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JUNE 27, 2017 AT 6:00 A.M. EDT

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RHODE ISLAND’S RURAL ROADS AND BRIDGES HAVE HIGH RATES OF DEFICIENCIES; STATE’S RURAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN NEED OF MODERNIZATION TO BETTER SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CONNECTIVITY

Eds: This report contains data for all 50 states for the percentage of rural roads in poor condition, the percent of deficient rural bridges, rural traffic fatality rates and the number of rural traffic fatalities. [Click here for infographics.](#)

Washington, D.C. – America’s rural transportation system is in need of repairs and modernization to support economic growth in the nation’s Heartland, which is a critical source of energy, food and fiber. Rural America is home to an aging and increasingly diverse population that is heavily reliant on the quality of its transportation system. This is according to a new report released today by **TRIP**. The report, [Rural Connections: Challenges and Opportunities in America’s Heartland](#), evaluates the safety and condition of the nation’s rural roads and bridges and finds that the nation’s rural transportation system is in need of improvements to address deficient roads and bridges, high crash rates, and inadequate connectivity and capacity. TRIP is a national non-profit transportation research group based in Washington, D.C. The chart below shows the states with the highest rate of rural pavements in poor condition, states with the highest share of structurally deficient rural bridges and those with the highest fatality rates on non-Interstate, rural roads.

Rank	STATE	Rural Roads in Poor Condition	STATE	Structurally Deficient Rural Bridges	STATE	Fatality Rate per 100M VMT on Rural Roads	Fatality Rate per 100M VMT on All Other Roads
1	Rhode Island	41%	Rhode Island	22%	South Carolina	3.82	1.03
2	Connecticut	39%	Iowa	22%	California	3.19	0.66
3	California	38%	Pennsylvania	22%	Kentucky	2.98	0.72
4	Hawaii	28%	South Dakota	20%	Mississippi	2.93	0.70
5	Mississippi	25%	West Virginia	17%	Montana	2.81	0.86
6	New Mexico	25%	Nebraska	16%	Nevada	2.77	1.06
7	Vermont	24%	Oklahoma	16%	Arizona	2.70	1.15
8	Pennsylvania	22%	North Dakota	16%	North Carolina	2.69	0.65
9	Arkansas	22%	Louisiana	15%	Oregon	2.68	0.64
10	Oklahoma	22%	Maine	15%	Arkansas	2.56	0.90
11	Missouri	21%	Missouri	14%	Virginia	2.46	0.51
12	Washington	21%	Mississippi	13%	Louisiana	2.46	1.16
13	Alaska	20%	New York	13%	Texas	2.43	1.09
14	Virginia	20%	New Hampshire	13%	Tennessee	2.35	0.91
15	Maine	19%	Michigan	13%	Georgia	2.35	0.96
16	Wisconsin	19%	North Carolina	11%	Pennsylvania	2.33	0.83
17	Louisiana	18%	New Jersey	11%	Wyoming	2.30	0.92
18	Michigan	17%	South Carolina	11%	Illinois	2.28	0.70
19	West Virginia	17%	Wyoming	11%	West Virginia	2.24	0.81
20	Iowa	15%	Idaho	10%	Kansas	2.24	0.50
21	Idaho	14%	Alaska	10%	Indiana	2.24	0.61
22	South Dakota	14%	Massachusetts	10%	Oklahoma	2.21	0.91
23	Texas	14%	Wisconsin	10%	Washington	2.20	0.64
24	Massachusetts	13%	Kansas	9%	Michigan	2.19	0.59
25	Minnesota	12%	Montana	9%	Colorado	2.09	0.83

The report finds that rural roads and bridges in Rhode Island have significant deficiencies. Forty-one percent of Rhode Island's rural roads are rated in poor condition - the highest rate in the nation - and 33 percent are rated in mediocre condition. Twenty-two percent of Rhode Island's rural bridges are rated as structurally deficient, the highest rate in the nation. The rate of traffic fatalities on Rhode Island's non-Interstate, rural roads – 1.03 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel – nearly double the fatality rate on all other roads in the state.

“There's little doubt that the condition of our infrastructure directly impacts the safety and mobility of motorists,” said Lloyd Albert, AAA Northeast senior vice president of Public and Government Affairs. “While TRIP's findings clearly highlight challenges with rural roads here in Rhode Island, actions taken over the past several years by state leaders, with support from the private sector, to more responsibly fund our transportation system should soon begin to pay dividends to taxpayers who travel on and help pay for the state's roadways.”

The quality of life in America's small communities and rural areas, and the health of the nation's rural economy, is highly reliant on the quality of the nation's transportation system, particularly its roads, highways and bridges. America's rural transportation system provides the first and last link in the supply chain from farm to market while supporting the tourism industry and enabling the production of energy, food and fiber. Rural Americans are more reliant on the quality of their transportation system than their urban counterparts.

Rural America is home to the vast majority of tourist destinations, many of which rely on good access. “Crumbling bridges, poorly maintained roads and congested highways discourage travel, threatening the entire U.S. economy,” said Erik Hansen, vice president of government relations for the U.S. Travel Association. “Lawmakers have signaled their interest in finding solutions for America's surface transportation, as evidenced in passage of the FAST Act and the formation of the NACTTI advisory board. However, far more is needed--and fast--to finish the job.”

The TRIP report finds that the U.S. needs to implement transportation improvements that will improve rural transportation connectivity, safety and conditions to provide the nation's small communities and rural areas with safe and efficient access to support quality of life and enhance economic productivity. The nation's ability to address its rural transportation challenges will be greatly enhanced if Congress is able to provide a long-term, dedicated, user-based revenue stream capable of fully funding the federal surface transportation program.

“We applaud the president, the new administration, and members of Congress for leading the conversation on an issue of critical importance to our 21st century economy: rebuilding America's infrastructure,” said U.S. Chamber's Executive Director for Transportation Infrastructure Ed Mortimer. “The American business community looks forward to developing and implementing a long-term plan that will bring our nation's rural and urban infrastructure up to speed and spur economic growth. Now is the time to take action and to get the job done.”

“The safety and quality of life in America's small communities and rural areas and the health of the nation's economy ride on our rural transportation system. The nation's rural roads and bridges provide crucial links from farm to market, move manufactured and energy products, and provide access to countless tourism, social and recreational destinations,” said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. “Fixing the federal Highway Trust Fund with a long-term, sustainable source of revenue that supports the transportation investment needed will be crucial to the modernization of our rural transportation system.”