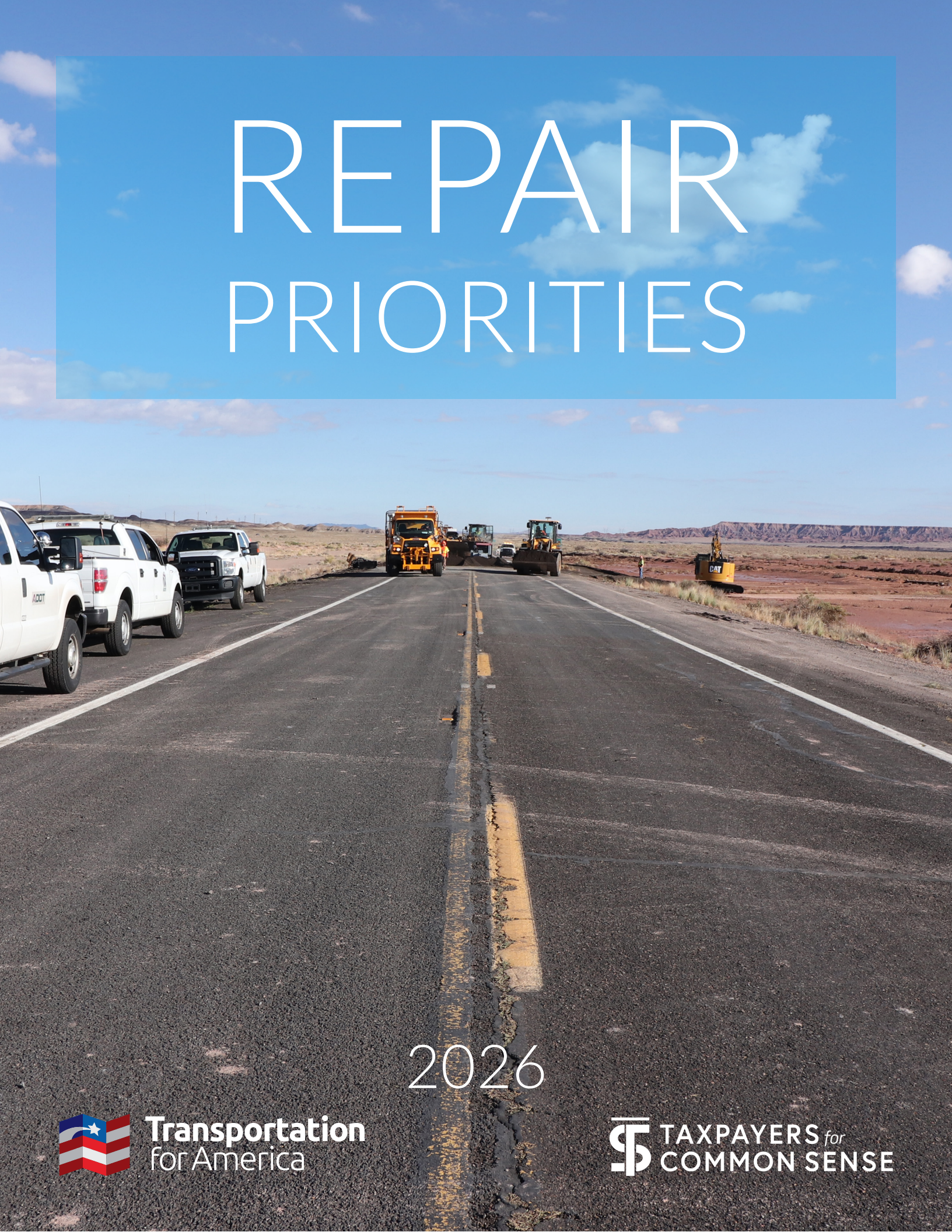
REPAIR PRIORITIES



2026

Transportation for America

TAXPAYERS for COMMON SENSE

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Appendix available at the homepage for Repair Priorities 2026: t4america.org/resource/repair-priorities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While the nation makes slow progress to improve the conditions of a small share of its roadways, the cost to fix them all continues to grow.

Between 2018 and 2024, the percentage of federal-aid eligible roads that were rough and damaged enough to be rated in "poor" condition fell by **just three percentage points**, despite historic levels of federal investment, including roughly **$60 billion per year for roads and bridges** under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Since the last edition of this report in 2019, states and metropolitann planning organizations (MPOs) have failed to make meaningful improvements, and taxpayers are still not seeing adequate returns for the substantial size of their investments—including billions in deficit spending beyond the gas tax.

Public domain U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Dennis Sloan

Preserving the conditions of our good roads and improving all the poor ones comes with an enormous price tag. Maintaining the lane-miles of roads that were in good and fair condition in 2024 would require an estimated **$32.6 billion on average annually** for routine preservation and maintenance. On top of that, addressing the existing backlog of roads in poor condition would cost an **additional $10.6 billion per year** over the course of a typical six-year federal transportation bill. In total, this amounts to **$43.2 billion annually—more than $259 billion over six years—**just to clear the backlog and keep the system in acceptable repair.

That's a huge price tag, but we could fully address these needs within the size and scope of the current federal program—if Congress decided to require and prioritize repair within it. Congress authorized $56.8 billion from the Highway Trust Fund for the highway formula programs in FY 2024, more than enough to cover the $43.2 billion for road repair needs on the federal-aid system. (Notably, these needs account for the cost to maintain less than one-fifth of all public roadways. See the inset box on p.9 about the data on federal-aid roadways.)

The fact that we have enough money but the outcomes aren't improving underscores a fundamental problem: **It is not simply how much we spend, but how we spend it.** Federal policy gives states broad flexibility in how transportation dollars are allocated, with few enforceable requirements to prioritize repair or to demonstrate measurable improvements in system conditions. As a result, states are free to expand roadway capacity while deferring essential maintenance, adding new long-term liabilities even as existing infrastructure falls further into disrepair. Decades of increased spending, including major stimulus investments, have not translated into better outcomes. National assessments continue to rate road and bridge conditions as mediocre. The American Society of Civil Engineers 2025 report card rated roads a D+ and bridges a C—essentially the same scores from their 2001 report card, despite hundreds of billions in federal spending since then. This reinforces the reality that funding alone, without accountability, will not solve the problem.

At the core of the problem is a failure to align priorities with outcomes. While policymakers routinely emphasize the need for repair—especially when making the case for increased spending—these commitments are rarely backed by enforceable standards to actually fix it first. The result is a system where oversight is limited, and taxpayers are left without clarity on whether their investments are improving road conditions. A better approach would reorient the federal program toward maintaining and operating existing assets first, before building new infrastructure that adds to their long-term maintenance obligations. Until these priorities are matched with clear, measurable goals, the gap between rhetoric and results from the federal transportation program will continue to widen.

So what will it take to fix the system?

More funding alone will not fix the nation's deteriorating roads and bridges. Congress should ensure that federal transportation funding is paired with strong accountability measures that prioritize repair and improve system performance by taking the following actions in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill:

1 Guarantee measurable outcomes for taxpayers

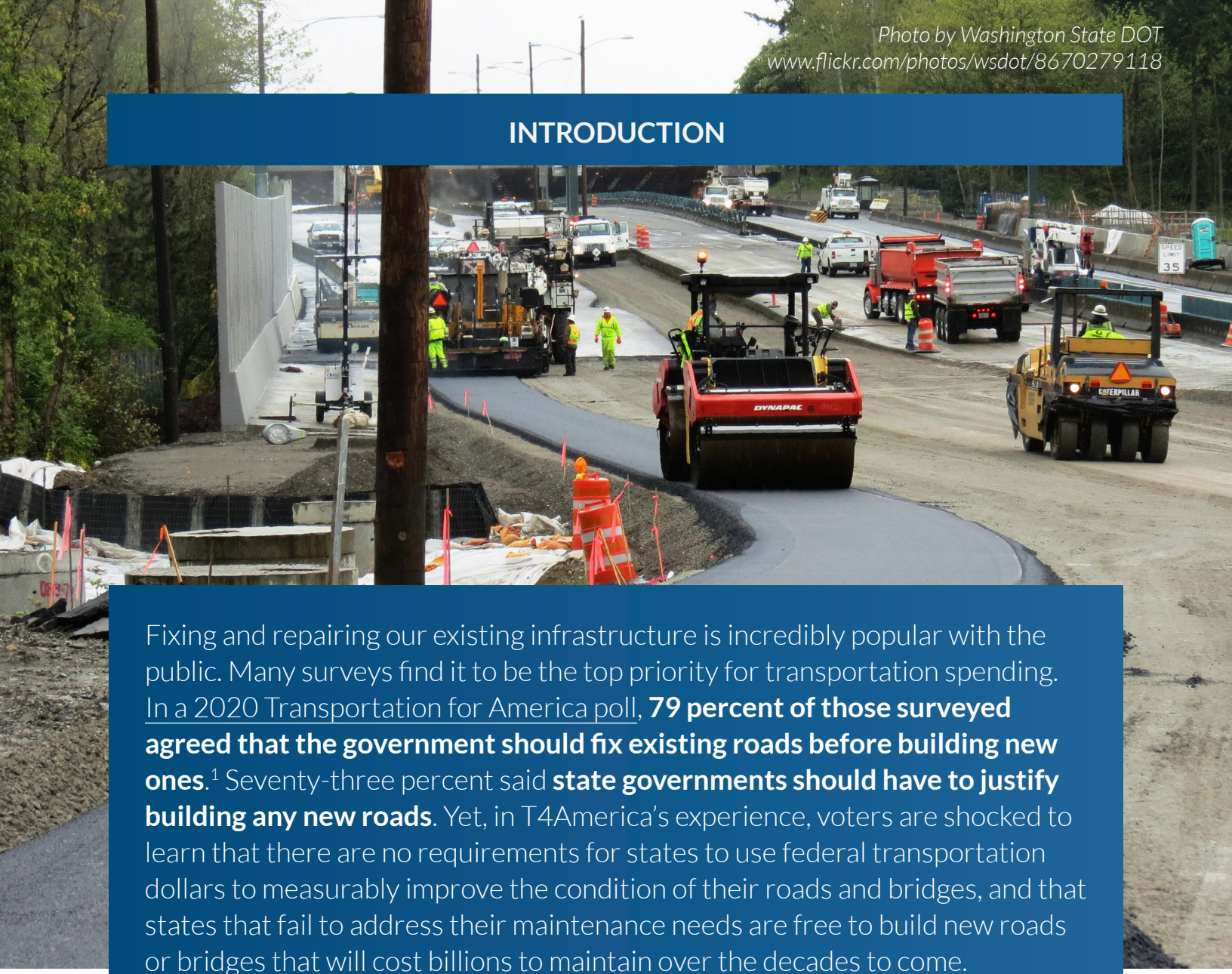
Taxpayers should not be asked to invest more in the nation's roads without clear assurances that all funding will measurably improve system conditions. The next transportation bill should establish clear, measurable goals for improving road and bridge conditions. Requiring states to set improving targets and enforcing them with meaningful penalties for failure would ensure federal funding delivers tangible results, creating accountability that has been absent from federal transportation policy for decades.

2 Require states to repair existing systems before expanding

Congress should require states to maintain existing infrastructure before building new capacity. Continuing to expand the system while neglecting repair creates a cycle of deterioration, forcing states to repeatedly return for additional funding to address preventable problems. States should also be required to demonstrate that they can afford to maintain new projects over their full lifecycles while keeping their overall systems in a state of good repair before any expansion project is approved.

3 Improve data transparency and reporting standards

Congress should require the Federal Highway Administration to routinely collect and publish standardized, comprehensive data on all public road system conditions, lane-miles, and federal fund spending at the project level. This should include clear, consistent information covering project location, capacity increases through widening or design changes, and the long-term maintenance costs associated with those projects. Without a clear understanding of what exists, what condition it is in, and how funds are being used, it is impossible to ensure that investments deliver results.



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INTRODUCTION

Fixing and repairing our existing infrastructure is incredibly popular with the public. Many surveys find it to be the top priority for transportation spending. In a 2020 Transportation for America poll, **79 percent of those surveyed agreed that the government should fix existing roads before building new ones**.[1] Seventy-three percent said **state governments should have to justify building any new roads**. Yet, in T4America's experience, voters are shocked to learn that there are no requirements for states to use federal transportation dollars to measurably improve the condition of their roads and bridges, and that states that fail to address their maintenance needs are free to build new roads or bridges that will cost billions to maintain over the decades to come.

The rhetoric used to justify new transportation funding never lines up with the outcomes it produces. The majority of lawmakers from both parties insist that massive new spending is the only way we'll ever fix our crumbling roads and bridges. So why are the past results so poor? After multiple federal transportation bills and several economic stimulus packages totaling more than $1.5 trillion over the last 30-plus years which poured historic amounts of funding into transportation, we have failed to make measurable progress. The American Society of Civil Engineers agrees, grading our bridge conditions the same today (C) as they did in 2005. And our roadways have improved only from a D to an uninspiring D+ since 2001.

The problem is not the level of spending, it's how the money is spent.

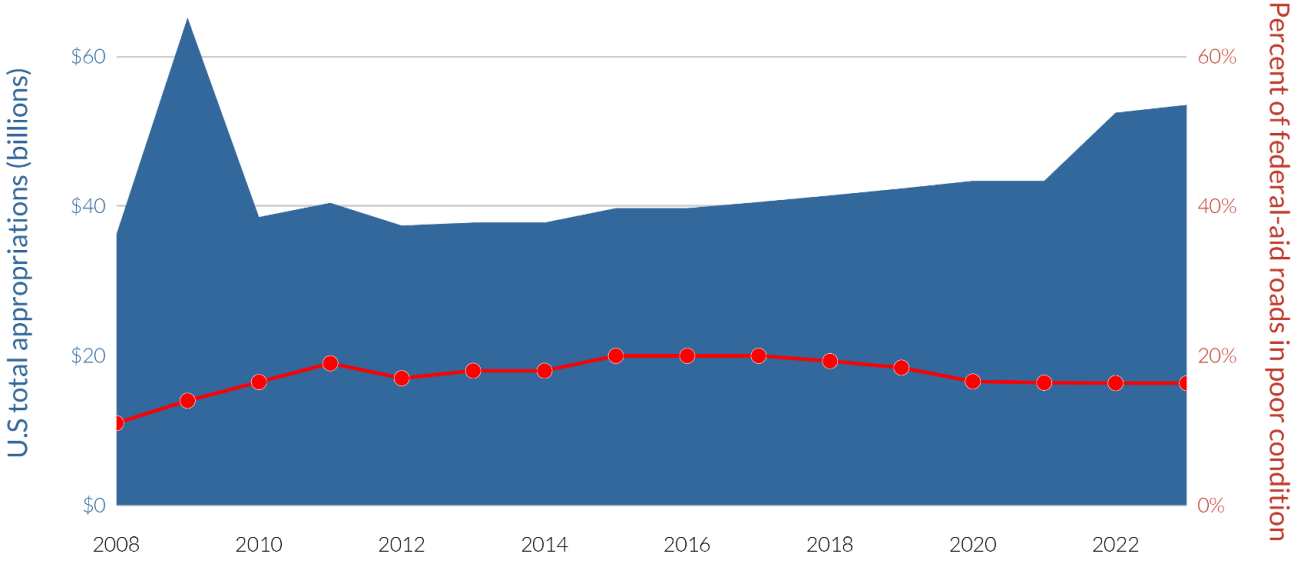
Any responsible homeowner with a leaky roof would not build an expensive addition to their home without the finances to fix their roof first. Yet Congress allows transportation agencies to do just that by failing to require them to prioritize repair while allowing them to build new roads they cannot afford to maintain. The rhetoric is always *repair, repair, repair*, but the priorities turn out to be *system expansion, flexibility without oversight, and new road capacity.*

Even as many states have shifted their spending toward repair over the past 10–15 years, inflation and rising construction costs have reduced what those dollars can accomplish. The backlog of roads in poor condition is so deep that even with higher investment levels, states can't keep up. States face a mammoth task of repairing decades of deferred maintenance while simultaneously taking on the long-term costs of any new construction. **Without a meaningful shift in priorities, the backlog will continue to grow, and the financial burden of keeping the system in a state of good repair will only increase.**

The same taxpayers who would prioritize repair if they were at the helm have been sold a bill of goods by both Congress and their transportation agencies. They have been promised that the funds would be used for repair, but Congress has been allergic to the idea of enforcing that priority with concrete requirements.

The federal program needs to be oriented around operating and maintaining what we've already built, and to allow expansion only when an agency can prove it can afford to operate and maintain a new asset over its full lifecycle. It's time for our priorities to match our rhetoric.

Percentage of roads in poor condition vs. federal appropriations



This chart is compiled using data from the FHWA Highway Statistics series (2009-2024)Table FA-4, Table HM-64, and Table HM-63; and data from the calculation of total federal-aid eligible centerline miles of road in poor condition in Appendix A of the FHWA American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 Implementing Guidance.

About the data in Repair Priorities 2026

Spending

This report sources a range of availalbe data from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and U.S. Department of Transportation publications like the Highway Statistics Series and National Bridge Inventory. In it, we evaluate state highway agency (state DOT) capital spending from all sources as reported to FHWA in Highway Statistics Series Table SF-12A.

Which roads? Defining federal-aid roadways

The data in this report only concern federal-aid eligible roadways, which are typically wider, more significant roads such as interstates, arterials, and collector roads. This 2.5 million lane-mile network of federal-aid roads—which includes the 777,000 lane-miles of the National Highway System—represents only about 28% of the full 8.9 million lane-mile public road network.[15] Due to the fact that national-level condition data only exists for the federal-aid eligible network, Repair Priorities is only able to evaluate conditions on this small but busy and vital slice of the U.S. road network.

Conditions

We evaluate the length and extent of states' roadways, as well as their conditions, as measured in lane-miles and centerline miles. (Lane-miles compensates for width; centerline miles are just length of roadway regardless of width.) FHWA measures the condition of federal-aid eligible roadways, defining pavement condition using measures of ride quality and structural distress.[16] A road is considered good only when all key indicators are in good condition, and poor if multiple indicators show significant deterioration. FHWA measures the percentage of total centerline miles of federal-aid eligible roadway that are in poor or good condition within the federal transportation performance management system. FHWA releases updates to the Highway Statistics Series data on an approximately annual basis, though some tables in the report are not always updated annually.

Period of analysis

We evaluated data primarily from 2018 to 2024 to update findings that extended from 2009 to 2017 in the previous edition of Repair Priorities. Finally, you might notice that according to some figures in this report, figures describing how many lane-miles are in a state may actually shrink in some states from year to year before bouncing back, often greater than before. This isn't because states are tearing down hundreds of miles of road each year. FHWA relies on state-reported data, which is not always consistently reported, and also relies on statistical extrapolations of sampled road data.[17,18] Considering the vast extent of public roadways, and the varied ownership, there are slight variations each year due to shifting methodological assumptions, ownership changes, and actual growth in lane mileage of roads.

The high cost of repair

While the share of roads in poor condition has slightly declined—from 19 percent in 2018 to 17 percent in 2020 and 16.34 percent in 2024—these improvements represent only a modest reduction in the overall backlog and have come at an incredibly high cost.

$32 billion per year just to keep our good roads "good."

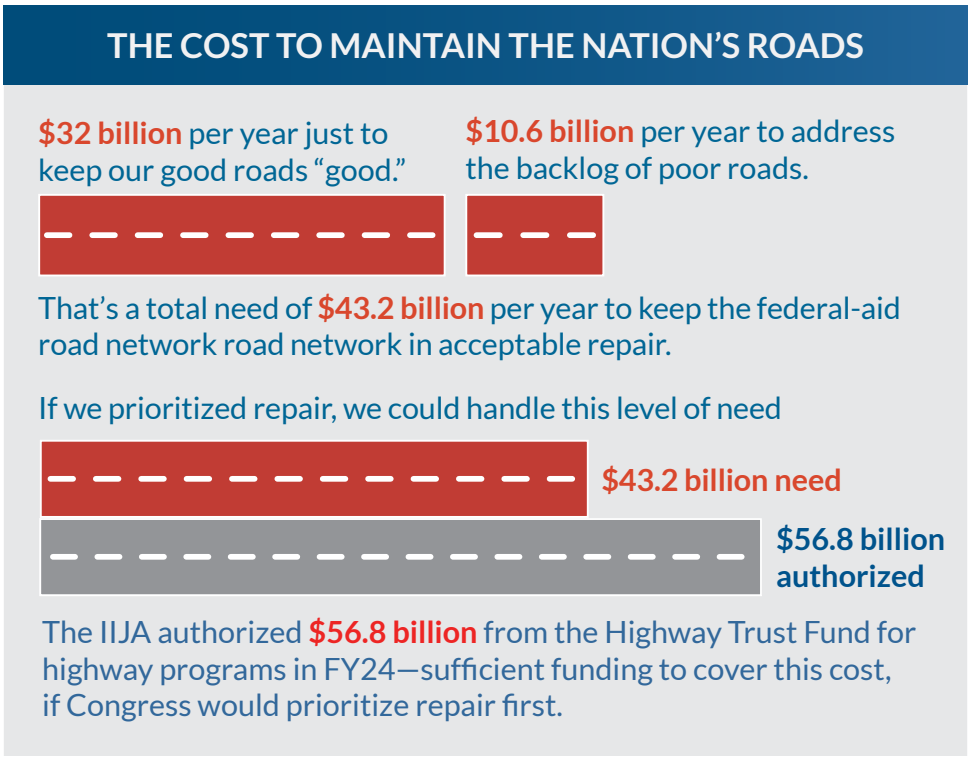
As of 2024, states would need to spend an estimated $32.6 billion annually on road repair just to keep the roads that we know are in good and fair condition in an acceptable state through routine pavement management practices.

$10.6 billion per year more to address the backlog of poor roads.

It is significantly more expensive to rehabilitate roads that have fallen into poor repair than to preserve roads in good condition through routine pavement preservation. We estimate, based on the miles of roadway reported to be in poor condition, that the total cost to bring the nation's current backlog of federal-aid eligible roads in poor condition into good repair would be approximately $63.8 billion, or $10.6 billion per year over the life of a six-year federal transportation bill.

$43.2 billion per year to keep the federal-aid eligible road network in acceptable repair

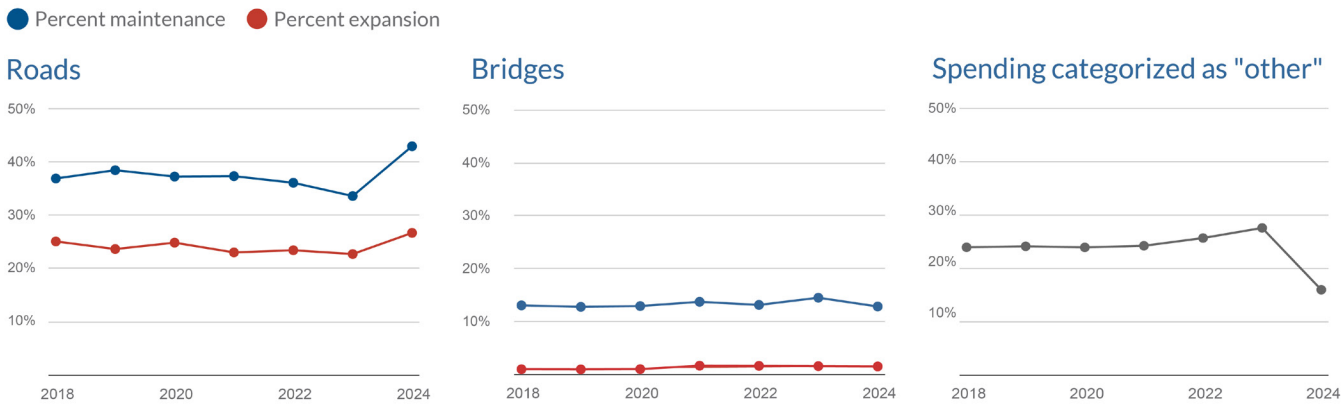
More than $259 billion over six years is a significant price tag, but it is possible to address the backlog and keep existing roads in good repair within the size and scope of the current federal program—**if Congress requires repair to be the priority**. For context, the IIJA authorized $56.8 billion from the Highway Trust Fund for highway formula programs in FY2024—more than enough to cover the cost of fixing the roads in the federal-aid system.[2]



Positive trends in repair spending

Since the first edition of Repair Priorities in 2011, states have made modest progress on repair spending. Between 2004 and 2008, states spent more on road expansion than on repair. Between 2009 and 2014, spending on expansion and repair was roughly equal. Since then, states have started to spend more on repair than on expansion. (25 percent on expansion vs. 39 percent on repair on average from 2018-2024.) Yet, with rising construction and maintenance costs, even increased spending may not yield the same results as in the past.[3] And this positive shift in spending has failed to radically move the needle on road and bridge conditions. Though spending trends have improved, states continue to borrow against the future by building new roads, often in hopes of reducing congestion, even though transportation investment strategies focused solely on adding lane-miles .[4]

Average annual state DOT expenditures on expansion vs repair



Data derived from years 2018 through 2024 state highway agency capital outlays summarized in Highway Statistics Series Table SF-12A. See Appendix A

Every new road is not an asset, but a financial obligation that creates new annual costs. The national network of public roads, across all jurisdictions, grew by 112,957 lane-miles between 2018 and 2024. That's the equivalent of a new single-lane road spanning the country from coast to coast 45 times. Meanwhile, maintaining a single lane-mile of road in a state of good repair costs approximately $47,296 annually in 2024 dollars, based on inflation-adjusted estimates (see Appendix B).[5] Just to preserve the new 112,000-plus lane-miles added during this seven-year period would require an **additional $5.3 billion in annual maintenance obligations from states**.

ROADS ARE LIABILITIES, NOT ASSETS

Each new mile creates new guaranteed costs over their lifecycles.

$47,300 annually per lane mile to keep roads in a state of good repair

X

112,957 lane miles added to the full public road network 2018-2024

=

$5.3 billion needed annually to maintain these recently added lane miles

Between 2018 and 2024, the full public road network grew by
112,957 lane-miles

That's the equivalent of a new single-lane road spanning the country 45 times

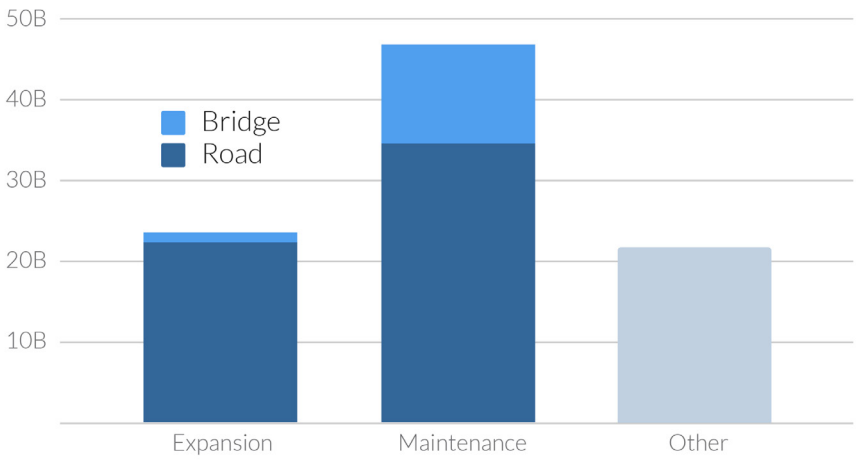
Maintaining these 112,000-plus lane-miles in good condition would require an additional **$5.3 billion** per year

Over time, many states have shifted a greater share of funds toward other priorities, particularly bridge maintenance and repair. Yet, despite historic levels of investment in bridges, including a brand-new $27.5 billion formula program specifically set aside for them, the overall condition of the nation's bridges has only incrementally improved.[6,7] The total percentage of bridge decks in poor condition improved by just 0.58 percent, but at the same time, the total percentage of bridge decks in good condition decreased by 3.2 percent.[8] The scale of the challenge is such that even a significant increase in repair spending will not be enough to overcome years of underinvestment and delayed action.

Worrying changes in the growth of "other" spending

Some states allocate a substantial share of funding to what we categorize as "other" expenditures, which include the FHWA-defined categories of relocation, traffic operations and control systems, safety, engineering, and environmental enhancements.[9] Between 2018 and 2023, this category of spending grew to a sizable share of some states' overall transportation spending.

Average spending by category, 2018-2024



In contrast to previous editions of Repair Priorities where bridge spending was categorized with"other", road and bridge maintenance and road and bridge expansion are isolated here to clearly capture investment in the maintenance and expansion of road and bridge infrastructure.

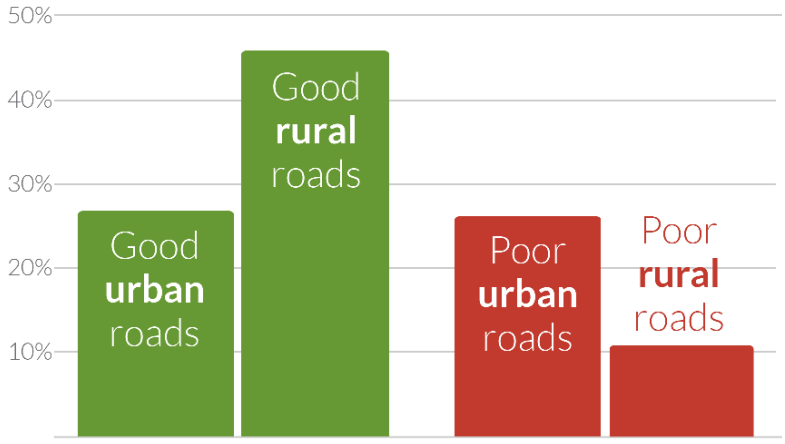
For instance, "other" expenditures made up nearly 41 percent of Washington State's expenditures between 2018 and 2024.

These investments could signal a shift in spending to achieve better safety outcomes, but the growth in this category also points to a worsening problem with data transparency and accountability. What kinds of projects are these programs actually funding, and are these existing categories sufficient to describe the types of complex project improvements, like complete street rehabilitations, that are becoming more common in some DOTs?[10] The fact that the taxpaying public doesn't have an easy way to decipher this spending data—representing billions of dollars—is an enormous red flag for the already low levels of accountability in this program.

An urban problem: Insufficient repair spending where most Americans live

States are spending slightly more on repair for roads in urban areas than in rural areas, about **$19 billion annually in urban areas** compared to roughly **$17.6 billion in rural areas.** Yet conditions remain significantly worse in urban areas, where heavier traffic, more wear and tear, and higher per-lane-mile costs make upkeep more expensive. Data from 2023 shows that 26 percent of urban roads are in poor condition, while 27 percent are in good condition. By contrast, 11 percent of rural roads are in poor condition, and 46 percent are in good condition.

Comparing urban vs. rural road conditions



Source: SF-12A and 2023 HM-63 & HM-64

Urban areas are home to roughly 80 percent of the nation's population, which rely on these busy roadways to reliably get to the places they need to go.[11] The combination of higher population exposure, impact, and repair costs suggests that urban roads should require a larger share of repair investment than they currently receive for their upkeep, but our current spending priorities ignore that reality.

Because urban areas are typically more congested than rural areas, it can lead many state DOTs into the endless cycle of attempting to "fix" that congestion by expanding and widening their roadways. Not only does this incredibly costly strategy always fail to improve congestion long term, it actually creates more traffic—a concept known as induced demand—and too often comes at the expense of prioritizing basic repair and maintenance of the roads they already have.[12]

Incomplete reporting of roadway conditions

A significant challenge in assessing roadway conditions nationwide is incomplete reporting. Based on 2024 data, 9.8 percent of federal-aid lane-miles nationwide have no reported pavement condition information. This is the result of a problem that has worsened over time: Just one percent of roads nationwide were left unreported in both 2009 and 2017. Reporting gaps also vary widely across states. Some states, including **Indiana, Maryland, and Kansas**, have reported on nearly all of their road conditions. In contrast, other states have far higher shares of unreported conditions. **Iowa, Massachusetts, and Indiana** have the largest reporting gaps, with more than half of reported federal-aid eligible lane-miles lacking condition data.

These gaps in reporting make it difficult to track whether conditions are improving or deteriorating, and reduce public transparency on how federal transportation dollars are being spent. In states with very high rates of unreported conditions, rankings of road conditions may not fully reflect the true condition of the road network, emphasizing the need for more complete and consistent data collection.

Case study: California and why inaccurate reporting is a problem

California illustrates how, when categories like "maintenance" and "expansion" become blurred, even well-funded systems can obscure whether they are actually addressing their repair needs. In 2023, Jeanie Ward-Waller, then Deputy Director of Planning and Multimodal Programs at the California Department of Transportation, was reassigned after raising concerns about how the agency classified and advanced major highway projects.[13] In her role, she oversaw long-range planning and policy direction for billions in state and federal transportation investments. Her objections centered on projects along Interstate 80 that were described as routine pavement rehabilitation but, in practice, included significant highway widening.

According to Ward-Waller, these projects were not only mischaracterized but also structured to avoid full environmental review under National Environmental Policy Act standards.[14] By splitting what was actually a single, larger project into multiple components, the agency was able to streamline permitting while understating the environmental impacts.

This raises a fundamental question of accountability. If projects labeled as "repair" include substantial expansion, then reported spending on maintenance becomes unreliable. In 2023, California reported allocating 29 percent of its transportation funding to maintenance. Yet, as this story illustrates, without clear and consistent definitions, it is difficult to determine how much of that funding actually went toward preserving existing infrastructure.

California's case highlights a deeper challenge that spans the country: Can reported data be trusted at all? When agencies can redefine projects to fit funding categories, the distinction between maintaining and expanding the system breaks down, undermining both transparency and the ability to set meaningful priorities about the most basic of performance measures.

STATE SPENDING PRIORITIES AND CONDITIONS

Repair should be the top priority for any entity receiving federal transportation dollars. Some states are already moving in that direction and have adjusted their highway capital budgets in recent years, shifting funds away from road expansion toward repair and preservation.

South Dakota is still leading the nation in prioritizing repair with their spending, having dedicated 72 percent of its highway capital budget to roadway repair between 2018 and 2024. During that time, the state saw their roads remain in good condition, with only a small share rated in poor condition. **New Mexico** is close behind, with 63 percent of its highway capital spending going to roadway repair over the same period. **Alaska, Maine, Michigan, Maryland, Nebraska, North Dakota, New Hampshire**, and **Wyoming** all allocated more than 50 percent of their highway capital budgets to repair.

Some states still saw worsening conditions despite high repair investment. Even while allocating more than 50 percent of their highway capital dollars to repair, **Alaska and Wyoming** saw only modest decreases in the percentage of roads in poor condition from 2018 to 2024.

Some states continue to dedicate substantial portions of their highway budgets to expanding road networks rather than maintaining their existing roads. At 68 percent, **North Carolina** allocated by far the largest share of its highway capital funds to expansion in 2023. **Arizona, Tennessee, Washington, Iowa**, and **Utah** also maintained high levels of spending on expansion, each allocating around 40 percent of their budgets.

Bridge spending can also shape pavement priorities. **Virginia, Rhode Island**, and **West Virginia** dedicated significant portions of their budgets to bridge maintenance and expansion—up to 51 percent in Rhode Island—limiting available funds for roadway repair or expansion.

Table I: Average annual highway capital spending on roads and bridges, 2018-2024

State	Average annual spending	Road expansion	Road maint.	Bridge expansion	Bridge maint.	Other
Alabama	$1,244,067,429	17.76%	22.31%	1.67%	32.62%	25.65%
Alaska	$735,112,143	19.94%	50.42%	0.83%	6.90%	21.91%
Arizona	$1,137,908,714	55.36%	26.00%	0.41%	2.22%	16.02%
Arkansas	$1,243,469,429	33.15%	38.35%	1.05%	13.85%	13.59%
California	$5,309,106,571	10.67%	42.05%	0.00%	5.88%	41.41%
Colorado	$1,316,086,143	12.71%	56.00%	0.51%	13.27%	17.52%
Connecticut	$1,044,421,571	16.66%	19.64%	0.12%	30.60%	32.99%
Delaware	$535,457,286	15.79%	46.80%	0.20%	13.17%	24.03%
Florida	$7,192,101,143	30.86%	40.66%	0.25%	5.81%	22.42%
Georgia	$2,109,810,286	34.41%	26.13%	2.30%	11.76%	25.41%
Hawaii	$203,087,000	20.93%	46.40%	0.00%	5.95%	26.72%
Idaho	$706,815,857	17.52%	34.49%	0.75%	26.95%	20.29%
Illinois	$3,937,809,714	10.44%	54.27%	1.79%	15.79%	17.71%
Indiana	$1,989,003,714	23.81%	29.17%	3.15%	14.19%	29.67%
Iowa	$1,226,918,000	40.33%	31.94%	3.02%	14.58%	10.13%
Kansas	$1,004,925,429	34.63%	29.78%	0.00%	6.31%	29.28%
Kentucky	$1,754,329,857	36.86%	28.64%	0.00%	9.59%	24.91%
Louisiana	$1,148,274,571	28.04%	31.05%	4.35%	17.19%	19.37%
Maine	$600,931,286	4.18%	55.28%	0.55%	26.39%	13.60%
Maryland	$1,651,707,286	17.32%	53.20%	0.01%	10.04%	19.44%
Massachusetts	$1,181,042,857	9.99%	49.69%	0.21%	21.04%	19.06%
Michigan	$3,159,478,286	5.79%	56.00%	0.06%	19.19%	18.96%
Minnesota	$1,249,535,000	17.27%	36.05%	1.70%	17.78%	27.21%
Mississippi	$903,663,429	23.73%	35.87%	0.06%	19.89%	20.46%

State	Average annual spending	Road expansion	Road maint.	Bridge expansion	Bridge maint.	Other
Missouri	$1,253,728,000	10.07%	43.80%	1.77%	16.16%	28.19%
Montana	$526,664,286	20.80%	40.87%	0.00%	12.51%	25.82%
Nebraska	$755,166,571	13.84%	58.91%	0.24%	8.86%	18.15%
Nevada	$722,296,429	35.44%	25.41%	3.69%	7.22%	28.24%
New Hampshire	$253,535,429	14.30%	56.62%	5.50%	15.27%	8.31%
New Jersey	$2,567,921,000	14.75%	39.84%	0.20%	23.12%	22.09%
New Mexico	$576,157,714	13.54%	63.06%	1.09%	13.63%	8.67%
New York	$4,210,234,286	6.46%	50.03%	2.73%	20.30%	20.48%
North Carolina	$4,366,634,000	62.93%	16.52%	0.03%	7.93%	12.58%
North Dakota	$475,339,286	11.37%	57.95%	0.00%	12.78%	17.90%
Ohio	$2,345,417,286	11.35%	41.90%	0.17%	17.50%	29.09%
Oklahoma	$1,599,533,714	16.62%	49.13%	0.48%	24.84%	8.93%
Oregon	$967,272,571	16.50%	22.16%	0.00%	19.08%	42.25%
Pennsylvania	$4,052,435,000	13.75%	49.30%	0.54%	15.76%	20.65%
Rhode Island	$336,379,857	6.90%	18.01%	0.07%	50.35%	24.67%
South Carolina	$1,754,521,429	33.65%	36.83%	0.00%	13.21%	16.31%
South Dakota	$534,425,571	9.69%	72.63%	0.20%	9.09%	8.38%
Tennessee	$1,462,335,000	40.87%	25.13%	0.00%	4.73%	29.26%
Texas	$11,312,772,857	33.50%	29.94%	0.00%	7.89%	28.67%
Utah	$1,190,726,714	51.28%	18.18%	6.61%	4.58%	19.35%
Vermont	$295,977,714	6.98%	45.07%	0.00%	30.22%	17.73%
Virginia	$2,242,031,857	29.67%	22.36%	14.78%	10.06%	23.13%
Washington	$2,187,034,857	30.87%	11.14%	0.00%	17.14%	40.86%
West Virginia	$1,284,413,143	19.37%	34.38%	16.76%	9.03%	20.46%
Wisconsin	$1,567,426,286	26.59%	37.97%	1.29%	25.83%	8.32%

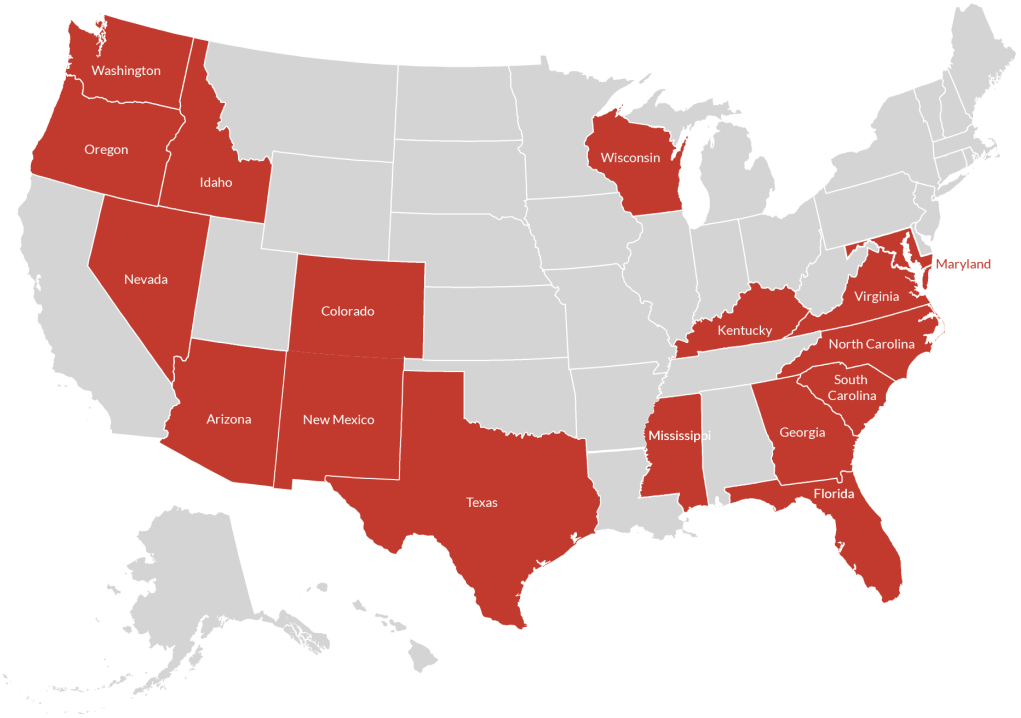
FHWA Highway Statistics Series, Table SF-12A 2018-2024

ROAD CONDITIONS BY STATE

While pavement conditions at the national level remained relatively flat between 2018 and 2024, the outlook is mixed when you drill down to individual states. 31 states saw improvements in their roads between 2018 and 2024, with **Oklahoma, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Vermont, Rhode Island, Arkansas, Kansas, and Iowa** recording decreases of at least 10 percent in their share of roads in poor condition. Some of these states are continuing a trajectory of improvement, continuing trends that go back to the 2009 data.

Conversely, a number of states saw increases in the percentage of roads in poor condition during this period. **Arizona, Maryland, Georgia, Oregon, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin** experienced the greatest increases, with states such as Texas and Virginia showing a considerable decline in pavement conditions since 2009.

17 states saw an increase in the percentage of roads in poor condition from 2018 to 2024



+18% Maryland
+11% Texas
+9% Virginia
+6% Georgia
+6% Wisconsin
+5% Arizona
+5% Oregon
+4% New Mexico
+3% Colorado
+3% Mississippi
+2% Idaho
+2% Nevada
+2% Washington
+1% Florida
+1% Kentucky
+1% North Carolina
+1% South Carolina

Table II: Change in poor pavement conditions by state, 2009-2024, 2018-2024

STATE	Change in % roads in poor condition (2009-2024)	Change in % roads in poor condition (2018-2024)
Alabama	-2%	-3%
Alaska	0%	-1%
Arizona	15%	5%
Arkansas	-8%	-9%
California	2%	-7%
Colorado	16%	3%
Connecticut	15%	-5%
Delaware	1%	-2%
Florida	10%	1%
Georgia	8%	6%
Hawaii	1%	-5%
Idaho	6%	2%
Illinois	15%	0%
Indiana	-8%	-5%
Iowa	-14%	-8%
Kansas	-7%	-9%
Kentucky	7%	1%
Louisiana	1%	-2%
Maine	-10%	-7%
Maryland	-1%	18%
Massachusetts	-1%	-17%
Michigan	7%	-7%
Minnesota	2%	-5%
Mississippi	12%	3%
Missouri	-3%	-2%
Montana	8%	0%
Nebraska	-1%	-5%
Nevada	8%	2%
New Hampshire	-3%	-7%
New Jersey	-27%	-16%
New Mexico	13%	4%
New York	-1%	-1%
North Carolina	5%	1%
North Dakota	5%	0%

STATE	Change in % roads in poor condition (2009-2024)	Change in % roads in poor condition (2018-2024)
Ohio	10%	-2%
Oklahoma	-27%	-30%
Oregon	4%	5%
Pennsylvania	1%	-3%
Rhode Island	23%	-11%
South Carolina	7%	1%
South Dakota	-6%	-4%
Tennessee	-2%	-1%
Texas	14%	11%
Utah	11%	-4%
Vermont	-29%	-13%
Virginia	18%	9%
Washington	20%	2%
West Virginia	-2%	-4%
Wisconsin	6%	6%
Wyoming	-2%	-2%
U.S. Total	**4%**	**-1%**

Seven states have at least 30 percent of their major road network in poor condition as of 2024: **California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Mexico, Rhode Island**, and **Washington**, highlighted in red in Table III. Of those, Rhode Island continues to rank the worst, with more than 40 percent of roads classified as poor. Several of these states were also among those with the highest share of poor roads in 2017, which was the baseline year used in the previous edition of Repair Priorities. **California, Connecticut, Hawaii, and Rhode Island** appeared in the category with the highest percentage of roads in poor condition in both reporting periods, suggesting a lack of willingness to prioritize maintenance ahead of other investments.

By contrast, **Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Vermont** report the lowest percentage of roads in poor condition as of 2024, each reporting fewer than five percent. Several states that ranked well in 2017 continue to report relatively strong pavement conditions: **Idaho, Nebraska, Tennessee, and Wyoming** again rank among the states with the lowest shares of roads in poor condition, suggesting consistent maintenance performance over more than a decade.

Nebraska, North Dakota, Tennessee, Vermont, and Wyoming report the highest percentage of roads in good condition, at 64 percent or higher. In Vermont, more than three-quarters of federal-aid roads are in good condition, the highest share of any state. These states also ranked among the highest in the percentage of roads in good condition in 2017.

Table III: Percentage of public roads in good, fair, and poor condition, 2024

State	Federal-aid eligible centerline miles of major road	Good condition	Fair condition	Poor condition	Unreported condition
Alabama	26,756	52.69%	33.67%	9.31%	4.32%
Alaska	3,964	39.53%	32.32%	19.90%	8.25%
Arizona	16,762	27.46%	37.91%	23.35%	11.28%
Arkansas	17,706	41.94%	21.37%	10.47%	26.22%
California	26,817	28.91%	35.22%	34.13%	1.74%
Colorado	16,203	36.18%	39.51%	24.31%	0.01%
Connecticut	6,389	24.12%	45.39%	30.47%	0.02%
Delaware	1,596	43.98%	37.47%	16.17%	2.38%
Florida	28,012	47.99%	35.54%	12.84%	3.63%
Georgia	31,335	54.70%	37.71%	7.59%	0.00%
Hawaii	1,548	22.80%	37.98%	38.76%	0.45%
Idaho	5,614	53.03%	27.86%	6.52%	12.59%
Illinois	30,975	46.72%	33.76%	19.49%	0.04%
Indiana	24,430	24.83%	10.09%	1.58%	63.50%
Iowa	24,810	11.75%	7.16%	1.50%	79.58%
Kansas	24,574	43.75%	9.10%	1.74%	45.41%
Kentucky	14,691	47.60%	38.58%	9.35%	4.47%
Louisiana	14,775	32.21%	40.87%	26.20%	0.72%
Maine	6,322	52.25%	32.55%	14.66%	0.54%
Maryland	8,134	35.62%	34.46%	29.59%	0.33%
Massachusetts	11,153	15.83%	16.54%	12.54%	55.09%
Michigan	28,756	47.93%	31.79%	17.50%	2.78%
Minnesota	33,423	55.05%	34.08%	10.05%	0.83%
Mississippi	21,793	29.65%	40.07%	30.05%	0.22%
Missouri	30,868	30.23%	46.57%	23.02%	0.19%
Montana	12,846	54.06%	34.16%	11.78%	0.00%
Nebraska	11,316	64.35%	18.21%	5.28%	12.16%
Nevada	7,470	49.16%	35.81%	15.03%	0.00%
New Hampshire	3,619	51.40%	31.28%	17.33%	0.00%
New Jersey	3,820	51.75%	28.32%	18.17%	1.75%
New Mexico	12,099	31.37%	34.49%	33.50%	0.64%
New York	28,057	37.89%	35.66%	24.09%	2.36%
North Carolina	23,438	35.43%	52.08%	11.76%	0.73%
North Dakota	14,350	67.02%	26.18%	6.75%	0.05%

State	Federal-aid eligible centerline miles of major road	Good condition	Fair condition	Poor condition	Unreported condition
Ohio	30,173	49.67%	34.11%	15.41%	0.81%
Oklahoma	29,293	25.03%	18.49%	4.51%	51.97%
Oregon	9,008	53.57%	31.96%	10.96%	3.51%
Pennsylvania	28,685	30.48%	39.25%	25.70%	4.57%
Rhode Island	1,755	19.37%	35.95%	42.68%	1.99%
South Carolina	21,216	37.27%	42.87%	19.66%	0.19%
South Dakota	14,830	50.41%	35.37%	10.33%	3.89%
Tennessee	9,153	69.11%	20.82%	3.67%	6.39%
Texas	89,529	33.80%	42.36%	22.04%	1.80%
Utah	8,412	47.15%	34.55%	17.33%	0.97%
Vermont	799	76.85%	17.52%	4.88%	0.75%
Virginia	21,571	28.10%	49.49%	21.31%	1.10%
Washington	19,994	22.34%	44.85%	30.96%	1.85%
West Virginia	10,482	26.60%	46.78%	26.24%	0.39%
Wisconsin	28,391	44.63%	30.67%	22.79%	1.90%
Wyoming	6,523	70.31%	22.92%	5.29%	1.49%
U.S. Total	**904,681.00**	**39.44%**	**33.90%**	**16.88%**	**9.78%**

Source: HM-63, HM-64, A3

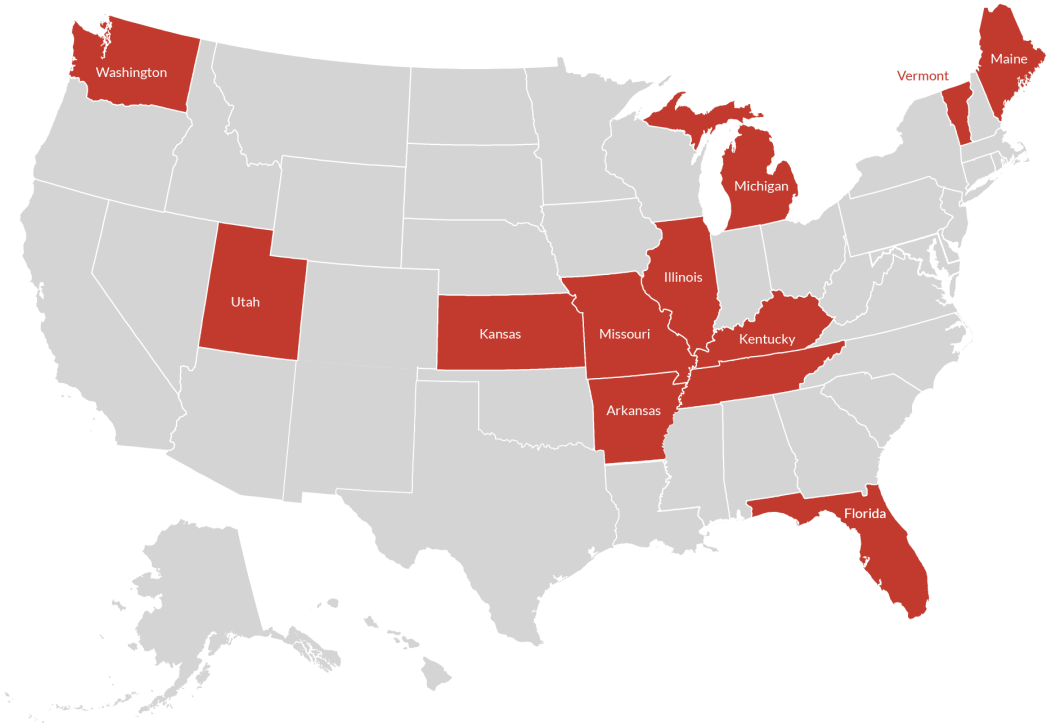
THE CONDITION OF U.S. BRIDGES

Every day, millions of people in cities and towns, large and small, travel over bridges that are in need of significant repair. Across the 50 states, **41,730 bridges are currently classified as being in poor condition**, meaning that they require significant maintenance or rehabilitation. Despite their condition, these poor bridges continue to carry a substantial share of daily travel, with more than 168 million average trips taken over them every single day.

Nationally, the share of bridges classified as being in poor condition declined from 7.6 percent in 2018 to 6.7 percent in 2024. While the long-term trend over the last three decades has been one of improvement, the *rate of improvement* has slowed dramatically in recent years and shows signs of stalling out. The shrinking number of poor bridges also obfuscates a few other important details: the share of bridges in good condition declined, and the percentage in fair condition increased from 2018 to 2024. These negative changes took place during a period that saw record investments from the IIJA in 2021 and the creation of new dedicated bridge repair programs. As with other measures, the performance differs dramatically from state to state.

A number of states saw improvements in bridge conditions between 2018 and 2024. **Arizona, Delaware, Georgia, Mississippi, and Rhode Island** saw some of the largest reductions in the share of bridges in poor condition. Conversely, **Arkansas, Maine, Utah, Vermont, and Washington** saw the highest increases in the share of bridges in poor condition over the same period, with increases of at least 19 percent.[19]

12 states saw an increase in the percentage of bridges in poor condition from 2018 to 2024



+38% Utah
+26% Vermont
+21% Washington
+20% Arkansas
+19% Maine
+11% Florida
+11% Illinois
+7% Michigan
+6% Kentucky
+4% Missouri
+3% Tennessee
+2% Kansas

Table IV: Change in bridge conditions from 2018 to 2024, by state

STATE	Total change 2018 to 2024	Change in good condition	Change in fair condition	Change in poor condition
Alabama	0.46%	-12.36%	12.39%	-21.19%
Alaska	5.84%	8.02%	8.14%	-14.19%
Arizona	3.36%	7.34%	-1.37%	-34.00%
Arkansas	0.64%	-12.85%	15.34%	+19.73%
California	0.43%	-20.17%	36.92%	-15.73%
Colorado	2.04%	-13.45%	15.55%	-8.67%
Connecticut	2.22%	-2.02%	8.15%	-33.12%
Delaware	1.04%	81.03%	-19.87%	-67.65%
Florida	4.83%	-7.46%	32.07%	+10.98%
Georgia	1.28%	78.93%	-56.06%	-51.42%
Hawaii	5.10%	25.35%	-4.55%	0.00%
Idaho	2.99%	8.26%	4.13%	-28.25%
Illinois	0.44%	-8.55%	9.23%	+10.73%
Indiana	1.12%	3.33%	1.37%	-15.38%
Iowa	-1.67%	0.36%	-2.93%	-2.80%
Kansas	-0.05%	-3.93%	4.99%	+1.71%
Kentucky	1.25%	-26.21%	18.48%	+5.51%
Louisiana	-1.56%	-24.14%	33.55%	-13.11%
Maine	1.82%	-20.36%	10.43%	+19.38%
Maryland	2.37%	0.80%	4.12%	-8.76%
Massachusetts	1.55%	-2.77%	3.86%	-2.29%
Michigan	1.27%	-14.36%	12.73%	+7.11%
Minnesota	1.30%	-7.17%	18.80%	-10.03%
Mississippi	-1.94%	-13.85%	36.68%	-37.06%
Missouri	0.43%	-12.44%	11.30%	+4.11%
Montana	-0.78%	2.55%	-1.47%	-8.72%
Nebraska	0.32%	2.05%	0.48%	-10.38%
Nevada	6.06%	25.05%	-12.53%	-11.11%
New Hampshire	1.92%	-0.83%	9.71%	-14.73%
New Jersey	1.20%	-4.84%	6.91%	-24.63%
New Mexico	0.62%	-6.91%	7.97%	-21.55%
New York	0.69%	-2.39%	3.92%	-5.29%
North Carolina	4.53%	17.19%	1.91%	-30.63%
North Dakota	-2.30%	-23.11%	28.67%	-0.43%

Ohio	-2.01%	2.16%	-6.56%	-16.53%
Oklahoma	-0.86%	-6.64%	12.32%	-30.55%
Oregon	1.76%	-3.99%	6.13%	-9.24%
Pennsylvania	2.47%	13.31%	3.95%	-22.23%
Rhode Island	0.38%	33.58%	4.08%	-33.89%
South Carolina	0.95%	-12.66%	19.01%	-26.29%
South Dakota	1.08%	4.51%	-0.44%	-1.03%
Tennessee	1.00%	-6.04%	7.27%	+3.10%
Texas	4.80%	3.96%	5.88%	0.00%
Utah	2.09%	-58.23%	75.22%	+37.88%
Vermont	3.02%	1.22%	3.95%	+25.76%
Virginia	1.36%	-2.63%	5.69%	-26.01%
Washington	2.37%	-1.64%	5.22%	+20.94%
West Virginia	1.09%	-6.22%	7.26%	-5.12%
Wisconsin	1.20%	-0.20%	5.10%	-10.63%
Wyoming	0.22%	1.84%	2.21%	-20.62%
U.S. Total	**1.14%**	**-2.99%**	**7.24%**	**-10.78%**

Table V: Bridge conditions by state, 2024

STATE	All bridges	"Good" bridges	"Fair" bridges	"Poor" bridges
Alabama	16,205	5,993	9,669	543
Alaska	1,685	768	784	133
Arizona	8,573	5,440	3,034	99
Arkansas	12,974	5,940	6,330	704
California	25,848	11,798	12,523	1,527
Colorado	8,965	3,197	5,336	432
Connecticut	4,365	1,213	2,946	206
Delaware	872	353	508	11
Florida	13,036	7,763	4,909	364
Georgia	15,069	11,278	3,551	240
Hawaii	1,195	445	672	78
Idaho	4,616	1,363	3,027	226
Illinois	26,928	12,289	12,122	2,517
Indiana	19,495	8,224	10,253	1,018
Iowa	23,719	9,213	9,962	4,544
Kansas	24,894	13,060	10,524	1,310

STATE	All bridges	"Good" bridges	"Fair" bridges	"Poor" bridges
Kentucky	14,548	3,866	9,610	1,072
Louisiana	12,698	4,919	6,321	1,458
Maine	2,518	626	1,504	388
Maryland	5,484	1,771	3,463	250
Massachusetts	5,296	1,332	3,494	470
Michigan	11,371	3,836	6,254	1,281
Minnesota	13,532	7,667	5,264	601
Mississippi	16,739	9,228	6,502	1,009
Missouri	24,618	9,263	13,152	2,203
Montana	5,224	1,646	3,222	356
Nebraska	15,398	8,149	6,032	1,217
Nevada	2,099	1,223	852	24
New Hampshire	2,542	1,312	1,039	191
New Jersey	6,827	1,731	4,686	410
New Mexico	4,035	1,414	2,439	182
New York	17,642	6,247	9,731	1,664
North Carolina	19,210	8,421	9,491	1,298
North Dakota	4,255	1,800	1,988	467
Ohio	26,729	16,319	9,143	1,267
Oklahoma	22,917	9,620	11,533	1,764
Oregon	8,305	2,766	5,156	383
Pennsylvania	23,299	7,915	12,452	2,932
Rhode Island	783	179	485	119
South Carolina	9,490	3,690	5,214	586
South Dakota	5,887	1,992	2,932	963
Tennessee	20,379	8,664	10,817	898
Texas	56,729	29,129	26,905	695
Utah	3,125	693	2,341	91
Vermont	2,862	1,491	1,288	83
Virginia	14,121	4,660	8,983	478
Washington	8,474	4,246	3,766	462
West Virginia	7,348	1,855	4,123	1,370
Wisconsin	14,446	7,368	6,136	942
Wyoming	3,136	943	1,989	204
U.S. total	**620,505**	**274,318**	**304,457**	**41,730**

CATEGORIZING STATES BASED ON SPENDING AND OUTCOMES

To illustrate the relationship between states' spending choices and road conditions, we grouped states into a framework based on their investment priorities and resulting pavement outcomes. States are categorized based on the following key metrics:

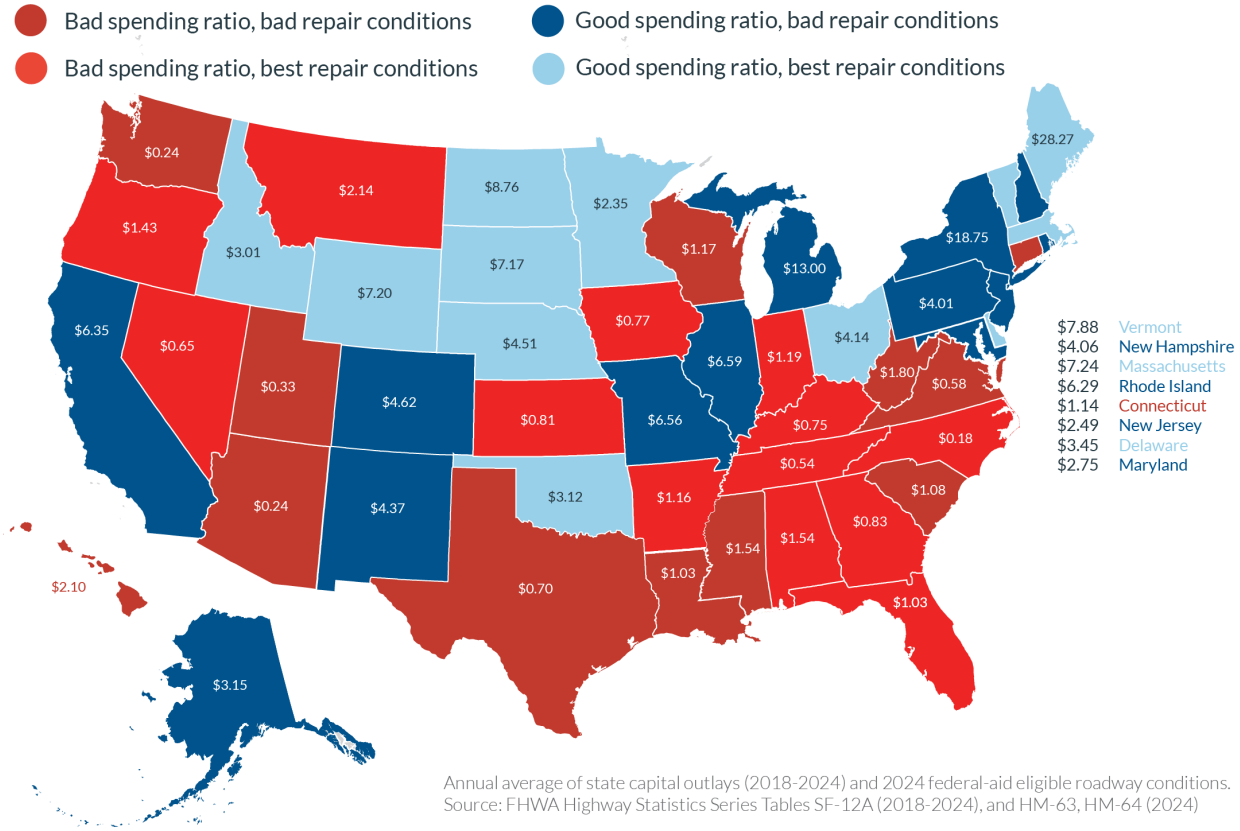
Good spending ratio refers to the top half of states based on their ratio of maintenance to expansion spending. These 25 states **exceed** $2.35 dollars spent on maintenance for every $1.00 spent on expansion. (2018-2024 annual average).

Best repair conditions refers to the t**op half** of states with a share of federal-aid roadways in poor condition in 2024 that is ***lower*** than the national average of 16.3%

Bad spending ratio refers to the bottom half of states based on their ratio of maintenance to expansion spending. These 25 states **spend less** than $2.35 dollars on maintenance for every $1.00 spent on expansion. (2018-2024 annual average).

Bad repair conditions refers to the **bottom half** of states with a share of federal-aid roadways in poor condition in 2024 that is ***higher*** than the national average of 16.3%.

Categorizing states based on spending priorities and road conditions



Annual average of state capital outlays (2018-2024) and 2024 federal-aid eligible roadway conditions.
Source: FHWA Highway Statistics Series Tables SF-12A (2018-2024), and HM-63, HM-64 (2024)

Good spending, best repair conditions

Delaware, Idaho, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Vermont, Wyoming

States such as North and South Dakota, Minnesota, and Vermont demonstrate a clear alignment between investment strategy and system performance. By continuing to prioritize repair, they have maintained a higher share of roads in good condition and avoided major maintenance backlogs. In many cases, these states either shifted toward repair early or maintained steady investment over time. Their experience shows that sustained, repair-focused spending can preserve system quality more efficiently.

Good spending, bad repair conditions

Alaska, California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island

States in this category, including California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Missouri, and Rhode Island, illustrate the difficulty of reversing decline once it has taken hold. (See Michigan case study on the following page.) While these states now direct a majority of funding toward repair, many are managing aging infrastructure or longstanding backlogs. For example, California has an extensive, heavily traveled system with deterioration that accumulated over time and will require billions to improve. These states may be on an upward trajectory, but progress will likely be gradual and require sustained investment to catch up.

Case study on good spending, bad repair conditions

Michigan: The high price of neglecting regular maintenance

Michigan provides an example of how high levels of spending can still produce disappointing outcomes when priorities and processes are misaligned. Despite spending 56 percent of its average annual spending on road maintenance—the 7th highest share in this report—Michigan's road conditions only improved by 7 percent between 2018 and 2024 and still rank near the bottom overall, with 17 percent in poor condition in 2024. (And 11 percent of bridges in poor condition.) This disconnect makes it clear that increased spending alone doesn't guarantee better road conditions. Instead, outcomes are driven by how those dollars are allocated. For years, Michigan's approach has prioritized reconstruction over routine preventative maintenance.[20] As a result, roads have been allowed to deteriorate into poor condition, when repairs become significantly more expensive and less effective. By deferring maintenance until more substantial rehabilitation is required, the state has only driven up costs, rather than containing them.

This dynamic has created a cycle that is difficult to spend a way out of. Even as funding has reached new highs, those dollars must stretch further to address the growing backlog of deteriorating infrastructure. The result is a system where taxpayers are contributing more but getting less for their money. States cannot spend their way out of this problem. Without a sustained shift toward preventative maintenance and asset management, decades of poor prioritization will continue to outweigh even substantial new investments.

Bad spending, best repair conditions

Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee

States including North Carolina, Georgia, Oregon, and Florida maintain relatively strong roadway conditions despite allocating a smaller share of funding to repair versus expansion compared to other states. In many cases, this reflects newer infrastructure and recent, rapid system expansion (such as in North Carolina) that has not yet required significant upkeep. Adding a new mile of freshly paved road increases the miles of roads in good condition—but only until those assets begin to deteriorate. If these states continue to underinvest in repair, they are likely to follow the path of other states that have declining conditions and growing maintenance backlogs.

Bad spending, bad repair conditions

Arizona, Connecticut, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin

States such as Arizona, Texas, Utah, Hawaii, Washington, and West Virginia exemplify the consequences of prioritizing expansion over repair. Some of these states, like Arizona, South Carolina, Utah, and Texas, have seen significant sustained growth in recent years and have made major investments to expand highway capacity. Almost half of these states spent more on expansion than on repair between 2018 and 2024—Utah spent just 33 cents on road maintenance for every dollar spent on road expansion, and Washington spent just 24 cents on maintenance for every dollar spent expanding roads. Because so much of their systems are relatively new, states like Utah, South Carolina, and Virginia do not break the bottom 10 list for roads in poor condition, but with continued underinvestment in repair, they may soon do so.

However, other states like Louisiana, Mississippi, Wisconsin, and West Virginia, where growth has been negative or slow relative to other states, have high ratios of funds spent on expansion versus maintenance. This trend runs counter to these states' need to fix their below-average road conditions. Importantly, these states continue to allocate a smaller share of funding toward repair, meaning they remain on a trajectory that risks further declines in system conditions and escalating long-term costs. Their experience underscores how delaying maintenance and failing to realign spending priorities leads to persistently poor outcomes.

Case study on bad spending, bad repair conditions

West Virginia: The painful costs of expansion

West Virginia demonstrates the predictable outcome of prioritizing expansion over preservation. In 2025, Gov. Patrick Morrisey announced a sweeping overhaul of the state's department of transportation, citing years of financial mismanagement and a sustained emphasis on new construction at the expense of maintaining existing infrastructure.[21] The result was not just the growing backlog of repairs, but an agency pushed to the brink of insolvency.

For years, state leadership had pursued expansion through the Roads to Prosperity initiative under former governor and West Virginia Sen. Jim Justice.[22] Backed by billions in tax revenue and 30-year general obligation bonds, the program promised economic growth through major road projects, but its fundamental flaw was its failure to align spending with actual system needs.[23] The initiative's funds were rapidly committed, with most bond proceeds allocated within the first seven years, leaving limited amounts available for future maintenance or flexibility to adapt to changing conditions and needs.

The consequences are now unavoidable. West Virginia is left with significant long-term debt, including roughly $120 million annually in interest payments on the state's bonds, while many projects remain incomplete and existing infrastructure continues to deteriorate.[24] Today, 19 percent of the state's bridges are in poor condition, one of the highest rates in the nation, and 26% of its roads are also in poor condition, the ninth worst in the country in 2024, underscoring the consequences of deferred maintenance.

Deferred maintenance does not disappear; it compounds. As costs rise and conditions worsen, the price of inaction grows steeper, consuming resources that could have stabilized the system earlier. Preventive maintenance costs far less than what is required when conditions fall below a certain level, increasing the price of neglect in a non-linear fashion over time.

West Virginia's current shift toward maintenance, transparency, and fiscal discipline represents an acknowledgment of this fundamental reality. The state's experience offers a broader lesson that borrowing billions to build new infrastructure means little without a plan to maintain both existing roads and the costly new assets.

Table VI: Categorizing states based on spending priorities and road conditions

State	Dollars spent on maintenance for every $1 spent on expansion (annual average 2018-24)	Repair to expansion spending ratio ranking (2018-2024)	Road condition rank (least % of roads in poor condition)	Percent of federal-aid roadways in poor condition (2024)
Rhode Island	$6.29	39	50	42.68%
Hawaii	$2.10	24	49	38.76%
California	$6.35	40	48	34.13%
New Mexico	$4.37	36	47	33.50%
Washington	$0.24	2	46	30.96%
Connecticut	$1.14	15	45	30.47%
Mississippi	$1.54	22	44	30.05%
Maryland	$2.75	28	43	29.59%
West Virginia	$1.80	23	42	26.24%
Louisiana	$1.03	13	41	26.20%

Pennsylvania	$4.01	33	40	25.70%
Colorado	$4.62	38	39	24.31%
New York	$18.75	49	38	24.09%
Arizona	$0.42	4	37	23.35%
Missouri	$6.56	41	36	23.02%
Wisconsin	$1.17	17	35	22.79%
Texas	$0.70	8	34	22.04%
Virginia	$0.58	6	33	21.31%
Alaska	$3.15	31	32	19.90%
South Carolina	$1.08	14	31	19.66%
Illinois	$6.59	42	30	19.49%
New Jersey	$2.49	27	29	18.17%
Michigan	$13.00	48	28	17.50%
Utah	$0.33	3	27	17.33%
New Hampshire	$4.06	34	26	17.33%
Delaware	$3.45	32	25	16.17%
Ohio	$4.14	35	24	15.41%
Nevada	$0.65	7	23	15.03%
Maine	$28.27	50	22	14.66%
Florida	$1.30	19	21	12.84%
Massachusetts	$7.24	45	20	12.54%
Montana	$2.14	25	19	11.78%
North Carolina	$0.18	1	18	11.76%
Oregon	$1.43	20	17	10.96%
Arkansas	$1.16	16	16	10.47%
South Dakota	$7.17	43	15	10.33%
Minnesota	$2.35	26	14	10.05%
Kentucky	$0.75	9	13	9.35%
Alabama	$1.54	21	12	9.31%
Georgia	$0.83	12	11	7.59%
North Dakota	$8.76	47	10	6.75%
Idaho	$3.01	29	9	6.52%
Wyoming	$7.20	44	8	5.29%
Nebraska	$4.51	37	7	5.28%
Vermont	$7.88	46	6	4.88%
Oklahoma	$3.12	30	5	4.51%
Tennessee	$0.54	5	4	3.67%
Kansas	$0.81	11	3	1.74%
Indiana	$1.19	18	2	1.58%
Iowa	$0.77	10	1	1.50%

Policy recommendations: What will it take to fix the system?

It should be clear by now that more funding alone will fail to lead to improvements in the condition of our deteriorating roads and bridges without changes in how we measure outcomes. It is time for Congress to stop invoking the rhetoric of repairing our crumbling roads and bridges to justify greater federal spending while failing to require that those funds be used first to maintain the immense amount of infrastructure already built.

While investments have shifted modestly toward repair in the national aggregate, some states continue to prioritize building new capacity at the expense of maintaining existing assets. This creates substantial future costs, as new lane-miles add billions in expected annual maintenance obligations. With construction and labor costs continuing to rise, the gap between the resources required to maintain existing roads in good condition and the funds available is larger than ever.

Left to their own devices, states will continue to produce disparate outcomes. Federal programs must set clear performance requirements and enforce accountability. Without that oversight, the system will continue to fall short of delivering roads and bridges in good repair nationwide. Congress should ensure that federal dollars improve outcomes by establishing new requirements that promote performance, accountability, and transparency.

We can no longer ask American taxpayers for funding to fix our crumbling roads and bridges without assurances that the money will do just that. The next federal surface transportation reauthorization (the IIJA will expire in September 2026) should require improvements in road and bridge conditions. Tangible goals, such as reducing the repair backlog by half, would provide the accountability that has been sorely missing from federal transportation policy for decades.

Congress should require states to dedicate funding to repairing and maintaining existing systems before building new or expanded roadways and bridges. Continuing to expand the highway system while neglecting maintenance results in states returning to Congress every few years for additional funding to address avoidable, self-made problems.

States should also be required to implement a fix-it-first strategy by demonstrating that they can afford to operate and maintain new infrastructure capacity throughout its useful life while maintaining the rest of their system in a state of good repair. The federal transit program requires exactly this: major new projects are evaluated before receiving federal funding to ensure that the transit agency can operate and maintain the new asset while continuing to operate and maintain the rest of the transit system. Even with this evaluation,

some projects get through that probably should not. But in the highway program, there is no attempt to vet new projects. A highway agency can brazenly say they plan to build a new bridge while a bridge next to it is closed due to structural issues. While that might not be well-received, it is considered perfectly fine under the bipartisan federal transportation program. That is ridiculous. Congress should give taxpayers real guarantees that the taxpayer funds they are taking (or, these days, the debt they are building) will accomplish the outcomes that they repeatedly promise.

Reliable, timely data are essential to effectively understanding the scope of needs within the federal transportation system. Yet states have consistently fallen short due to gaps, inconsistencies, and a lack of transparency in reporting, which complicate oversight. States define projects in varied ways, making it unclear how expansions, repairs, or safety improvements are classified. When comparing one year to another, some states seem to lose thousands of miles of roadway. It is hard to believe we can expect conditions to improve if states can't even keep track of what they have.

Congress should require the FHWA to collect standardized information on how many lane-miles of highways we have, what condition they are in, and exactly how they are spending taxpayer funds. This is particularly galling at a time when Congress is unwilling to raise the funds they claim we need and, instead, spends future dollars that will be even more needed to maintain the new things being built. Only with accurate, current, and comprehensive data can agencies hope to spend their funding wisely, and can the public hold transportation agencies and Congress accountable for producing the results they have been promised for so long.

Endnotes

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Full appendix available at the homepage for Repair Priorities 2026: t4america.org/resource/repair-priorities