TRAVEL TRENDS AND TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

The importance of New Hampshire's surface transportation system and the reliable movement of goods it provides has been heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic. The steep reduction in vehicle travel – particularly during the onset of the pandemic – has also impacted transportation revenue in the state.

New Hampshire's population grew to approximately 1.4 million residents in 2020, a 10 percent increase since 2000.[i] New Hampshire had approximately 1.2 million licensed drivers in 2019.[ii] In 2019, the state's transportation system carried 13.8 billion vehicle miles of travel (VMT), a 15 percent increase from 2000.[iii] Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, vehicle travel in New Hampshire dropped by as much as 43 percent in April 2020 (as compared to vehicle travel during the same month the previous year), but rebounded to 16 percent below the previous year's volume in January 2021.[iv] From 2000 to 2019, New Hampshire's gross domestic product (GDP), a measure of the state's economic output, increased by 37 percent, when adjusted for inflation.[v] U.S. GDP increased 45 percent during the same period.[vi]

Traffic congestion causes significant delays in New Hampshire, particularly in its larger urban areas, choking commuting and commerce. Traffic congestion robs commuters of time and money and imposes increased costs on businesses, shippers and manufacturers, which are often passed along to the consumer. Increased levels of congestion can also reduce the attractiveness of a location to a business when considering expansion or where to locate a new facility.

Based on TTI methodology, TRIP estimates the value of lost time and wasted fuel in New Hampshire is approximately $525 million a year. The chart below shows the annual number of hours lost to congestion per driver, and the average cost per driver of lost time and wasted fuel due to congestion in the state's largest urban areas.

Chart 7. Annual hours and lost due to congestion and congestion costs per driver.

Location	VOC
Dover-Rochester	$370
Manchester	$472
Nashua	$433
Portsmouth	$490
NEW HAMPSHIRE STATEWIDE	**$553 Million**

Source: TRIP analysis of TTI Urban Mobility Report.

[i] U.S. Census Bureau (2020).
[ii] Highway Statistics (2019). Federal Highway Administration. DL-1C.
[iii] U.S. Department of Transportation - Federal Highway Administration: Highway Statistics 2000 and 2019. (2020) https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/travel_monitoring/tvt.cfm
[iv] Federal Highway Administration – Traffic Volume Trends. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/travel_monitoring/tvt.cfm

[v] TRIP analysis of Bureau of Economic Analysis data (2019). https://apps.bea.gov/itable/iTable.cfm?ReqID=70&step=1#reqid=70&step=1&isuri=1

[vi] Ibid.