This publication provides a condensed overview of facts and figures about the Nation's highways. It is designed to be of interest to the average citizen. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is the source of the data except where noted. State Governments collect and provide these data to FHWA each year. Unless otherwise stated, 2006 data are displayed in this publication.

For more detailed data on many of the subjects covered, and for other publications relating to highway policy, visit the Office of Highway Policy Information at Web site:

www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/ohpi

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The Federal Highway Administration’s Office of Highway Policy Information (OHPI) establishes travel monitoring policy and guidelines, facilitates the application of technology, and collects and analyzes highway-related data from throughout the United States. These data include information about highway financing, motor fuel use, driver’s licensing, vehicle registration, traffic, and travel data. OHPI’s various publications provide information on the current state of highway operation as well as historical perspectives on our highway system.

Our Nation’s Highways highlights the latest key facts on the U.S. highway system. This 2008 edition is reorganized to help readers locate information more easily. We hope this edition will continue to be a valuable resource for not only elected and appointed officials but also the public.

David Winter
Acting Director
Office of Highway Policy Information
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“In large measure, America’s history is a history of her transportation.” So said President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1966, during the signing ceremony for the legislation creating the U.S. Department of Transportation. Since the introduction of the interstate system to Congress in 1939, the Nation has devoted significant resources to the creation of a roadway system that connects every population center. With the interstate system acting as the system’s backbone, we have enjoyed freedom of travel and efficiency of commerce as never before.

The functional classification schema developed by the Federal Highway Administration classifies roadways by their function within the State’s network of public roads. The three basic categories of functional classification are local roads, collectors, and arterials. Local roads serve homes, businesses, farms, and small communities, and provide access to collector roadways. Collectors channel traffic from the local roads to the arterials, which provide safe, reliable, and efficient travel between larger towns and major cities.

The key purposes of all roadways are to provide access and mobility. Local roads chiefly provide access, while mobility is the primary function of arterials. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the relationships between classes of roadways and their relative functions.

Data Source: Figures 1-1 and 1-2 are redrawn from Figure II-1 and II-4 of FHWA Functional Classification Guidelines, 1989, Office of Planning, Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation (www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/fcsec2_1.htm).
Figure 1-1. Hierarchy of Our Highway System

Figure 1-2. Access and Mobility
Figure 1-3. The National Highway System
Our National Highway System (NHS) is a network of roadways that is important to the Nation’s economy, defense, and mobility. The NHS includes all Interstate highways (arterials), the Strategic Highway Network (defense purpose), intermodal connectors (roads connecting to major intermodal facilities), and other principal arterials. Currently, the NHS includes more than 160,000 miles of highway.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
Figure 1-4. National Truck Network
The Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 authorized the establishment of a national network of highways designated for use by large trucks. On these highways, Federal width and length limits apply. The National Network (NN) includes almost all of the Interstate Highway System and other, specified non-Interstate highways. The network comprises more than 200,000 miles of highways.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. Note: Figure 1-4 is for illustrative purposes only. It shall not be interpreted as the official National Network nor shall it be used for truck size and weight enforcement purposes.
By the late 1980s, the U.S. highway network was near completion. Now, virtually all population centers are linked by paved roadways. Although there has been little construction of new roads and highways since 1980, the number of lane miles has been increasing as highways are widened with additional lanes to carry more vehicles. That is to say, for the most part, that we are adding capacity to existing highways rather than building new ones.

Note: After 1998, forest development roads ceased being treated as public roads. This is why Figure 1-5 (above) indicates significant drops in both centerline and lane mileage in 1999.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Highway Policy Information, Highway Statistics
Not surprisingly, the majority of public roads (about 76 percent) are owned by local governments. The approximately 3 percent of roadways owned by the Federal government are located mainly in national parks and forests, military garrisons, and Indian reservations. State governments own the remaining 21 percent of public roads, including most of the interstate highways.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Highway Policy Information, Highway Statistics
BY REDUCING TRAVEL time and increasing reliability, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes increase the number of people who can move through a congested corridor. While carpoolers, vanpoolers, and bus patrons benefit directly from a time-saving standpoint, we all share the benefits of cleaner air and lower energy use that are linked to HOV operations.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Highway Policy Information, Highway Performance Monitoring System
A toll highway is a road that drivers pay fees to use. Toll roads may also be known as turnpikes or toll ways. The fees collected are used to repay money borrowed for construction of the road. As the debt is repaid, the toll is also used for ongoing operations and maintenance.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Highway Policy Information, Highway Performance Monitoring System
While motor vehicles—automobiles, light trucks, vans, sports utility vehicles, and motorcycles—are the predominant forms of personal transportation, freight-carrying trucks predominate among all modes of freight movement in terms of tonnage and dollar value. The following figures and diagrams are snapshots of vehicle travel statistics on our highway system.

Figure 2-1. Passenger Travel Modal Choice

**Passenger Vehicles 86.4%**
- Auto, Van 61.6%
- Other Private Vehicle 0.7%
- Pickup 11.9%
- Utility Vehicle 12.2%

**Public Transportation 1.6%**
- Bus, Trolley 1.1%
- Commuter Train 0.1%
- Subway 0.5%

**Other Means 11.9%**
- Airplane 0.1%
- School Bus 1.7%
- Walk 8.6%
- Amtrak 0.03%
- Taxi 0.2%
- Other 0.6%

Among all modes of travel in the United States—rail, air, water, highway—highway travel by personal motor vehicle (automobile, light truck, van, and motorcycle) is predominant.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Highway Policy Information, National Household Travel Survey
The latest comprehensive goods movement data indicate that the U.S. transportation system moved nearly 21 billion tons of freight worth close to $15 trillion in 2006. Trucks alone moved over 60 percent in weight and over 65 percent of dollar value.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Freight Management and Operations, Freight Analysis Framework
Figure 2-3. Interstate Annual Average Daily Traffic, 2006

The most widely used parameter of measuring traffic activity on a highway or highway segment is annual average daily traffic (AADT). AADT can also be used to assess how serious congestion is by comparing the highway’s capacity with AADT at peak times and directions. These calculations help transportation agencies decide whether highway infrastructure is adequate to the demand.
VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT) is one of the most widely used measures of travel intensity. For a given segment of roadway, the VMT is obtained by multiplying AADT by the length of the roadway segment. For example, on a 5-mile highway segment traveled by 5,000 vehicles daily (an average obtained over a year), the VMT would be 25,000. VMT is a measure of total vehicle activity.

Data Source: U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Office of Highway Policy Information, Highway Statistics