A National Transportation Research Nonprofit

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ALABAMA TRAFFIC FATALITIES REMAIN AS HIGH AS A DECADE AGO; CRASHES IN ALABAMA CAUSED MORE THAN 5,700 DEATHS FROM 2020 TO 2025; FATAL & SERIOUS TRAFFIC CRASHES IN ALABAMA RESULTED IN $36.9 BILLION IN ECONOMIC AND QUALITY-OF-LIFE COSTS IN 2025

New national report examines causes of high fatality rates in states and potential solutions

***Click here* for the report, appendix and infographics.**

Washington, D.C. – U.S. traffic fatalities fell in 2025 for the fourth straight year, following a surge in traffic fatalities in 2020, 2021 and 2022 as the nation grappled with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. From 2020 to 2025, U.S. traffic crashes claimed 241,637 lives. This is according to a report released today by TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit. The report, *Addressing America's Traffic Safety Crisis: Examining the Causes of Increasing U.S. Traffic Fatalities and Identifying Solutions to Improve Traffic Safety*, documents trends in traffic fatalities from 2015 to 2025 at the national and state levels, examines causes for the increase in traffic fatalities, and prescribes a broad, comprehensive approach to reducing traffic fatalities in the U.S.

The number and rate of U.S. traffic fatalities increased dramatically in 2020 and 2021, as driver behavior and travel patterns changed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. However, following the sharp increase during the pandemic, U.S. fatalities have fallen each year from 2022 through 2025. But despite a reduction in traffic fatalities over the last four years, the number of traffic fatalities in 2025 were still three percent higher than in 2015 (36,640 versus 35,484).

Alabama's traffic fatality rate of 1.16 fatalities per 100 million VMT in 2025 is higher than the national fatality rate of 1.10. In Alabama, from 2020 to 2025, the number of traffic fatalities decreased nine percent and the fatality rate per 100 million VMT decreased 16 percent. But, despite recent progress, 5,706 people were killed in traffic crashes in the state from 2020 to 2025 – averaging approximately 2.6 fatalities per day during this period.

ALABAMA TRAFFIC FATALITY AND FATALITY RATE PER 100 MILLION VEHICLE MILES OF TRAVEL									
	2015	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2015-2025 Change	2020-2025 Change
Traffic Fatalities	849	934	983	988	974	976	851	0%	-9%
Fatalities per 100M VMT	1.26	1.38	1.37	1.38	1.35	1.33	1.16	-8%	-16%

The report's Appendix includes the number of fatalities and the fatality rate per 100 million VMT every state and the District of Columbia for 2015 and 2020 to 2025. The following chart indicates the states with the highest fatality rate per 100 million miles of vehicle travel in 2025.

2025 Traffic Fatality Rate per 100M VMT					
1	New Mexico	1.59	11	Nevada	1.32
2	Mississippi	1.52	12	Oregon	1.29
3	South Carolina	1.51	13	Colorado	1.28
4	Arizona	1.50	14	Tennessee	1.27
5	West Virginia	1.46	15	Wyoming	1.26
6	Arkansas	1.43	16	Florida	1.24
7	Montana	1.43	17	Idaho	1.22
8	Louisiana	1.38	18	Hawaii	1.22
9	Kentucky	1.36	19	Delaware	1.21
10	Oklahoma	1.35	20	Texas	1.21
U.S. TOTAL: 1.10					

The TRIP report found that bicyclist and pedestrian fatalities, which accounted for 21 percent of all U.S. traffic fatalities in 2025, increased eight percent from 2020 to 2025. From 2020 to 2025, the number of pedestrians killed increased five percent (from 6,236 to 6,529) and the number of bicyclists killed increased 29 percent (from 891 to 1,148).

According to the TRIP report, there were 5,758 motorcyclist fatalities in 2025. And while motorcycle travel accounted for just 0.7 percent of annual VMT in the U.S., motorcyclists represented 16 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2025. The fatality rate per 100 million miles of travel in 2024 for motorcyclists was 36 times higher than for passenger car occupants (28 versus 0.78). U.S. motorcyclist fatalities increased by 2 percent from 2020 to 2025, from 5,620 to 5,758. The share of motorcyclists not wearing helmets increased from 17 percent in 2019 to 29 percent in 2021, then dropped to 18 percent in 2023.

From 2020 to 2024, crashes in U.S. highway work zones resulted in 4,481 fatalities. In Alabama, highway work zone crashes resulted in 93 traffic fatalities from 2020 to 2024. The report's Appendix includes the number of work zone fatalities in each state and nationwide from 2020-2025.

"Every traffic fatality represents a life lost, a family changed forever, and a reminder that roadway safety demands continued attention and investment. ATSSA applauds TRIP for highlighting both the encouraging progress and the significant challenges that remain," said Haley Jenkins, chair of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA). "While four straight years of declining fatalities show that safety improvements are making a difference, more than 36,000 people were killed on our nation's roads in 2025. Rising pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities further reinforce the need for a comprehensive, coordinated approach to safety. ATSSA appreciates the commitment of transportation agencies and policymakers to reducing roadway deaths and serious injuries. Continued investment in infrastructure, innovation, and proven safety solutions is essential to creating safer roads for all users."

Traffic crashes result in a significant economic burden. According to a 2023 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) report, the tangible economic costs of traffic crashes include medical care, lost productivity, legal and court costs, insurance administrative costs, workplace costs, congestion impacts (travel delay, excess fuel consumption and pollution), emergency services, and property damage. NHTSA has also estimated the annual value of the lost quality-of-life cost of traffic crashes causing serious injury or death. The lost quality-of-life costs include the loss of remaining lifespan, extended or lifelong physical impairment, or physical pain.

Based on NHTSA's traffic crash cost methodology, TRIP estimates that fatal and serious traffic crashes in Alabama in 2025 caused a total of $36.9 billion in the value of societal harm, which includes $9.1 billion in economic costs and $27.7 billion in quality-of-life costs.

"The continued loss of life on our nation's roadways reminds us that we cannot accept traffic fatalities as an inevitable consequence of mobility. The Safe System approach challenges all of us to take a more comprehensive and proactive approach to safety—one that recognizes human error, anticipates risk and builds layers of protection into our roads, vehicles and transportation system," said Russell McMurry, president of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and commissioner of the Georgia Department of Transportation. "As

transportation leaders, we have a shared responsibility to use data, innovation and every available safety tool to prevent crashes from becoming fatalities and serious injuries. Together, we must remain focused on building a transportation system that helps ensure everyone can reach their destination safely."

In 2011 U.S. traffic fatalities dropped to 32,749, the lowest level since 1949 when there were 30,246 traffic fatalities. By 2018, U.S. traffic fatalities had increased to 36,835. Beginning in March 2020, when initial restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic were implemented, the number and rate of traffic fatalities began to increase, even as the rate of vehicle travel decreased initially.

The significant increase in traffic fatalities following the onset of the pandemic appears largely related to increased risks being taken by drivers. In an October 2021 report, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that "after the declaration of the public health emergency in March 2020, driving patterns and behaviors in the United States changed significantly. Of the drivers who remained on the roads, some engaged in riskier behavior, including speeding, failure to wear seat belts, and driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs."

The TRIP report noted that NHTSA data indicates that the number of people killed in the U.S. in police-reported alcohol involved crashes increased by two percent from 2020 to 2024, from 11,654 to 11,904.

NHTSA found that the number of unrestrained occupants of passenger vehicles (those not wearing a seat belt) killed in the U.S. decreased by 21 percent from 2020 to 2025, from 12,143 to 9,546. The share of adult front-seat passengers wearing seat belts in 2025 was 91 percent (91.3), an increase from 90.3 percent in 2020 but lower than the rate in 2023 – 91.9 percent, which is the highest rate yet recorded.

NHTSA also found that the number of people killed in speeding-related traffic crashes in the U.S. decreased by 11 percent from 2020 to 2025, from 12,143 to 9,546 – representing 26 percent of U.S. traffic fatalities in 2025.

From 2020 to 2024, the number of fatalities in distraction-affected traffic crashes increased by two percent, from 3,154 to 3,208.

"The continued decline in traffic deaths is encouraging, and the return toward pre-pandemic levels marks real progress," said Jake Nelson, director of Traffic Safety Advocacy and Research at AAA. "But improvement is not the same as success. Too many people are still dying on our roads, and traffic deaths remain higher than they were a decade ago. We need to build on this momentum with proven strategies that make every trip safer for every road user."

In early 2022 the U.S. Department of Transportation adopted a comprehensive National Roadway Safety Strategy, a roadmap for addressing the nation's roadway safety crisis based on a Safe System approach, which is also being adopted by state and local transportation agencies. The objectives and elements of the approach include the following:

Safer People: Encourage safe, responsible behavior through education on speeding, impaired driving, safe pedestrian and bicycling behavior; extension of safety belt laws and enforcement; and enhanced enforcements and penalties for speeding and impaired, aggressive or distracted driving.

Safer Roads: Design roadway environments to mitigate human mistakes, account for injury tolerances, encourage safer behaviors, and facilitate safe travel by the most vulnerable users.

Safer Vehicles: Expand the availability of vehicle systems and features that help to prevent crashes and minimize the impact of crashes on both occupants and non-occupants. Support the development, testing and deployment of connected and autonomous vehicle technology such as collision avoidance, lane departure avoidance systems and turning detection systems.

Safer Speeds: Where appropriate, provide roadway features to encourage safer speeds, including traffic roundabouts and curb extensions; improved signage and dynamic speed signing at high-risk locations; education on the consequences of speeding; and increased speeding enforcement, particularly at high-risk locations.

Post-Crash Care: Enhance the survivability of crashes through expedient access to emergency medical care, create a safe working environment for vital first responders by preventing secondary crashes through robust traffic incident management practices, increase access to level one or two trauma centers for seriously injured crash victims.

Consistent with the Safe System approach, safety at highway work zones can be improved by implementing a comprehensive work zone safety strategy that includes ensuring a proper work zone layout; prioritizing work zone

safety training; ensuring the use of high visibility safety apparel and appropriate traffic control devices; creating an internal traffic control plan; and implementing strategies to reduce aggressive driving.

Increasing investment in roadway safety improvements is likely to pay off in the form of reduced fatal and serious traffic crashes. The U.S. has a $146 billion backlog in needed roadway safety improvements, according to a 2017 report from the AAAFTS. The report found implementing cost-effective and needed roadway safety improvements on U.S. roadways would save approximately 63,700 lives and reduce the number of serious injuries as a result of traffic crashes by approximately 350,000 over a 20-year period.

Additional funding for improved roadway safety has been provided by the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which was signed into law in November 2021, and provides a significant boost in federal investment in roads, bridges and transit, and offers an opportunity for the nation to make progress in improving the safety, reliability and condition of America's transportation system. The IIJA provides $454 billion over the five-year period from 2022 to 2026 for investment in highways and transit, resulting in a 38 percent increase in federal investment starting in 2022. The IIJA is set to expire on September 30, 2026.

"While it is good news that the number of traffic fatalities is trending downward in recent years, the nation continues to face a traffic safety crisis with nearly a quarter million Americans killed since 2020." Said Dave Kearby, TRIP's executive director. "Making a commitment to eliminating fatal and serious injuries on the nation's roadways will require robust investment and coordinated activities by transportation and safety-related agencies in providing the needed layers of protection for the nation's motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists, including safe road users, safe roads, safe vehicles, safe speeds and high-quality post-crash care."

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