

# A SAFER ROAD TO TOMORROW

July 2019

## **Trip Report: NH's Rural Roads & Bridges Have Significant Deficiencies**

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. With increases in population and growing employment, rural America is heavily reliant on the quality of its transportation system to sustain further growth. This is according to a new report released by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit. 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 immediate improvements to address deficient roads and bridges, high crash rates, and inadequate connectivity and capacity. The chart below shows the states with the highest rate of rural pavements in poor condition, states with the highest share of rural bridges that are rated poor/structurally deficient, and states with the highest fatality rates on non-Interstate, rural roads.

The report finds that 21 percent of New Hampshire's rural roads are rated in poor condition, the tenth highest rate in the nation, and 18 percent are rated in mediocre condition. Nine percent of New Hampshire's rural bridges are rated as poor/structurally deficient, the 17th highest share in the U.S. Bridges that are poor/structurally deficient have significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge and are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including agricultural equipment, commercial trucks, school buses, and emergency services vehicles. The rate of traffic fatalities on New Hampshire's non-interstate, rural roads is nearly double the fatality rate on all other roads in the state -- 1.09 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel versus 0.59.

"Rural roads play a critical role in supporting the transportation needs of millions of Americans every day," said Kathleen Bower, AAA senior vice president of public affairs and international relations. "Damaged and deteriorating roadways too often result in deadly crashes, and it is time to act. Making critical safety improvements to rural roads will save thousands of lives each year and help move our economy forward."

America's rural transportation system provides the first and last link in the supply chain from farm to market, connects manufacturers to their customers, supports the tourism industry, and enables the production of energy, food and fiber. Rural Americans are more reliant on the quality of their transportation system than their urban counterparts.

"The health of the nation's economy and the safety and quality of life in America's small communities and rural areas ride on our rural transportation system," said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "Fixing the federal Highway Trust Fund with a sustainable source of revenue that supports the transportation investment needed will be crucial to the modernization of our rural transportation system."

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**A SAFER ROAD  
TO TOMORROW**  
Safety • Quality of Life • Economic Development

### **Safer Road Partners**

#### **Associated General Contractors of New Hampshire**

The Associated General Contractors is a non-profit trade organization of general contractors, subcontractors, and industry professionals dedicated to improving industry standards.

#### **NH Good Roads Association**

NH Good Roads Association is a non-profit trade organization established to encourage the development of a safe, efficient and environmentally sound highway transportation system.

#### **Safety and Health Council of Northern New England**

The Council's mission is to educate and promote safety & health policies, practices and procedures that prevent and mitigate human economic losses arising from unintended causes.

#### **NH Association of Chiefs of Police**

The Association secures a close relationship among commanding officers all over the state, to encourage a cooperative relationship among all police officials.

#### **NH Lodging & Restaurant Association**

The Association is a non-partisan organization to promote, protect and educate the food service and lodging industries and to ensure positive business growth for our members.

#### **Business & Industry Association**

The Association is NH's leading business trade association. It advocates for business interests with state and federal legislators and regulators.

### TRIP Report: Rural Roads & Bridges Deficiencies by State

Rank	State	Rural Pavements in Poor Condition	State	Rural Bridges Poor/Structurally Deficient	State	Fatality Rate per 100M VMT on Rural Non-Interstate Roads	Fatality Rate per 100M VMT on All Other Roads
1	RI	39%	RI	23%	SC	3.60	0.98
2	CA	32%	IA	21%	CA	3.16	0.77
3	NM	30%	WV	20%	AZ	2.94	1.31
4	WV	30%	PA	18%	RI	2.57	0.92
5	HA	30%	SD	18%	WV	2.55	0.91
6	OK	30%	LA	15%	TN	2.55	0.93
7	MS	27%	ME	14%	KY	2.54	1.02
8	AK	22%	NY	12%	LA	2.48	1.21
9	ME	22%	NC	12%	KS	2.47	0.85
10	NH	21%	OK	12%	OR	2.44	0.68
11	WA	21%	MI	12%	NC	2.43	0.70
12	PA	21%	ND	11%	TX	2.38	1.11
13	MO	21%	MS	10%	AL	2.38	0.81
14	CT	20%	AK	10%	GA	2.36	1.00
15	LA	19%	NE	9%	VA	2.34	0.57
16	WI	19%	MO	9%	DE	2.33	0.74
17	TX	18%	NH	9%	IN	2.32	0.68
18	MA	17%	MA	9%	OK	2.24	0.86
19	MI	16%	NJ	9%	FL	2.23	1.32
20	VT	16%	CA	9%	PA	2.18	0.79
<b>US Average</b>		<b>15%</b>	<b>US Avg</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>US Avg</b>	<b>2.14</b>	<b>0.88</b>

The full report can be found at <http://www.tripnet.org>.

### As FAST Act Expiration Date Approaches, the Future of NH Infrastructure Funding is Uncertain

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act will be expiring in September 2020 and must be reauthorized in order for New Hampshire to continue addressing our unique infrastructure needs. Currently, federal funding provides nearly 75% of the highway funded projects in the state. President Trump and congressional Democratic leaders recently agreed on a \$2 trillion infrastructure package, but the real question will be if both sides can agree on the source of those funds.

On the state level, there will be no surplus funds relegated to towns for roads and bridges in the coming budget, unlike previous years. In 2017, the legislature approved \$36.8M for local road and bridge projects. Then in 2018, \$20M was appropriated for state red list bridges and \$10.4M for municipal bridges. While the proposed 2020-2021 state budget does provide \$20M a year for municipalities, that amount is not designated specifically for infrastructure improvements. Additionally, funding procured from the state gas tax increase of 2014 will over the next year go toward paying off TIFIA bonds, leaving minimal funding for future projects. State municipal bridge aid has been level-funded for the next two years at \$6.7M, leaving the existing backlog of deficient bridges largely underfunded.

The New Hampshire legislature will be considering the 2021-2030 Ten-Year Intermodal Transportation Plan next year, which will be an opportunity to see if there will be adequate funding for infrastructure investment or if the state will run into the same issues as Washington. The Governor's Advisory Council on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) has identified the 2021-2030 priorities, which include:

- Pavement preservation
- Bridge preservation & red list bridges
- Dedicated SB 367 funds or TIFIA loan pledged rural roads & red list bridges
- Completion of I-93 Salem to Manchester and funding for Exit 4A

Next year will be critical for infrastructure investment on both the state and federal levels. The FAST Act requires congressional reauthorization while New Hampshire's bridges are at risk of being neglected. It is clear that more bipartisan effort is needed to ensure adequate funding is available in the coming years.

### Utah Passes Road Usage Charge

Utah's governor has signed into law SB 72, creating a voluntary Road Usage Charge (RUC) for alternative fuel vehicles. Beginning on January 1, 2020, owners may opt into the program instead of paying a special registration fee.

According to a fact sheet on the program, the RUC is a user fee based on the number of miles driven instead of the gallons of fuel consumed. Similar to utilities, drivers pay for what they use. It is a potential replacement for the gas tax. Utah's RUC system is a voluntary program that alternative fuel vehicle owners may opt into at the time of their annual registration renewal, instead of paying a flat fee. In the program:

- Participants sign up with a third-party account manager that collects and reports miles driven, using in-vehicle technology they provide.
- Participants place a credit card on file and set up a pre-paid wallet from which mileage fees are deducted periodically.
- Payment of the per-mile fee stops once the accumulated total for the year is equal to the annual flat fee.
- The account manager provides a phone app or other method for submission of an odometer capture photo at enrollment and a yearly "true-up" photo to make sure that mileage on file corresponds to actual odometer readings.
- People with privacy concerns may opt for limited data retention or pay the flat fee.

In the New Hampshire legislature, a similar concept called the Road Usage Fee has been proposed a number of times. The fee would be based on vehicle miles traveled and average miles per gallon but would not be voluntary. The most recent version of the road usage fee, HB 478, was retained in committee in February.



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## NH DOS Releases Motor Vehicle Fatality Report

The NH Department of Safety of Motor Vehicles has released its latest report on fatal motor vehicle crashes. The data includes crashes that have occurred between January 1, 2019 through June 24, 2019. The department reports a total of 31 fatal crashes so far this year, resulting in the total deaths of 39 persons. The number of fatal crashes is down some 32 percent compared to the same period last year, which was 46.

*Of those 31 fatal crashes to date, 3 involved commercial vehicles. Eighteen of the fatalities were operators, while 5 were occupants. Additionally, 4 adult pedestrians were killed. No crashes or deaths were reported for bicycles, mopeds, or snowmobiles. The highest number of fatal motor vehicle crashes this year have occurred in Hillsborough and Merrimack Counties.*

*The report shows a total of 12 motorcycle deaths as of June 24, two of which were passengers. Motorcycle deaths went up 80% between 2017 and 2018, and 2019 numbers are holding steady with last year after a major incident in Randolph killed 7 motorcyclists.*

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