



For immediate release
Wednesday, February 25, 2015
Report available at: tripnet.org

Contact: [Rocky Moretti](tel:2022620714) (202) 262-0714 (cell)
[Carolyn Bonifas Kelly](tel:7038019212) 703.801.9212 (cell)
TRIP office (202) 466-6706

SOUTH DAKOTA’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 AND LEAD TO INCREASING DETERIORATION

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

Sioux Falls, SD – South Dakota’s transportation system 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 South Dakota, according to a new report released today by [TRIP](http://tripnet.org), a Washington, DC based national transportation organization.

The TRIP report, “[*South Dakota’s Top Transportation Challenges: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility*](#),” finds that pavement conditions on state-maintained roads are projected to deteriorate significantly over the next decade. The report also finds that approximately one quarter of South Dakota’s locally and state-maintained bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, the state’s major urban roads are becoming increasingly congested and the fatality rate on South Dakota’s roads is significantly higher than the national average.

Currently, two percent of state-maintained roads and highways in South Dakota are in poor condition, while nine percent are in fair condition and 89 percent are in good or excellent condition. However, by 2024, under current funding levels, the share of state-maintained roads in poor condition is projected to rise to 25 percent. Thirty-nine percent of county-maintained roads in South Dakota are in failing or in poor condition, while 28 percent of township-maintained roads are either closed or in poor condition. To maintain pavement conditions at their current level, South Dakota municipal and township governments would have to increase their annual road and highway investment by 46 percent. Making significant improvements in road and bridge conditions would require a doubling of current investment. Driving on rough roads costs all South Dakota motorists a total of \$206 million each year in the form of extra vehicle operating costs. These costs include accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

“Roads, bridges and highways are essential for business to operate and are a basic function of government,” said Evan Nolte, president and CEO of the Sioux Falls Chamber of Commerce. “This report brings a sharp focus on the needs and will be invaluable in helping seek policies that will keep South Dakota’s infrastructure strong.”

South Dakota's bridges are also increasingly deteriorated. Twenty percent of South Dakota's bridges are structurally deficient, the fourth highest share in the nation. Structurally deficient bridges 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 four percent of South Dakota's locally and state-maintained 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. At the current rate of transportation funding, it will take 40 years to replace the state's county bridges that are currently in need of replacement.

Traffic crashes in South Dakota claimed the lives of 650 people between 2009 and 2013, an average of 130 fatalities each year. The state's overall traffic fatality rate of 1.48 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is significantly higher than the national average of 1.09. South Dakota's rural non-Interstate roads have significantly higher rates of fatal crashes, with a traffic fatality rate of 2.19 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel, more than two-and-a-half times the 0.80 fatality rate on all other roads and highways in the state. Each year, South Dakota motorists lose \$164 million in the form of financial costs due to traffic crashes, including insurance costs and lost household productivity.

The efficiency and condition of South Dakota's transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state's economy. Annually, \$27 billion in goods are shipped from sites in South Dakota and another \$28 billion in goods are shipped to sites in South Dakota, 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, South Dakota 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."