

# RURAL CONNECTIONS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN AMERICA'S HEARTLAND



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## MAINE'S RURAL ROADS & BRIDGES HAVE SIGNIFICANT DEFICIENCIES; REPAIRS & MODERNIZATION NEEDED TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS, BOOST SAFETY & SUPPORT GROWTH & 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. 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 today 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.

**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. 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 today 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.

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	Rhode Island	39%	Rhode Island	23%	South Carolina	3.60	0.98
2	California	32%	Iowa	21%	California	3.16	0.77
3	New Mexico	30%	West Virginia	20%	Arizona	2.94	1.31
4	West Virginia	30%	Pennsylvania	18%	Rhode Island	2.57	0.92
5	Hawaii	30%	South Dakota	18%	West Virginia	2.55	0.97
6	Oklahoma	30%	Louisiana	15%	Tennessee	2.55	0.93
7	Mississippi	27%	<b>Maine</b>	<b>14%</b>	Kentucky	2.54	1.02
8	Alaska	22%	New York	12%	Louisiana	2.48	1.21
9	<b>Maine</b>	<b>22%</b>	North Carolina	12%	Kansas	2.47	0.85
10	New Hampshire	21%	Oklahoma	12%	Oregon	2.44	0.68
11	Washington	21%	Michigan	12%	North Carolina	2.43	0.70
12	Pennsylvania	21%	North Dakota	11%	Texas	2.38	1.11
13	Missouri	21%	Mississippi	10%	Alabama	2.38	0.87
14	Connecticut	20%	Alaska	10%	Georgia	2.36	1.00
15	Louisiana	19%	Nebraska	9%	Virginia	2.34	0.57
16	Wisconsin	19%	Missouri	9%	Delaware	2.33	0.74
17	Texas	18%	New Hampshire	9%	Indiana	2.32	0.68
18	Massachusetts	17%	Massachusetts	9%	Oklahoma	2.24	0.86
19	Michigan	16%	New Jersey	9%	Florida	2.23	1.32
20	Vermont	16%	California	9%	Pennsylvania	2.18	0.79
US AVERAGE		15%	US AVERAGE	9%	US AVERAGE	2.14	0.88

Fourteen percent of Maine's rural bridges are rated as poor/structurally deficient, the seventh 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 report finds that 22 percent of Maine's rural roads are rated in poor condition – the ninth highest rate in the nation – and 21 percent are rated in mediocre condition. The rate of traffic fatalities on Maine's non-Interstate, rural roads is nearly two-and-a-half times higher than the fatality rate on all other roads in the state – 1.6 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel vs. 0.66.

[Click here to view above excerpted press release.](#)

## **RURAL TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES: DEFICIENT ROAD AND BRIDGE CONDITIONS**

The nation's rural roads, highways and bridges have significant deficiencies and deterioration.

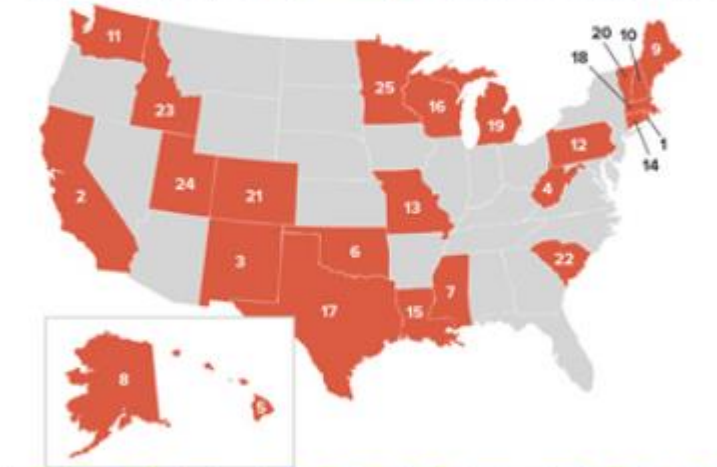
Fourteen percent of the nation's rural roads have pavements in poor condition, and nearly one-in-ten of the nation's rural bridges need rehabilitation, repair or replacement.

- In 2017, 15 percent of the nation's major rural roads (arterials and collectors) were rated in poor condition, 21 percent were rated in mediocre condition, 17 percent were rated in fair condition and 47 percent were rated in good condition.
- The chart below ranks the 25 states with the greatest percentage of rural roads in poor condition in 2017. Rural pavement conditions for all states can be found in [Appendix D](#).

RANK	STATE	Percentage of Rural Pavements in Poor Condition
1	Rhode Island	39%
2	California	32%
3	New Mexico	30%
4	West Virginia	30%
5	Hawaii	30%
6	Oklahoma	30%
7	Mississippi	27%
8	Alaska	22%
9	Maine	22%
10	New Hampshire	21%
11	Washington	21%
12	Pennsylvania	21%
13	Missouri	21%
14	Connecticut	20%
15	Louisiana	19%
16	Wisconsin	19%
17	Texas	18%
18	Massachusetts	17%
19	Michigan	16%
20	Vermont	16%
21	Colorado	14%
22	South Carolina	14%
23	Idaho	14%
24	Utah	14%
25	Minnesota	12%

- In 2018, nine percent of the nation's rural bridges were rated as poor/structurally deficient. Forty-six percent of rural bridges were rated fair and forty-six percent of rural bridges were rated in good condition. A bridge is rated poor/structurally deficient if there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Poor/structurally deficient bridges are often posted for lower weight or closed to traffic, restricting or redirecting large vehicles, including commercial trucks, agricultural equipment, school buses and emergency services vehicles. A fair rating indicates that a bridge's structural elements are sound but minor deterioration has occurred to the bridge's deck, substructure or superstructure.

## TOP 25 STATES WITH HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF MAJOR RURAL ROADS IN POOR CONDITION



**TRIP**  
a national transportation research group

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- The chart below ranks the 25 states with the highest share of rural bridges rated poor/structurally deficient in 2018. Rural bridge conditions for all states can be found in [Appendix E](#).

RANK	STATE	Percent Rural Bridges Rated Poor/Structurally Deficient	Percent Rural Bridges Rated Fair	Percent Rural Bridges Rated Good
1	RHODE ISLAND	23%	58%	19%
2	IOWA	21%	42%	37%
3	WEST VIRGINIA	20%	52%	28%
4	PENNSYLVANIA	18%	50%	32%
5	SOUTH DAKOTA	18%	51%	32%
6	LOUISIANA	15%	36%	50%
7	MAINE	14%	55%	31%
8	NEW YORK	12%	49%	39%
9	NORTH CAROLINA	12%	49%	39%
10	OKLAHOMA	12%	44%	44%
11	MICHIGAN	12%	47%	41%
12	NORTH DAKOTA	11%	36%	53%
13	MISSISSIPPI	10%	27%	63%
14	ALASKA	10%	45%	44%
15	NEBRASKA	9%	39%	51%
16	MISSOURI	9%	47%	44%
17	NEW HAMPSHIRE	9%	41%	50%
18	MASSACHUSETTS	9%	56%	35%
19	NEW JERSEY	9%	61%	30%
20	CALIFORNIA	9%	39%	52%
21	SOUTH CAROLINA	9%	48%	43%
22	HAWAII	9%	55%	36%
23	WYOMING	8%	62%	30%
24	WISCONSIN	8%	40%	52%
25	ILLINOIS	8%	40%	53%

## Appendix D - TRIP Rural Connections Report 2019

### Rural Pavement Conditions, 2017

STATE	POOR	MEDIOCRE	FAIR	GOOD
Alabama	9%	14%	17%	60%
Alaska	22%	20%	14%	44%
Arizona	9%	18%	15%	58%
Arkansas	9%	18%	26%	47%
California	32%	24%	17%	27%
Colorado	14%	25%	22%	39%
Connecticut	20%	28%	24%	28%
Delaware	6%	12%	22%	61%
Florida	2%	16%	8%	73%
Georgia	3%	14%	18%	65%
Hawaii	30%	32%	14%	24%
Idaho	14%	23%	9%	54%
Illinois	6%	21%	21%	51%
Indiana	7%	13%	16%	64%
Iowa	7%	15%	17%	61%
Kansas	9%	26%	8%	56%
Kentucky	6%	21%	24%	49%
Louisiana	19%	21%	18%	43%
Maine	22%	21%	15%	43%
Maryland	2%	5%	12%	81%
Massachusetts	17%	19%	18%	47%
Michigan	16%	18%	15%	51%
Minnesota	12%	19%	14%	55%
Mississippi	27%	27%	15%	31%
Missouri	21%	27%	20%	33%
Montana	9%	17%	17%	57%
Nebraska	8%	12%	10%	70%
Nevada	7%	15%	15%	62%
New Hampshire	21%	18%	11%	50%
New Jersey	6%	33%	29%	32%
New Mexico	30%	25%	12%	33%
New York	2%	8%	18%	73%
North Carolina	8%	18%	23%	51%
North Dakota	7%	12%	14%	67%
Ohio	6%	15%	14%	65%
Oklahoma	30%	22%	16%	32%
Oregon	9%	19%	15%	58%
Pennsylvania	21%	20%	19%	40%
Rhode Island	39%	31%	13%	17%
South Carolina	14%	26%	20%	40%
South Dakota	11%	29%	17%	42%
Tennessee	1%	5%	7%	87%
Texas	18%	28%	19%	34%
Utah	14%	23%	18%	45%
Vermont	16%	17%	16%	51%
Virginia	7%	17%	25%	51%
Washington	21%	30%	20%	29%
West Virginia	30%	25%	19%	25%
Wisconsin	19%	21%	20%	41%
Wyoming	6%	12%	14%	68%
U.S. Total	15%	21%	17%	47%

Source: TRIP Analysis of Federal Highway Administration Data.

## Appendix E - TRIP Rural Connections Report 2019

### Rural Bridge Conditions, 2018

State	Percent Poor/Structurally Deficient	Percent Fair	Percent Good
ALABAMA	5%	51%	44%
ALASKA	10%	45%	44%
ARIZONA	2%	39%	59%
ARKANSAS	5%	43%	52%
CALIFORNIA	9%	39%	52%
COLORADO	6%	54%	39%
CONNECTICUT	7%	58%	35%
DELAWARE	4%	70%	26%
DIST. OF COL.	0%	100%	0%
FLORIDA	5%	41%	54%
GEORGIA	4%	56%	40%
HAWAII	9%	55%	36%
IDAHO	8%	65%	27%
ILLINOIS	8%	40%	53%
INDIANA	6%	53%	40%
IOWA	21%	42%	37%
KANSAS	6%	42%	52%
KENTUCKY	7%	56%	37%
LOUISIANA	15%	36%	50%
MAINE	14%	55%	31%
MARYLAND	7%	58%	35%
MASSACHUSETTS	9%	56%	35%
MICHIGAN	12%	47%	41%
MINNESOTA	5%	31%	63%
MISSISSIPPI	10%	27%	63%
MISSOURI	9%	47%	44%
MONTANA	8%	62%	31%
NEBRASKA	9%	39%	51%
NEVADA	2%	56%	42%
NEW HAMPSHIRE	9%	41%	50%
NEW JERSEY	9%	61%	30%
NEW MEXICO	6%	55%	38%
NEW YORK	12%	49%	39%
NORTH CAROLINA	12%	49%	39%
NORTH DAKOTA	11%	36%	53%
OHIO	6%	35%	59%
OKLAHOMA	12%	44%	44%
OREGON	5%	57%	38%
PENNSYLVANIA	18%	50%	32%
RHODE ISLAND	23%	58%	19%
SOUTH CAROLINA	9%	48%	43%
SOUTH DAKOTA	18%	51%	32%
TENNESSEE	4%	49%	46%
TEXAS	2%	49%	50%
UTAH	3%	45%	52%
VERMONT	2%	45%	53%
VIRGINIA	5%	62%	33%
WASHINGTON	5%	42%	53%
WEST VIRGINIA	20%	52%	28%
WISCONSIN	8%	40%	52%
WYOMING	8%	62%	30%
TOTALS	9%	46%	46%

Source: TRIP Analysis of Federal Highway Administration National Bridge Inventory Data.

## Conclusion

Rural roads and bridges are a critical link in the nation's transportation system, providing access to natural resources and the energy, food and fiber that drives the nation's economic engine. In a rural America that is experiencing economic and population growth and that is highly transportation reliant, the transportation system plays a critical role in connecting communities to America's urban areas, supporting commerce, commuting and tourism. The nation's rural transportation system, particularly its roads and bridges, faces significant challenges. The rural transportation network carries increasing levels of traffic, fails to provide adequate connectivity for many communities, has significant deterioration and has significantly higher rates of serious traffic crashes than other roads.

Providing the nation with a rural transportation system that will support the economy and future development will require that the U.S. invest in a rural transportation system that is safe, efficient, and well-maintained, and that provides adequate mobility and connectivity to the nation's rural communities.

###

## Conditions/statistics as stated in this report:

**Maine's bridges: 14% Poor/Structurally Deficient**

**55% Fair**

**31% good**

**Ranked #7 (worst) nationwide**

**Maine's roads: 22% Poor**

**21% Mediocre**

**15% Fair**

**43% good**

**Ranked #9 (worst) nationwide**