

# KEY FACTS ABOUT ALASKA'S ROAD AND BRIDGE CONDITIONS AND FEDERAL FUNDING

Updated February 2007

The nation's roads and highways are the backbone of the U.S. transportation system, providing Americans with approximately 3 trillion miles of travel annually. From commuters heading to work, people driving to stores, church or the doctor's office and businesses shipping goods to customers throughout the nation and around the globe, Americans depend on good roads in their communities.

But there are problems on our nation's roads, highways and bridges. With traffic congestion worsening and road and bridge deterioration continuing, the U.S. Department of Transportation estimates that the current backlog of unfunded but needed road, highway and bridge repairs and improvements is currently \$461 billion.

In 2009, Congress will be required to reauthorize the current long-term federal surface transportation program -- the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). This legislation will have a significant impact on the future condition and traffic congestion levels of the nation's key roads, bridges and highways.

## ***Federal Funding for Our Nation's Road and Bridge System Generates Jobs; Making Needed Highway Improvements Assures Economic Security***

- Our nation's highways, transit systems, railroads, airports, ports and inland waterways drive our economy, enabling all industries to achieve the growth and prosperity that have made America strong and prosperous.
- A U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) study concludes that for each \$1 billion of federal spending on highway construction nationwide, 47,500 jobs are generated annually.
- The USDOT study also states that every dollar invested in the nation's highway system yields \$5.40 in economic benefits in reduced delays, improved safety and lower vehicle operating costs.
- Fifty-eight percent of the \$8 billion worth of commodities delivered annually from sites in Alaska is transported by trucks on the state's highways. Five percent is delivered by a combination of trucks and ships or barges, and two percent is delivered by parcel, U.S. Postal Service or courier, which use multiple modes, including highways.
- Driving on roads in need of repair costs Alaska motorists \$156 million a year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs – \$323 per motorist.
- Traffic congestion costs American motorists \$63.1 billion a year in wasted time and fuel costs. Americans spend 3.7 billion hours a year stuck in traffic.
- Motor vehicle crashes cost Alaska \$475 million per year, \$758 for each resident, in medical costs, lost productivity, travel delays, workplace costs, insurance costs and legal costs.

## ***The Federal Highway Trust Fund Guarantees Funding Needed for Our Nation's Roads and Bridges***

- The Federal Highway Trust Fund was established by the Federal-Aid Highway and the Highway Revenue Acts of 1956 to provide revenue needed to help build and improve the Interstate System and roads and bridges that are eligible for federal aid.

**TRIP**

**a national transportation research group**

- The Federal Highway Trust Fund is funded by a federal gasoline tax of 18.4 cents per gallon and a federal diesel tax of 24.4 cents per gallon.
- The Highway Trust Fund consists of a highway account, which receives 15.44 cents per gallon of the gasoline tax, a mass transit account, which receives 2.86 cents per gallon, and a Leaking Underground Storage Tank Trust Fund, which receives 0.1 cent per gallon. The highway trust fund is designed to finance road and bridge and mass transit improvements on a pay-as-you-go basis. Its expenditures by law cannot exceed its income.
- The Office of Management and Budget projects that the balance in the Highway Trust Fund will be at *negative* \$200 million some time in fiscal year 2009.
- Since 1956, \$7.9 billion has been disbursed from the Highway Trust Fund for road and bridge projects in Alaska

### ***Current Road and Bridge Conditions, Travel Trends and Traffic Congestion***

- Fifty percent of Alaska's major roads are in poor or mediocre condition.
- Twenty-six percent of Alaska's bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete.
- 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.
- Vehicle travel on Alaska's highways increased by 27 percent from 1990 to 2005. Alaska's population grew by 21 percent between 1990 and 2005.
- Vehicle travel on America's highways increased by 39 percent from 1990 to 2005, while new road mileage increased by only four percent. The nation's population grew by 19 percent during that period.

### ***Roadway Improvements Can Save Lives, Reduce Accidents and Relieve Congestion***

- Roadway conditions are a significant factor in approximately one-third of traffic fatalities. There were 72 traffic fatalities in 2005 in Alaska.
- 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.
- A total of 446 people died on Alaska's highways from 2001 through 2005. Nationwide, 76 percent of all fatal crashes occur on two-lane roads while only 14 percent of fatal crashes occur on roads with four or more lanes. In Alaska, 93 percent of major roads, excluding the Interstate, are two lanes.

*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 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.*

**TRIP**  
a national transportation research group