efficiency, condition or safety of a roadway provide significant economic benefits by reducing transportation delays and costs associated with a deficient transportation system. Some benefits of transportation improvements include the following.**

- Improved business competitiveness due to reduced production and distribution costs as a result of increased travel speeds and fewer mobility barriers.
- Improvements in household welfare resulting from better access to higher-paying jobs, a wider selection of competitively priced consumer goods, additional housing and healthcare options, and improved mobility for residents without access to private vehicles.
- Gains in local, regional and state economies due to improved regional economic competitiveness, which stimulates population and job growth.
- Increased leisure/tourism and business travel resulting from the enhanced condition and reliability of a region's transportation system.

- A reduction in economic losses from vehicle crashes, traffic congestion and vehicle maintenance costs associated with driving on deficient roads.
- Transportation projects that expand roadway capacity produce significant economic benefits by reducing congestion and improving access, thus speeding the flow of people and goods while reducing fuel consumption.
- [Site Selection magazine's 2010 survey](#) of corporate real estate executives found that transportation infrastructure was the third most important selection factor in site location decisions, behind only work force skills and state and local taxes.
- A [2007 analysis by the Federal Highway Administration](#) found that every \$1 billion invested in highway construction would support approximately 27,800 jobs, including approximately 9,400 in the construction sector, approximately 4,300 jobs in industries supporting the construction sector, and approximately 14,000 other jobs induced in non-construction related sectors of the economy.
- The [Federal Highway Administration estimates](#) that each dollar spent on road, highway and bridge improvements results in an average benefit of \$5.20 in the form of reduced vehicle maintenance costs, reduced delays, reduced fuel consumption, improved safety, reduced road and bridge maintenance costs, and reduced emissions as a result of improved traffic flow.

**While Arkansas' diverse economy has been impacted by the recession, the state's transportation system will need to accommodate projected future growth.**

- From 1990 to 2010, Arkansas' population increased by 24 percent, from approximately 2.4 million to approximately 2.9 million. Arkansas' population is expected to increase to 3.1 million by 2025.
- From 1990 to 2010, annual vehicle-miles-of-travel (VMT) in the state increased by 59 percent, from approximately 21 billion VMT to 33.5 billion VMT. Based on travel and population trends, TRIP estimates that vehicle travel in Arkansas will increase another 40 percent by 2030, reaching approximately 47 billion VMT.
- Arkansas' unemployment rate rose from 5.6 percent in September 2008 to 7.1 percent in September 2012. The national unemployment rate was 7.8 percent in September 2012.
- In 2012, Arkansas is projected to have a 3.3 percent rate of economic growth, measured in real gross state produce (GSP), which is factored for price changes. This rate of growth is higher than the forecast 1.2 percent increase in national real GSP in 2012.

- Arkansas has benefited from a diverse economy, which includes significant employment in the following sectors: agriculture, food processing, tourism, mining, government and finance.

**Arkansas' economy is served by an extensive surface transportation system that has some deficiencies and experiences severe congestion in key areas. Roads carry the majority of freight shipped in the state.**

- Arkansas' system of 100,083 miles of roads and 12,641 bridges, maintained by local, state and federal governments, carry 33.5 billion vehicle miles of travel annually.
- Thirty-nine percent of Arkansas' major urban roads are deficient, with 14 percent rated in poor condition and an additional 25 percent rated mediocre in 2010. An additional 26 percent of the state's major roads were rated in fair condition and 35 percent were rated in good condition.
- Seven percent of Arkansas' bridges were rated structurally deficient in 2011. A bridge is structurally deficient if there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Structurally deficient bridges are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including commercial trucks, school buses and emergency services vehicles.
- In 2011, 15 percent of Arkansas' bridges were rated as functionally obsolete. Bridges that are functionally obsolete no longer meet current highway design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment.
- Every year, approximately \$101.9 billion in goods are shipped annually from sites in Arkansas and another \$112.1 billion in goods are shipped annually to sites in Arkansas, mostly by truck.
- Eighty-three percent of the goods shipped annually from sites in Arkansas are carried by trucks and another nine percent are carried by parcel, U.S. Postal Service, courier services or by multiple modes, which use trucks for part of the deliveries.

*Sources of data for this report include the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD), the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the Bureau of Economic Analysis and the U.S. Census Bureau. All data used in the report is the latest available.*

## **Introduction**

Arkansas' transportation system serves as the backbone of the Natural State's economy, providing mobility to the state's residents, visitors and businesses. Arkansas' transportation system has allowed the state's residents to travel to work and school and to access recreation, healthcare, social and commercial activities. The system has also allowed the state's businesses to access customers, suppliers and employees.

But Arkansas' transportation system has deficiencies that could prevent the state from reaching its full economic potential. In order to insure that the state's economy recovers from the recession and returns to significant and sustained growth, Arkansas must improve and expand key highway routes, which will ease congestion, improve traffic safety and enhance access throughout the state.

Arkansas' economic climate has not been immune to the national economic downturn, and the state must make infrastructure investments that will stimulate job growth and support the state's long-term economic goals by improving access for the state's diversified economy. Arkansas' economy and quality of life could be adversely affected if its transportation system cannot provide for the efficient movement of goods and people. The completion of needed transportation improvements is a key component of any region's ability to induce sustained economic growth.

Because it impacts the time it takes to transport people and goods, as well as the cost of travel, the reliability and physical condition of a region's transportation system plays a significant role in long-term economic growth, productivity and competitiveness. Investment in expanding the capacity or improving the condition of existing

transportation facilities is critical to a region's ability to stimulate short-term and long-term economic growth.

In this report, TRIP identifies the 40 transportation projects in Arkansas that are most needed to spur and assist in the state's economic growth. The most needed transportation improvements in Arkansas include projects to build, expand or modernize highways or bridges.

## **Transportation Projects Impact the Economy**

When a state or region's surface transportation system lacks adequate capacity, is deteriorated or lacks some desirable safety features, it impedes economic performance by slowing commerce and commuting, increasing transport costs and burdening an economy with future transportation investment needs.

Local, regional and state economic performance is improved when a region's surface transportation system is expanded or repaired. This improvement comes as a result of the initial job creation and increased employment created over the long-term because of improved access, reduced transport costs and improved safety. [Site Selection magazine's 2010 survey](#) of corporate real estate executives found that transportation infrastructure was the third most important selection factor in site location decisions, behind only work force skills and state and local taxes.<sup>1</sup>

To prepare this report, TRIP analyzed data provided by the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) on the transportation projects in the state most needed to support economic growth. The projects include the reconstruction,

expansion, or improvement of existing transportation facilities or the construction of new transportation facilities.

The agencies provided information on projects including route, location, current level of use, the type of improvement needed, the estimated cost of the improvement, a description of the importance of the facility to regional mobility and an explanation of the economic benefits provided by the project.

## **The 40 Transportation Projects Most Needed to Support Arkansas' Economy**

TRIP has identified the 40 transportation projects that are most needed to support Arkansas' economic recovery and growth. All projects are listed geographically and ordered by route number.

TRIP evaluated the projects based on the following categories:

- ✓ Short-term economic benefits, including job creation.
- ✓ Improvement in the condition of transportation facility, including safety improvements.
- ✓ Improved access and mobility.
- ✓ Long-term improvement in regional or state economic performance and competitiveness.

### **STATEWIDE**

- **I-40 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.** This \$465 million project would rehabilitate and reconstruct 228 miles of I-40, including replacing the I-40 bridge over the White River. In recent years, truck traffic has increased significantly and

has accelerated the deterioration rate on Arkansas' Interstate system. The I-40 project will improve the conditions of the Interstate, decrease maintenance costs and provide a smoother ride for users.

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- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 65 in Van Buren County.** This \$60 million project would increase capacity on 12.5 miles on Highway 65 between Dennard and Clinton. The Highway 65 project would help complete the state's four-lane grid system and increase the capacity between Clinton and Harrison and points beyond. The Highway 65 Corridor is a very important shipping route for products that are headed to central Missouri. The expansion of the corridor will also improve safety through the mountainous region of the state.
- **Construct Phase I of the Bella Vista Bypass.** This \$100 million project would complete Phase I of the 12 mile Bella Vista Bypass (Highway 71). Phase I will construct two of the ultimate 4-lane Interstate facility from I-540 in Bentonville to the Missouri State Line. This project is part of the future Interstate 49 Corridor that will eventually connect New Orleans to Kansas City and improve travel conditions throughout the area by separating the local commuters from through traffic.
- **Construct Phase I of the Springdale Bypass.** This \$150 million project involves the construction of a four-lane divided highway (Highway 412) from I-540 in Springdale to the planned Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport Access Road. This roadway is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system. The Highway 412 corridor is the main east-west route in the northern portion of the state. This project will relieve congestion in the growing Springdale area.

- **Adding Two Lanes to I-540 in Washington and Benton Counties.** This \$125 million project would add two lanes to 15 miles of I-540 from Fayetteville to Bentonville. I-540 regularly experiences severe congestion due to the high volume of traffic traveling between Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers and Bentonville. This corridor is a vital link in the northwest part of the state. Increased capacity will make the roadway safer and more efficient.
- **I-540 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction.** This \$260 million project will rehabilitate and reconstruct 23 miles of roadway and eight interchanges on I-540 in Sebastian, Crawford, Washington and Benton Counties. Due to significant increases in truck traffic, this portion of the state's Interstate system has deteriorated rapidly and is in need of repair. This project will improve the condition of the Interstate, decrease maintenance costs and provide a smoother ride for users. The modifications to interchanges will accommodate the widening of I-540 in the future.

### NORTHEAST ARKANSAS

- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 18 in Craighead and Mississippi Counties.** This \$60 million project would increase capacity on six miles of Highway 18 from Lake City to Highway 181. The project would help complete the state's four-lane grid system and increase capacity between Jonesboro and Blytheville while providing a critical link between I-55 and the rest of Northeast Arkansas. These improvements will increase regional mobility and the freight movement through the area.
- **I-55 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in Crittenden and Mississippi Counties.** This \$150 million project would rehabilitate or reconstruct approximately 60 miles of I-55, from I-40 to Highway 61 near Blytheville, and from Highway 18 in Blytheville to the Missouri State Line. This section of I-55 has experienced deterioration due to increased truck traffic. This project will improve the condition of the Interstate, decrease long-term maintenance costs and improve the rideability for users.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 64 in Crittenden County.** This \$50 million project would add two lanes to 14 miles of Highway 64, from the Cross County Line to Highway 147. The Highway 64 project is needed to help complete the state's four lane grid system and to increase capacity between Marion and Wynne and points beyond. Increased capacity on this vital economic corridor will help farmers get their produce to markets in the Memphis area. This route is adjacent to the access point for a critical intermodal facility.
- **Construction of Highway 67 to Interstate Standards.** This \$27 million project will complete the upgrade of Highway 67 to Interstate standards between Little Rock and Walnut Ridge. It is a continuation of corridor improvements that will provide a more direct connection from Little Rock to St. Louis.

- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 167 in Independence County.** This \$36 million project would add two lanes to 9.7 miles of Highway 167 from Highway 394 to Cave City. The Highway 167 project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system and increase capacity between Batesville and Cave City. Highway 167 is the main north-south route through the central part of the state and is a vital freight route that connects rural areas to the urban center of the state.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 226 in Craighead County.** This \$41 million project will complete the widening of Highway 226 from the new location of Highway 67 to Highway 49. This 3.4 mile project would help complete the state's four-lane grid system and provide a critical link between Little Rock and Jonesboro. These improvements will increase regional mobility and the freight movement through the area.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 412 in Lawrence and Greene Counties.** This \$70 million project would add two lanes to 14.7 miles of Highway 412 from Highway 67 to Highway 141. This project will help complete the state's four-lane grid system, increase capacity between the Paragould and Walnut Ridge, and increase freight movement through the northeastern part of the state. The Highway 412 corridor is the main east-west corridor in the northern part of the state.
- **Construct Two Lanes of the Paragould Bypass in Greene County.** This \$29 million project would construct two lanes of an ultimate four-lane principle arterial on new location for a distance of 10.4 miles. The project will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will decrease congestion in Paragould. The Highway 412 corridor is the main east-west corridor in the northern part of the state. This project will increase freight movement through the northeastern part of the state.

## **SOUTHWEST ARKANSAS**

- **Rehabilitation and Reconstruction on I-30.** This \$164 million project would rehabilitate and reconstruct 93 miles of I-30 from the Texas state line to the Social Hill Rest Area. Increased truck traffic in recent years has accelerated the deterioration of this portion of the state's Interstate system. The I-30 project will improve the condition of the interstate, decrease maintenance costs and provide a smoother ride for users.
- **Constructing Highway 71 to Interstate Standards.** This \$16 million project will complete 4.5 miles of Highway 71 to Interstate standards from Doddridge to the Louisiana state line. This will finish Arkansas' portion of the future Interstate 49 corridor from Texarkana to Shreveport and improve freight movements and regional travel between the two areas.

- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 82 in Columbia and Union Counties.** This \$127 million project would add two lanes to 22.5 miles of Highway 82 from west of Magnolia to El Dorado. The Highway 82 corridor is the main east-west connector in south Arkansas. It will help complete the state's four-lane grid system, increase the capacity between Magnolia and El Dorado and allow access to I-69 once it is constructed.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 167 in Calhoun County.** This \$120 million project would add two lanes to 18 miles of Highway 167 from Hampton to Highway 79. The Highway 167 Corridor is the main north-south route through the central part of the state and is a vital freight route connecting rural areas to the urban center of the state. This project will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will increase capacity between the Fordyce and El Dorado and points beyond.
- **Adding Two Lanes and Widening the Ouachita River Bridge on Highway 167 in Union and Calhoun Counties.** This \$106 million project would add two lanes to 25.1 miles of Highway 167 from El Dorado to Hampton. The Highway 167 project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system and increase capacity between Fordyce and El Dorado and points beyond. The Highway 167 corridor is the main north-south route through the central part of the state and is a vital freight route that connects rural areas to the urban center of the state.

## **SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS**

- **Add Two Lanes to Highway 1 in Lee County.** This \$18 million project would add two lanes to 5.4 miles of Highway 1 from Cypress Corner to County Road 216. The Highway 1 project is a continuation of corridor improvements in the area along Highway 1 and Highway 49. It will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will increase capacity between Forrest City and Helena-West Helena.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 1 in Lee and Phillips County.** This \$36 million project would add two lanes to seven miles of Highway 1, from Walnut Corner to Cypress Corner. The Highway 1 project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will increase capacity between Forrest City and Helena-West Helena and points beyond.
- **Construction of the initial Arkansas portion of I-69 in Drew County.** This \$51 million project will construct 20 miles of the first section of I-69 in Arkansas, which will connect Houston to Detroit. Interstate 69 will be a vital route for most freight movements through the central United States. Rural economies in the southern portion of the state will benefit greatly from increased access.

- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 82 in Ashley County.** This \$27 million project would add two lanes to 6.1 miles of Highway 82 from County Road 411 to Highway 425. The Highway 82 project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system and to increase capacity between Crossett and Highway 425. The Highway 82 corridor is the main east-west connector in south Arkansas. This section will connect the cities of El Dorado and Lake Village to Interstate 69 when it is built.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 167 in Cleveland and Dallas Counties.** This \$34.3 million project would add two lanes to the segment from Highway 273 to Peters Road. The Highway 167 project is needed to help complete the state's four-lane grid system. It will also increase capacity between Fordyce and Little Rock. The Highway 167 Corridor is the main north-south route through the central part of the state and is a vital freight route connecting rural areas to the urban center of the state.
- **Adding Two Lanes to Highway 82/425 in Ashley County.** This \$70 million project would add two lanes to 15 miles of Highway 82/425 from the Louisiana State Line to Hamburg. This project will help complete the state's four-lane grid system and will increase capacity between the Louisiana State Line and Crossett. This is a continuation of corridor improvements and will connect I-20 to I-69 to accommodate the anticipated increase in freight movements through this area.

## **Population, Travel and Economic Trends in Arkansas**

While Arkansas' current unemployment rate is lower than the national average, the state's diverse economic sectors have not been immune to the effects of the recession.

Arkansas' economy relies on significant employment in the following sectors:

agriculture, food processing, tourism, mining, government and finance.

The state's unemployment rate rose from 5.6 percent in September 2008 to 7.1 percent in September 2012.<sup>2</sup> Arkansas' current unemployment rate is lower than the national average of 7.8 percent in September 2012.<sup>3</sup>

In 2012, Arkansas is projected to have a 3.3 percent rate of economic growth, measured in real gross state product (GSP), which is factored for price changes. This rate of growth is higher than the forecast 1.2 percent increase in national real GSP in 2012.<sup>4</sup>

From 1990 to 2010, Arkansas' population increased by 24 percent, from approximately 2.4 million to approximately 2.9 million.<sup>5</sup> Arkansas' population is expected to increase to approximately 3.1 million by 2025.<sup>6</sup>

The continued increase in population has resulted in significant increases in vehicle travel in Arkansas. From 1990 to 2010, annual vehicle-miles-of-travel (VMT) in the state increased by 59 percent, from approximately 21 billion VMT to 33.5 billion VMT.<sup>7</sup> Based on travel and population trends, TRIP estimates that vehicle travel in Arkansas will increase another 40 percent by 2030, reaching approximately 47 billion VMT.

## **Arkansas' Surface Transportation System**

Arkansas is served by a system of 100,083 miles of roads and 12,641 bridges. This system is maintained by local, state and federal governments and carries 33.5 billion vehicle miles of travel each year.<sup>8</sup>

Arkansas' roads, highways and bridges have some deficiencies. Thirty-nine percent of the state's major urban roads are deficient, with 14 percent rated in poor condition in 2010 and another 25 percent rated in mediocre condition.<sup>9</sup> In 2011, seven percent of Arkansas' bridges were rated structurally deficient because they are in need of

repair or replacement, and another 15 percent of the state's bridges were rated as functionally obsolete because they do not meet modern design standards.<sup>10</sup>

## **The Importance of Transportation to Arkansas' Economy**

Supporting Arkansas' economic growth will require that the state build and maintain a transportation system that provides reliable and safe mobility to enhance business competitiveness.

Highways, rail, ports and public transit are vitally important to fostering economic development in Arkansas. As the economy expands, creating more jobs and increasing consumer confidence, the demand for consumer and business products grows. In turn, manufacturers ship greater quantities of goods to market to meet this demand, a process that adds to truck traffic on the state's highways and major arterial roads.

Every year, \$101.9 billion in goods are shipped from sites in Arkansas and another \$112.1 billion in goods are shipped to sites in Arkansas, mostly by trucks.<sup>11</sup> Eighty-three percent of the goods shipped annually from sites in Arkansas are carried by trucks and another nine percent are carried by parcel, U.S. Postal Service, courier services or by multiple modes, which use trucks for part of the deliveries.<sup>12</sup>

## **How Transportation Improvements Support Economic Growth**

Because it impacts the time it takes to transport people and goods, as well as the cost of travel, the level of mobility provided by a transportation system and its physical condition play a significant role in determining a region's economic effectiveness.

Arkansas' businesses are dependent on an efficient, safe and modern transportation system. Today's business culture demands that an area have a well-maintained and efficient system of roads, highways, bridges and public transportation if it is to be economically competitive. The advent of modern national and global communications and the impact of free trade in North America and elsewhere have resulted in a significant increase in freight movement. Consequently, the quality of a region's transportation system has become a key component in a business's ability to compete locally, nationally and internationally.

Businesses have responded to improved communications and the need to cut costs with a variety of innovations including just-in-time delivery, increased small package delivery, demand-side inventory management and by accepting customer orders through the Internet. The result of these changes has been a significant improvement in logistics efficiency as firms move from a push-style distribution system, which relies on large-scale warehousing of materials, to a pull-style distribution system, which relies on smaller, more strategic movement of goods. These improvements have made mobile inventories the norm, resulting in the nation's trucks literally becoming rolling warehouses.

The economic benefits of a well-maintained, efficient and safe transportation system can be divided into several categories, including the following.

**Improved competitiveness of industry.** An improved transportation system reduces production and distribution costs by lowering barriers to mobility and increasing travel speeds. Improved mobility provides the manufacturing, retail and service sectors improved and more reliable access to increased and often lower-cost sources of labor, inventory, materials and customers.<sup>13</sup> An increase in travel speeds of 10 percent has been

found to increase labor markets by 15 to 18 percent. A 10 percent increase in the size of labor markets has been found to increase productivity by an average of 2.9 percent.<sup>14</sup>

**Improved household welfare.** An improved transportation system gives households better access to higher-paying jobs, a wider selection of competitively priced consumer goods, and additional housing and healthcare options. A good regional transportation system can also provide mobility for people without access to private vehicles, including the elderly, disabled and people with lower incomes.<sup>15</sup>

**Improved local, regional and state economies.** By boosting regional economic competitiveness, which stimulates population and job growth, and by lowering transport costs for businesses and individuals, transportation improvements can bolster local, regional and state economies. Improved transportation also stimulates urban and regional redevelopment and reduces the isolation of rural areas.<sup>16</sup>

**Increased leisure/tourism and business travel.** The condition and reliability of a region's transportation system impacts the accessibility of activities and destinations such as conferences, trade shows, sporting and entertainment events, parks, resort areas, social events and everyday business meetings. An improved transportation system increases the accessibility of leisure/tourism and business travel destinations, which stimulates economic activity.<sup>17</sup>

**Reduced economic losses associated with vehicle crashes, traffic congestion and driving on deficient roads.** When a region's transportation system lacks some desirable safety features, is congested or is deteriorated, it increases costs to the public and businesses in the form of traffic delays, increased costs associated with traffic crashes, increased fuel consumption and increased vehicle operating costs.

Transportation investments that improve roadway safety, reduce congestion and improve roadway conditions benefit businesses and households by saving time, lives and money.

**Transportation investment creates and supports both short-term and long-term jobs.** A [2007 analysis by the Federal Highway Administration](#) found that every \$1 billion invested in highway construction would support approximately 27,800 jobs, including approximately 9,400 in the construction sector, approximately 4,300 jobs in industries supporting the construction sector, and approximately 14,000 other jobs induced in non-construction related sectors of the economy.<sup>18</sup>

Needed transportation projects that expand capacity and preserve the existing transportation system generate significant economic benefits. Transportation projects that provide additional roadway lanes, expand the efficiency of a current roadway (through improved signalization, driver information or other Intelligent Transportation Systems), or provide additional transit capacity, produce significant economic benefits by reducing congestion and improving access, thus speeding the flow of people and goods.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, transportation projects that maintain and preserve existing transportation infrastructure also provide significant economic benefits. The preservation of transportation facilities improves travel speed, capacity, load-carry abilities and safety, while reducing operating costs for people and businesses.<sup>20</sup> Projects that preserve existing transportation infrastructure also extend the service life of a road, bridge or transit vehicle and save money by postponing or eliminating the need for more expensive future repairs.<sup>21</sup>

The [Federal Highway Administration estimates](#) that each dollar spent on road, highway and bridge improvements results in an average benefit of \$5.20 in the form of

reduced vehicle maintenance costs, reduced delays, reduced fuel consumption, improved safety, reduced road and bridge maintenance costs and reduced emissions as a result of improved traffic flow.<sup>22</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Arkansas' transportation system continues to play a critical role as the backbone of the state's economy by providing mobility to residents, visitors and businesses. As Arkansas looks to expand its economy, the improvement of its transportation system will allow the state to support further economic growth. Needed transportation improvements will provide Arkansas' residents with a high quality of life and afford its businesses and industries a high level of economic competitiveness.

Making needed improvements to Arkansas' surface transportation system will support future economic growth and competitiveness and help ensure that Arkansas remain an attractive place to live, visit, work and do business.

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> One Piece at a Time (November 2010). Site Selection magazine.
- <sup>2</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, United States Department of Labor (2011). Local Area Unemployment Statistics.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> USgovernmentspending.com. Comparison of State and Local Government Spending and Debt in the United States Fiscal Year 2012.
- <sup>5</sup> TRIP analysis based on U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Interim State Population Projections, 2005 to 2030.
- <sup>6</sup> Arkansas State Data Center, 2010.
- <sup>7</sup> TRIP analysis of Federal Highway Administration statistics.
- <sup>8</sup> Federal Highway Administration (2010). Highway Statistics 2010.
- <sup>9</sup> TRIP analysis of Federal Highway Administration data (2010).
- <sup>10</sup> National Bridge Inventory (2011), Federal Highway Administration.
- <sup>11</sup> Bureau of Transportation Statistics (2010), U.S. Department of Transportation. 2007 Commodity Flow Survey, State Summaries. [http://www.bts.gov/publications/commodity\\_flow\\_survey/2007/states/](http://www.bts.gov/publications/commodity_flow_survey/2007/states/)
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> National Cooperative Highway Research Program. Economic Benefits of Transportation Investment (2002). p. 4.
- <sup>14</sup> The Transportation Challenge: Moving the U.S. Economy (2008). National Chamber Foundation. p. 10.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Federal Highway Administration, 2008. Employment Impacts of Highway Infrastructure Investment.
- <sup>19</sup> The Transportation Challenge: Moving the U.S. Economy (2008). National Chamber Foundation. p. 5.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> FHWA estimate based on its analysis of 2006 data. For more information on FHWA's cost-benefit analysis of highway investment, see the 2008 Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges, and Transit: Conditions and Performance.