

# Freedom or Failure?

The U.S. transportation infrastructure has fueled economic prosperity, but will it keep the nation competitive in the global marketplace?

If the United States does not invest adequate resources to meet the critical needs of the nation's highway system, economic prosperity, safety, personal mobility, and quality of life of its citizens will degrade.

## From Transportation to Economics

Is the United States heading toward “developing nation” status?

Consider this. The direct link between economic growth and infrastructure capacity was cited in a 1994 World Development Report. A 1% increase in infrastructure development is directly tied to a 1% increase in gross domestic product (GDP) internationally, according to the report.

To see the effects of highway development on a global scale, see Figure 1, which shows miles of highway per 1,000 people, as well as Figure 2, which illustrates the per capita gross national product (GNP) worldwide. Note that nations with developed transportation infrastructure tend to have a high per capita GNP.

Another factor to consider is the United Nation's Human Development Index (HDI), shown at Figure 3. The HDI is a barometer of poverty, literacy, education, life expectancy, childbirth, and overall well-being. A higher HDI suggests a higher standard of living. **All countries in the highest HDI grouping have well developed transportation infrastructure.** From this, it can be said that transportation infrastructure is the foundation of economic prosperity and human well being.

In the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, forward thinking policy makers in the United States took dramatic steps to invest in and build a highway and roadway system that met demand. Although this system was sufficient to serve the needs of past generations, many questions now exist as to its ability to meet future needs....

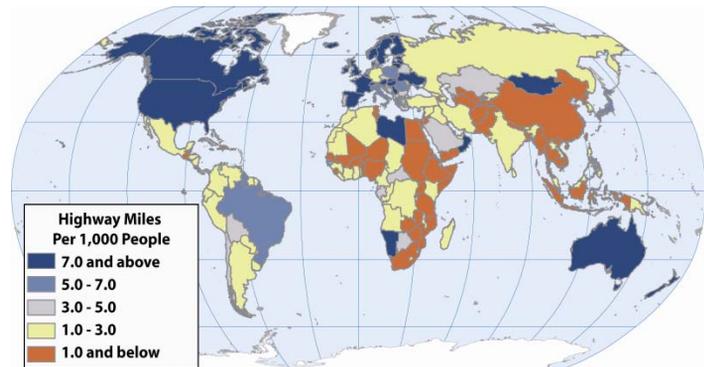


Figure 1. Miles of highway per 1,000 people in each country.

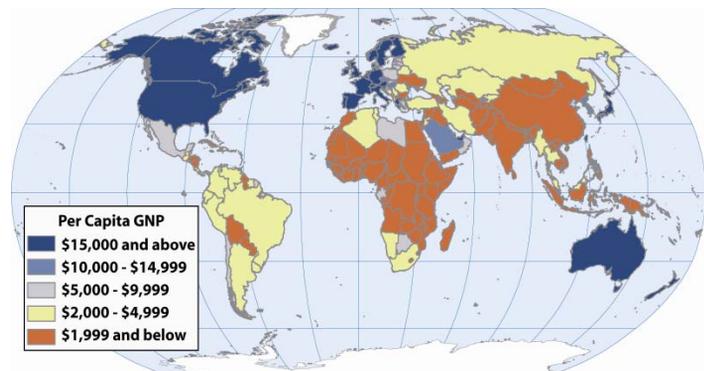


Figure 2. Per capita gross national product worldwide.

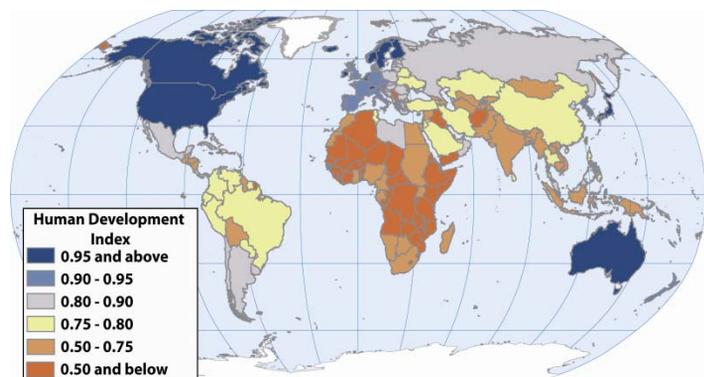


Figure 3. Human development index worldwide.

**“Transportation lies at the core of the freedom we enjoy as Americans—freedom to go where we want when we want, freedom to live and work where we choose, and freedom to spend time with our families.”**

- Hon. Mary Peters, 15th U.S. Secretary of Transportation  
February 5, 2007

In the latter part of the century, investments began to trail the demand and have since fallen short of meeting the critical needs of the nation's surface transportation infrastructure. If the trend continues, how will the United States remain competitive in the increasingly global marketplace?

## U.S. Transportation Situation

The U.S. population surpassed 300 million in 2006, an almost 55 percent increase since 1965. In the four decades spanning 1965 to 2005, the nation's dependence on highways and roadways has increased dramatically, as illustrated in Figure 4.

In the same time span, vehicle miles traveled on the nation's highways and roadways increased almost 240 percent. In sharp contrast, the total number of miles of roadways and Interstate highways have increased only 8.7 and 14.5 percent, respectively. This illustrates both the dependency on highways, as well as the fact that expansion is trailing demand for increased capacity.

***In short, present highway and roadway capacity is neither meeting current demands nor keeping pace with projected growth!***

## The Future

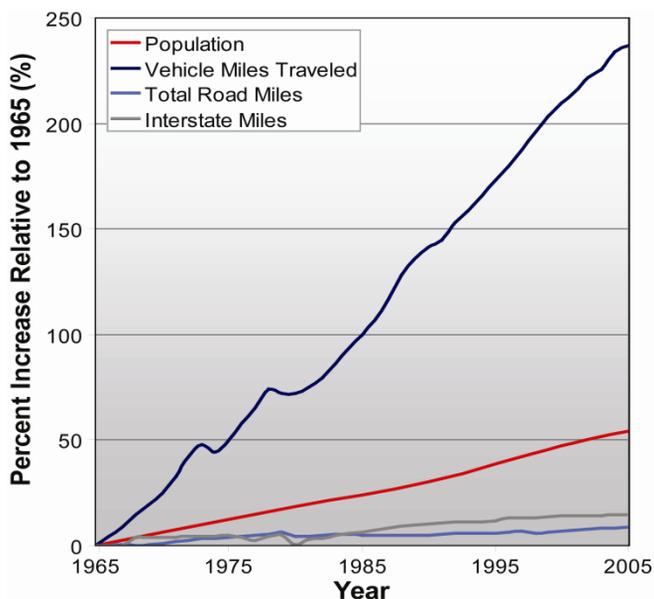
The globalization of markets is a key factor in planning the future of highways and roadways in the United States. Business and industry demands efficient and fast methods for delivering goods to market. This is even more important given the volatile fossil fuel supply and pricing situation.

Today, trucks are the **sole means** of delivering freight to 80% of U.S. communities. Truck traffic will only increase as the population grows, which will likely mean even more congestion on highways and roadways. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) estimates 90% of urban Interstates will be at or near capacity in less than 13 years, as indicated in Figure 5.

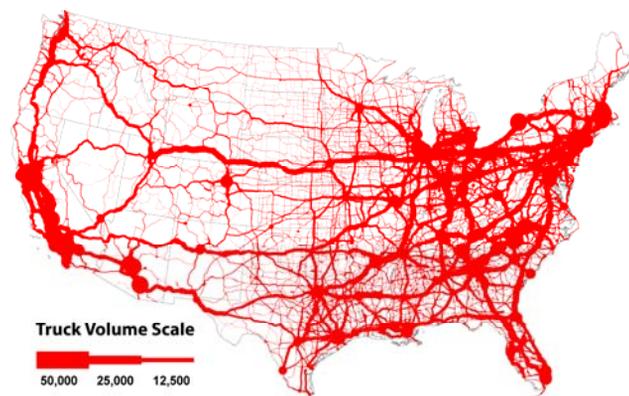
What makes this even more of a concern is that it takes between nine and 19 years to plan, gain approval, and construct a major federally funded highway project, according to the FHWA.

It's time for serious change on highways and roadways. It's time to find better, long-lasting alternatives that do not require perpetual ripping, replacement, and repair. It's time for concrete pavements.

For more information, visit [www.pavements4life.com](http://www.pavements4life.com).



**Figure 4. Graph plots increase in population, vehicle miles traveled, total road miles, and Interstate miles over four decades.**



**Figure 5. Estimated average annual daily truck traffic in 2020.**

## References

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2. U.S. Census Bureau
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4. U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
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6. United Nations Human Development Report (<http://hdr.undp.org>)
7. World Development Report, June 1994.

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