

TRIP details transportation needs in Wyoming

Energy, agriculture, tourism and manufacturing need road improvements to thrive

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In order to support Wyoming's rapidly growing energy industry and allow the state's agriculture, tourism and manufacturing industries to thrive, the state will need to make numerous improvements to its surface transportation system. This is according to a new report released by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation research organization.

TRIP's report, "The Top 25 Surface Transportation Projects to Support Economic Growth in Wyoming," identifies and ranks the projects needed to provide Wyoming with a transportation system that can support the increased movement of people, goods and natural resources throughout the state. These improvements would enhance economic development opportunities in the state's burgeoning energy sector as well as in other critical areas of the state's economy including tourism, agriculture and manufacturing. They would also improve safety on the state's roads, which would lower the financial and economic costs of traffic crashes.

According to the TRIP report, the most needed project is the modernization of the entire length of I-80 within the state to include the construction of variable-speed lanes, truck climbing lanes, truck parking areas and chain-up areas to facilitate freight and passenger travel on this critical national east-west corridor.

The following projects are also among the most needed in the state:

- Widening Route 59 in Campbell County to four lanes to improve access to the Powder River Basin area;
- Reconstruction and redesign of the I-80/I-25 interchange in Cheyenne to better serve nearby distribution centers and other businesses;
- Construction of a West Beltway Loop Highway in Casper to improve freight movement and development along the corridor; and
- Constructing a connector route in Torrington to replace the U.S. 85/U.S. 20-26 intersection and provide access to the Powder River Basin sulfur coal area and Niobrara Oil Play.

"A well-built and maintained modern transportation system is critical to the future of Wyoming's economic growth," said Laurie Farkas, vice president of the Greater Cheyenne Chamber of Commerce. "The bottom line for our state is we must be able to move supplies and materials in and out of Wyoming. Some people see construction and maintenance of our roads as a cost when it should be looked at as long-term investment in the future of our state."

"Wyoming can't get where it wants to go—in both a literal and an economic sense—without an efficient transportation system," said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "It is critical that Wyoming's transportation system is adequately funded at the local, state and federal level. Thousands of jobs and the state's economic well-being are riding on it."