



Improving Metropolitan Mobility

MAP-21 Reauthorization Fact Sheet

By Kevin DeGood February 12, 2014

Metropolitan congestion is the defining challenge of our time, costing the U.S. economy billions of dollars every year. Yet our federal policies have not kept pace with rapid urbanization and the need for a wider variety of mobility options.

Congress will debate the reauthorization of surface transportation programs this year. The current bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, or MAP-21, expires on September 30, 2014.

This fact sheet explains the current state of federal funding for surface transportation programs as well as important system performance characteristics that should shape policy reforms in the next bill. In order for the federal program to remain effective, Congress must find new revenues and focus policies on improving metropolitan mobility through balanced investments.

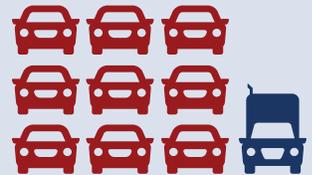
Driving trends

The United States has a mature transportation system that efficiently connects rural areas and small towns to markets and links cities of all sizes. The major challenge currently facing the nation is metropolitan congestion, yet federal funds flow overwhelmingly to highway expansion rather than to projects that improve mobility.

- Seventy-three percent of vehicle trips are less than nine miles in length.¹
- Americans drove almost 3 trillion miles in 2012. Cars, light trucks, and sport utility vehicles accounted for 89 percent of the total miles traveled.²
- According to the Federal Highway Administration, 67 percent—or 1.9 trillion miles—of all vehicle miles traveled occur within urban areas.³



Americans drive 2.9 trillion miles annually—enough for 6,070,578 round trips to the moon and back.



Passenger vehicles account for 90 percent of all driving; trucks account for only 10 percent.



Sixty-seven percent of all vehicle miles traveled occur in urban areas.

- Sixty percent of all federal highway funds may be spent on only 5 percent of public roadways. This severely restricts states' and metro regions' flexibility to allocate funds in a way that meets their needs.⁴
- Driving growth has rapidly outpaced population growth. Annual vehicle miles traveled have increased by more than five times from 458 million miles to 2.9 trillion miles annually since 1950. Over this same period, the population doubled from 152 million people to 310 million people.⁵
- Americans drove more than two times as many miles on rural roads as urban roads in 1957. By 2010, this ratio had flipped with more than two times as many urban miles as rural miles.⁶

Funding

For decades, the federal government has paid for surface transportation programs through a tax on gasoline. Reduced driving rates—both per capita and overall—combined with dramatic increases in vehicle fuel efficiency have pushed the Highway Trust Fund to the brink of insolvency. New vehicle-efficiency standards will further reduce trust fund revenues.

- Congress has transferred \$54 billion in general fund revenues into the Highway Trust Fund to prevent insolvency since 2008. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that another \$15 billion will be needed in fiscal year 2015 alone to keep the fund solvent.⁷
- Vehicle miles traveled per licensed driver have declined since 2005, well before the onset of the Great Recession.⁸
- Total vehicle miles traveled began to decrease starting in 2007 after average annual growth of 2 percent during the preceding 20-year period.⁹
- The corporate average fuel-economy standards will rise to 54.5 miles per gallon for cars and light-duty trucks by model year 2025.¹⁰ This will approximately double the efficiency of vehicles compared to current levels and dramatically reduce the amount of tax revenue flowing to the Highway Trust Fund, crippling federal surface transportation programs.



Fuel-efficiency standards will double in the next 12 years, pushing the Highway Trust Fund to insolvency.



Seventy-three percent of all vehicle trips are less than nine miles in length.

Freight and competitiveness

Timely, reliable, and efficient freight transportation is essential to our national competitiveness and ability to access global markets. Overreliance on interstates and other highways for short-distance trips by local residents create major bottlenecks that cause costly delays and disrupt supply chains.

- Trucks carried 11.3 billion tons of goods worth a staggering \$10.5 trillion in 2011.¹¹ Trucking, however, accounts for only 10 percent of all vehicles miles traveled.
- Long-haul operators are responsible for 60 percent of freight miles, and regional distributors account for the remaining 40 percent.¹²
- Freight bottlenecks occur predominantly within dense urban areas, not between them. Better system management, congestion pricing, and providing alternatives to driving such as high-quality public transportation can greatly improve system performance and avoid the need for costly highway expansion projects.

Barriers to leaving your car at home

- Less than 5 percent of households are located within a half-mile of rail transit and only 53 percent of Americans have access to any form of public transportation.¹³
- Nearly one-third of Americans live in neighborhoods without sidewalks.¹⁴

Kevin DeGood is the Director of Infrastructure Policy at the Center for American Progress.

Endnotes

- 1 Office of Highway Policy Information, "Our Nation's Highways 2011" (Washington: Federal Highway Administration, 2011), p. 30, figure 4-6.
- 2 Office of Freight Management and Operations, "Freight Facts and Figures 2012" (Washington: Federal Highway Administration, 2012), p. 31, figure 3-8.
- 3 Office of Highway Policy Information, "Functional System Travel – 2011" (Washington: Federal Highway Administration, 2012), table VM-2.
- 4 Office of Highway Policy Information, "Functional System Travel – 2011," table HM-260.
- 5 Based on author's calculation from Bureau of the Census, *United States - Race and Hispanic Origin: 1790 to 1990* (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2002), available at <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0056/tab01.xls>; Office of Highway Policy Information, "Annual Vehicle Distance Traveled in Miles 1936-1995" (Washington: Federal Highway Administration, 1997), available at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/summary95/vm201.pdf>; Office of Highway Policy Information, "Historical Monthly VMT Report" (Washington: Federal Highway Administration, 2013), available at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/travel_monitoring/historicvmt.cfm.
- 6 Results based on author's calculation from Office of Highway Policy Information, "Highway Statistics 2010: Functional System Travel" (Washington: Federal Highway Administration, 2012), available at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2010/vm2.cfm>; Office of Highway Policy Information, "Annual Vehicles Miles of Travel, 1957-1995" (Washington: Federal Highway Administration, 1997), available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ohim/summary95/vm203.pdf>.
- 7 Kim P. Cawley, "Status of the Highway Trust Fund," Testimony before the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, July 23, 2013, available at http://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/cbofiles/attachments/44434-HighwayTrustFund_Testimony.pdf.
- 8 Office of Highway Policy Information, "Our Nation's Highways 2011," p. 29, figure 4-5.
- 9 Office of Highway Policy Information, "Traffic Volume Trends" (Washington: Federal Highway Administration, 2012).
- 10 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "Obama Administration Finalizes Historic 54.5 mpg Fuel Efficiency Standards," Press release, August 28, 2012, available at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/About+NHTSA/Press+Releases/2012/Obama+Administration+Finalizes+Historic+54.5+mpg+Fuel+Efficiency+Standards>.
- 11 Office of Freight Management and Operations, "Freight Facts and Figures 2012" (Washington: Federal Highway Administration, 2012), p. 31, figure 3-8.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 U.S. Department of Transportation, "Transportation for a New Generation: Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2012-2016" (2012).
- 14 Ibid.