

MOBILITY TRENDS INDUSTRY AND WORKERS



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Federal Highway
Administration

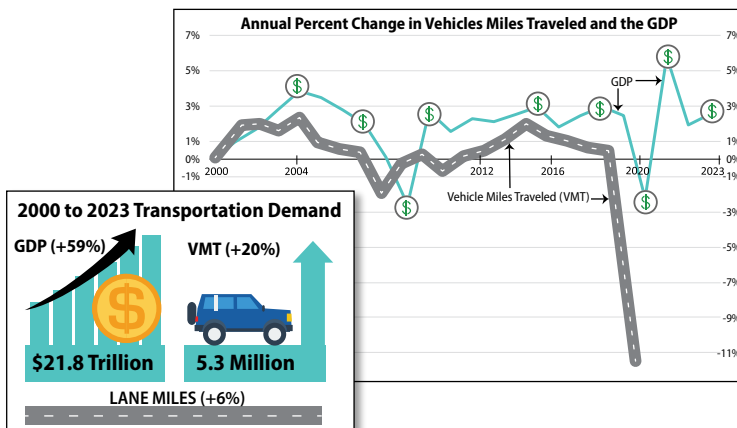


TRENDING

2025

Economic activity, freight logistics, labor force participation, e-commerce, and workplace flexibility all play a key role in shaping when, where, and how people and goods move. In 2021, more than 4.18 million miles of U.S. roads supported essential travel and freight activity, moving 12.68 million tons of goods by truck and connecting a vast web of households, industries, and supply chain nodes.¹

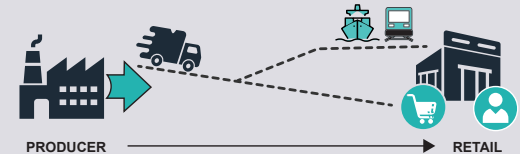
Transportation demand is closely linked to gross domestic product (GDP) and vehicle miles traveled (VMT). As the economy expanded from \$13.7 trillion in 2000 to \$21.8 trillion in 2023, VMT trends generally mirrored this growth, with some temporary declines during economic downturns such as the 2007–2009 recession and again in 2020.² Highway travel increased by over 20 percent (from 4.4 million miles to 5.3 million miles), while lane miles only increased by 6 percent.³ This discrepancy underscores a growing gap between capacity expansion and user demand.



Labor force growth and evolving work habits are also transforming transportation patterns. Older workers, aged 65 and over, more than doubled between 2002 and 2021, rising from 4.6 million to 10.6 million—a 146 percent increase.⁴ Some people are continuing to work past retirement age or engaging in part-time roles, while flexible work schedules have become more common. Although VMT has recovered since 2020, in 2023 downtown travel remained 27 percent lower,⁵ and peak congestion is now concentrated on midweek days and spread across broader time windows. These shifts have produced flatter demand curves and increased midday traffic, reflecting new rhythms of personal travel, errands, and leisure.

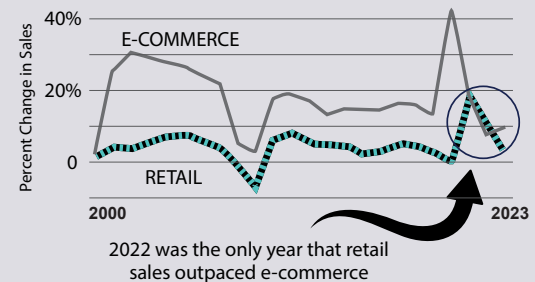
→ FREIGHT PATTERNS

In 2021, trucks moved **12.68 million tons of goods**, helping connect 4.2 million miles of roads to America's economy, but most truck shipments cover short to medium distances.



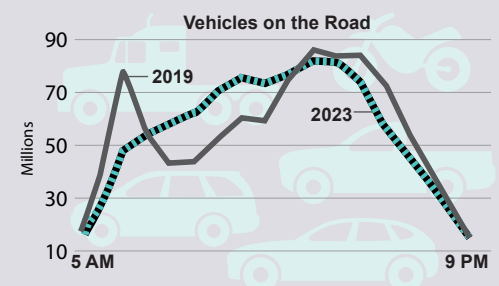
→ E-COMMERCE

E-commerce now drives **14 percent of consumer sales** and has shifted travel demand from personal shopping trips to increased residential deliveries, especially in urban areas.⁶



→ HYBRID WORK SCHEDULES

Hybrid work schedules have reduced peak-hour congestion and shifted travel to midday and midweek, reshaping traditional commute patterns.



As industries adapt to changing supply chains, households shift to online shopping, and hybrid work becomes the norm, transportation systems must also adapt to new patterns of movement, congestion, and infrastructure needs.

Notes and Sources

1. Federal Highway Administration, *24th Ed. Status of the Nation's Highways, Bridges, and Transit Conditions and Performance Report* (U.S. DOT Office Policy and Governmental Affairs, 2021), accessed September 26, 2024, <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/24cpr/>; Bureau of Transportation Statistics, "Moving Goods in the United States," *Freight Facts and Figures* (U.S. DOT, 2024), accessed September 27, 2024, <https://data.bts.gov/stories/s/Moving-Goods-in-the-United-States/bcyt-rqmu>.
2. World Bank, "GDP (Current US\$)," World Development Indicators, 2024, accessed September 27, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>; U.S. Census Bureau, *National Population Totals and Components of Change: 2020–2024*, 2024, accessed September 27, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-national-total.html>.
3. Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *U.S. Passenger-Miles* [dataset] (U.S. DOT, n.d.), accessed September 27, 2024, <https://www.bts.gov/content/us-passenger-miles>; U.S. Census Bureau, *National Population Totals and Components of Change: 2020–2024*, 2024, accessed September 27, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-national-total.html>.
4. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey* (Annual Averages, All Years), September 13, 2024, accessed September 27, 2024, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/tables.htm#otheryears>.
5. StreetLight Data, "Downtown Congestion Post-COVID—Traffic Trends in the Top 10 U.S. Cities," *StreetLight Data*, 2022, accessed September 23, 2024, <https://learn.streetlightdata.com/hubfs/eBooks%20and%20Research/Congestion%20Report/Downtown%20Congestion%20Report.pdf>.
6. U.S. Census Bureau, "Quarterly Retail E-Commerce Sales," August 19, 2024, accessed September 25, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/retail/ecommerce.html>.

Graphics: Federal Highway Administration, Office of Transportation Policy Studies.

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