KEY FACTS ABOUT AMERICA’S SURFACE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AND FEDERAL FUNDING

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Roads and highways are the backbone of the U.S. transportation system, allowing Americans to travel more than 2 trillion miles annually. But conditions on the system are deteriorating, as the need for transportation improvements far outpaces the amount of state and federal funding available. As the nation rebounds from the recession, making needed improvements to roads, bridges and public transit could provide a significant boost to the economy by creating jobs and stimulating long-term economic growth as a result of enhanced mobility and access.

Signed into law in July 2012, MAP-21 (Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act), has improved several procedures that in the past had delayed projects, MAP-21 does not address long-term funding challenges facing the federal surface transportation program. In July 2014 Congress approved the Highway and Transportation Funding Act of 2014, an eight-month extension of the federal surface transportation program, on which states rely for road, highway, bridge and transit funding. The program, initially set to expire on September 30, 2014, will now run through May 31, 2015. In addition to extending the current authorization of the highway and public transportation programs, the legislation will transfer nearly $11 billion into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF) to preserve existing levels of highway and public transportation investment through the end of May 2015. Congress will need to pass new legislation prior to the May 31 extension expiration to ensure prompt federal reimbursements to states for road, highway, bridge and transit repairs and improvements.

Federal Funding for Our Nation’s Surface Transportation System Generates Jobs; Making Needed Highway Improvements Assures Economic Recovery and Growth

- Enhancing critical transportation assets will boost the 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 by reducing travel delays and transportation costs, improving access and mobility, improving safety, and stimulating sustained job growth.

- The 2015 AASHTO Transportation Bottom Line Report found that annual investment in the nation’s roads, highways and bridges needs to increase from $88 billion to $120 billion and from $17 billion to $43 billion in the nation’s public transit systems, to improve conditions and meet the nation’s mobility needs. The report also found that the current backlog in needed road, highway and bridge improvements is $740 billion.

- 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.
Current Road and Bridge Conditions, Travel Trends and Traffic Congestion

- Nineteen percent of America’s major roads are in poor condition. Driving on roads in need of repair costs U.S. motorists $109 billion a year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs – $516 per motorist.

- Twenty-four percent of America’s bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.

- Forty-four percent of America’s major urban highways are congested. Traffic congestion costs American motorists $121 billion a year in wasted time and fuel costs.

- Vehicle travel on America’s highways increased by 39 percent from 1990 to 2013, while new road mileage increased by only four percent. The nation’s population grew by 26 percent from 1990 to 2009.

- Americans rely almost exclusively on motor vehicles for mobility. Travel in private vehicles accounts for 88 percent of all person miles of travel. Air travel accounts for eight percent of all person miles of travel, while transit (including buses and trains) accounts for one percent.

Roadway Improvements Can Save Lives and Reduce Traffic Crashes

- Roadway conditions are a significant factor in approximately one-third of traffic fatalities. There were 32,719 traffic fatalities in 2013 in the U.S. A total of 165,340 people died on U.S. highways from 2009 through 2013.

- The national traffic fatality rate is 1.09 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel. The fatality rate on the nation’s rural roads is disproportionately higher than that on all other roads (2.20 fatalities per 100 million miles of travel vs. 0.75).

- Motor vehicle crashes cost the U.S. $230 billion per year, $819 for each resident, in medical costs, lost productivity, travel delays workplace costs, insurance costs and legal costs.

- Where appropriate, highway improvements such as removing or shielding obstacles, adding or improving medians, widening lanes and shoulders, upgrading roads from two lanes to four lanes, and improving road markings and traffic signals can reduce traffic fatalities and accidents and improve traffic flow to help relieve congestion.

- According to a study conducted by the Federal Highway Administration, $100 million spent on highway safety improvements will save 145 lives over a 10-year period.

Data from the U.S Census, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the Bureau of Transportation Statistics, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Congressional Budget Office, AASHTO and the Texas Transportation Institute was compiled and analyzed by TRIP, a nonprofit transportation research group based in Washington, D.C. Information is the latest available.