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IOWA’S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM FACES NUMEROUS CHALLENGES INCLUDING DETERIORATED ROADS AND BRIDGES, HIGH RATES OF RURAL FATALITIES, INCREASINGLY CROWDED ROADS, AND A LACK OF ADEQUATE FUNDING, WHICH COULD STIFLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES. DRIVING ON DEFICIENT ROADS COSTS IOWA’S DRIVERS APPROXIMATELY \$2 BILLION EACH YEAR.

Eds.: The report includes data regarding pavement and bridge condition, congestion, highway safety, economic development and funding.

Des Moines, IA – Iowa’s system of roads and bridges faces mounting challenges in the form of deteriorated roads and bridges, high rates of rural traffic fatalities, increasingly crowded roads, stifled economic development, and insufficient funding. Increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels could improve road and bridge conditions, boost safety, increase roadway efficiency and support long-term economic growth in Iowa, according to a new report released today by [TRIP](http://tripnet.org), a Washington, DC based national transportation organization.

The TRIP report, “[Iowa’s Top Transportation Challenges: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility](#),” finds that throughout Iowa, more than a quarter of major locally and state-maintained urban roads and highways are in poor condition. More than a quarter of Iowa’s bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. The state’s major urban roads are becoming increasingly congested, with drivers wasting significant amounts of time and fuel each year. And, the fatality rate on Iowa’s rural non-Interstate roads is more than three times the fatality rate on all other roads in the state.

According to TRIP calculations, driving on deficient roads cost Iowa’s drivers approximately \$2 billion annually in the form of additional vehicle operating costs including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear (\$935 million); the cost of lost time and wasted fuel due to traffic congestion (\$380 million); and the financial cost of traffic crashes (\$654 million).

Without a significant boost in transportation funding at the local, state and federal levels, the condition, efficiency and safety of Iowa’s surface transportation system will decline. The Iowa Department of Transportation estimates the state faces an annual transportation funding shortfall of \$215 million in order to meet the state’s most critical public roadway needs.

Twenty-seven percent of Iowa’s major urban roads and highways have pavements in poor condition, while an additional 50 percent of the state’s major urban roads are rated in mediocre or fair condition and the remaining 23 percent are rated in in good condition. Thirteen percent of Iowa’s rural roads are in poor condition, while 45 percent of rural roads are in mediocre or fair condition and 42 percent are in good condition. Driving on rough roads costs all Iowa motorists a total of \$935 million each year in the form of extra vehicle operating costs. These costs include accelerate vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

“A sound road system is arguably the most significant economic development initiative the state can provide its citizens,” said Sharon Presnall, senior vice president of the Iowa Bankers Association. “It is the backbone of a sound economy, connecting Iowa with regional, national and international markets.”

Iowa’s bridges are also increasingly deteriorated. Twenty-one percent of Iowa’s bridges are structurally deficient, meaning they have significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. These bridges are often posted for lower weights or closed to traffic restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including commercial trucks and emergency response vehicles. An additional five percent of Iowa’s bridges are functionally obsolete. Bridges that are functionally obsolete no longer meet current design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment.

“It’s time to fix our roads, because this has been put off far too long,” said Iowa Farm Bureau President Craig Hill. “A safe and efficient transportation system is vital for Iowans, whether it’s rural buses taking our kids to school or moving commerce.”

Traffic crashes in Iowa claimed the lives of 1,803 people between 2009 and 2013, an average of 361 fatalities each year. Iowa’s rural non-Interstate roads are particularly deadly, with a traffic fatality rate of 1.66 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel, more than three times the 0.50 fatality rate on all other roads and highways in the state. Each year, Iowa motorists lose \$654 million in the form of financial costs due to traffic crashes, including insurance costs and lost household productivity.

Increasing levels of traffic congestion are causing significant delays in Iowa, particularly in its larger urban areas, choking commuting and commerce. Traffic congestion costs Iowa’s motorist \$380 million annually in the form of lost time and wasted fuel as a result of traffic congestion.

The efficiency and condition of Iowa’s transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state’s economy. According to a [survey of industry executives](#) in the state, Iowa’s growing need for highway improvements was rated as one of the state’s most serious economic development weaknesses, just behind the availability of a skilled workforce. Annually, \$157 billion in goods are shipped from sites in Iowa and another \$142 billion in goods are shipped to sites in Iowa, mostly by truck.

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.

“These conditions are only going to get worse if greater funding is not made available at the local, state and federal levels,” said Will Wilkins, TRIP’s executive director. “Congress can help by approving a long-term federal surface transportation program that provides adequate funding levels, based on a reliable funding source. If not, Iowa is going to see its future federal funding threatened, resulting in fewer road and bridge improvements, loss of jobs, and a burden on the state’s economy.”