

Introduction

States across the country have different processes and policies for ranking and funding transportation improvement projects. This policy briefing examines Connecticut and the five states that, according to a U.S. News and World Report ranking, have the best transportation infrastructure.¹ This policy briefing describes each state's geographic and infrastructure makeup and condition, federal requirements for transportation planning and project programming, and each state's unique project selection process.

Federal Requirements

In general, transportation planning and project programming occurs at two levels: regional² and statewide.³ Regional planning and programming is broken down further into metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. Metropolitan areas are urbanized areas with populations of more than 50,000.⁴ In these areas, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are responsible for developing long-range transportation plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs).⁵ Nonmetropolitan areas have populations of less than 50,000, and states choose whether or not to designate a Regional Planning Organization (RPO) to be responsible for long-range planning and TIPs. State transportation departments are responsible for long-range transportation plans and Statewide Transportation Improvement Programs (STIPs).⁶

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP 21), signed into law in 2012, introduced a performance-based approach to state transportation planning and decision making.⁷ States and MPOs are required to support national goals, which can generally cover safety, infrastructure condition, congestion reduction, system reliability, freight movement and economic vitality, environmental sustainability, and reduced project delivery delays.⁸ They are further required to establish performance targets based on performance measures established by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for bridge and pavement management systems, highway safety, congestion mitigation and air quality, and national freight movement.⁹

When developing long-range transportation plans, states are required to cooperate with MPOs in metropolitan areas and local officials, or RPOs, if they are established, in nonmetropolitan areas.¹⁰ Long-range transportation plans are required to be developed at least every four years and must cover a period of at least 20 years.^{11,12} Long-range transportation plans are required to include:

- A list of multimodal transportation facilities that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system that emphasize facilities that support national and regional functions;
- A description of the MPO or state's performance measures and targets;
- A system performance report;
- A report on actions taken to mitigate environmental impact;
- A financial plan showing how the plan can be implemented and the funding sources anticipated to be utilized;

- Operational and management strategies for reducing congestion and improving the safety and mobility of people and goods;
- Capital investment and other strategies to preserve the current systems and reduce the risk of damage from natural disasters; and
- Proposed public transportation enhancements, including the role intercity buses play in reducing congestion, pollution, and energy consumption.^{13,14}

Public hearings are required to be held on the long-range transportation plan. In addition, MPOs and states are required to engage with various stakeholders (ex. affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, intercity bus operators, and vanpool programs).¹⁵

States and MPOs are similarly required to cooperate in the development of TIPs and STIPs, however, in this case, states are only required to consult with local officials or regional planning organizations for nonmetropolitan areas.¹⁶ TIPs and STIPs are lists of projects developed at least every four years. These lists cover a four-year period that is consistent with, and reflects, the investment priorities in a state's long-range transportation plan, and include projects that are designed to achieve the performance targets mentioned above.¹⁷ TIPs and STIPs are required to contain:

- A priority list of federally supported and regionally significant projects to be acted upon within the next four years;
- A financial plan showing how the TIP can be implemented and the funding sources anticipated to be utilized;
- Descriptions of each project including such items as termini, length, and design or construction phase; and
- The anticipated impact on performance targets.¹⁸

TIPs are required to have a public comment and stakeholder engagement period identical to the one described for long-range transportation plans.¹⁹ Projects included in the TIP are to be carried out by the state in cooperation with MPOs, or in consultation with RPOs or local officials, and must first appear on a TIP before they can be included in a STIP. Exceptions to this include projects on the National Highway System (NHS) in nonmetropolitan areas, the FHWA bridge program, and the interstate maintenance program.²⁰

MAP 21 also required state Transportation Asset Management Plans (TAMPs).²¹ TAMPs look at a state's assets, management strategies, long-term expenditure forecasts, and business management processes.²² Each state is required to develop a TAMP for the preservation and improvement of NHS assets and the performance of the system.²³ TAMPs include a listing of pavement and bridge assets on the NHS and a description of their condition, asset management objectives and measures, lifecycle costs and risk management analysis, a financial plan, and investment strategies.²⁴ States are permitted to include non-NHS assets as well.²⁵

Connecticut

Background

Connecticut is the 48th largest state in land area²⁶ and has the 29th largest population.²⁷ It is 5,543 square miles.²⁸ There are 4,238 bridges and 3,332,219 square meters of bridge deck area.^{29,^} Connecticut has 21,544 miles of road³⁰ and 45,855 lane miles, almost 75 percent of which are considered urban.³¹ The State of Connecticut maintains 1,442 miles of road and 1,785 of the bridges, totally in 2,440,622 square meters of bridge deck area.³²

Connecticut has eight MPOs: Capitol MPO, Central Naugatuck MPO, Greater Bridgeport Valley MPO, Housatonic Valley MPO, Lower Connecticut River Valley MPO, South Central MPO, Southeastern Connecticut MPO, and South Western Connecticut MPO.³³ Connecticut also has two Rural Planning Regions: Northeastern Connecticut Planning Region and Northwest Hills Planning Region.³⁴

Connecticut's transportation infrastructure was ranked 37th overall by U.S. News and World Report, including 24th in Bridge Quality and 43rd in Road Quality.³⁵ Of Connecticut's 21,544 miles of road, 7,325, or 34 percent, are in "poor" condition.³⁶ Of Connecticut's 4,238 bridges, 332, or 7.83 percent were reported as structurally deficient.³⁷ Measured by deck area, 444,281 square meters, or 13.37 percent, are structurally deficient.³⁸

Project Selection/Oversight Body

Every four years, the commissioner of Connecticut's Department of Transportation (CTDOT) is responsible for coordinating and developing the state's Long-Range Transportation Plan in cooperation with the state's eight MPOs and in consultation with the state's two RPOs.^{39,40} Likewise, the CTDOT develops the STIP in coordination with the MPOs and in consultation with the RPOs every four years.⁴¹ The CTDOT prepares a draft list of projects to be initiated for the next 4-year period from its 5-year capital program and provides said list to the MPOs for consideration in their TIPs.⁴² The CTDOT works with the MPOs to address and resolve disagreements.⁴³ After the public comment period, the MPOs endorse their draft TIP and submit it to the CTDOT.⁴⁴ The CTDOT ensures the TIP is consistent with the agreed upon list of projects, and includes those projects in the STIP, which is then adopted by the commissioner.⁴⁵

The CTDOT also develops an annual 5-year capital plan, which includes all projects anticipated to be taken up by the Department over that 5-year period, including projects not required to be included in the STIP.⁴⁶ The CTDOT collaborates with MPOs, elected officials, and other stakeholders in developing the capital plan.⁴⁷

[^] Bridge deck area is the width of the surface structure times the length of the surface structure.

State statute requires projects^B to be assessed using an assessment method, developed by the CTDOT and approved by the Connecticut General Assembly's Transportation Committee, prior to their inclusion in the 5-year capital plan.⁴⁸ The assessment method is to look at the impact of projects on economic development, transit-oriented development, housing development, access to employment, the environment, traffic congestion, and public safety.⁴⁹ To date, the assessment method has not been provided to, nor approved by, the Transportation Committee.⁵⁰

The General Assembly passed legislation creating an oversight body in 2017: the Transportation Policy Advisory Council.⁵¹ To date, only one member has been appointed and the Council has not met.⁵² The Council is to consist of 13 members, including: the secretary of the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), the commissioner of the Department of Economic and Community Development, the commissioner of the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the commissioner of the Department of Housing, the state treasurer, six members appointed by leaders of the state legislature, and two members appointed by the governor.⁵³ The commissioner of the CTDOT and the chairpersons and ranking members of the General Assembly's Transportation Committee serve as ex-officio, nonvoting members.⁵⁴ The secretary of the OPM serves as the chairperson.⁵⁵

The Council is responsible for:

- Recommending policies for improving transportation planning and project selection;
- Reviewing the CTDOT's annual 5-year capital plan and ensuring the plan "assures the development and maintenance of an adequate, safe and efficient transportation system";
- Holding public hearings on the 5-year capital plan;
- Advising the commissioner of the CTDOT on policies and procedures supporting economic development, transit-oriented development, housing development, access to employment, environmental protection, and the needs of each region of the state; and
- Reviewing assessments of transportation projects provided by the CTDOT in accordance with the assessment method previously mentioned.⁵⁶

Connecticut completed its first TAMP in July 2018.⁵⁷ While federal law only requires NHS bridges and roads to be included, the CTDOT included all state-maintained bridges and pavements.⁵⁸

^B Conn. Gen. Statutes ch. 242, § 13b-13c(a) defines "transportation projects," as used in relation to the assessment method noted in this paragraph, as transportation planning or capital projects that either expand capacity on a limited access highway, transit or railroad system or parking facility, or are estimated to cost \$150 million or more, but does not include those projects the commissioner of the DOT determines are necessary to maintain a state of good repair and will cost less than \$150 million.

Nevada

Background

Nevada is the 7th largest state in land area⁵⁹ and 32nd largest in population.⁶⁰ It is 110,572 square miles,⁶¹ has 1,944 bridges and 1,609,549 square meters of bridge deck area.⁶² There are 48,234 miles of road⁶³ and 101,666 lane miles, of which over 75 percent are considered rural.⁶⁴ The State of Nevada maintains 13,420 of the road miles and 1,165 of the bridges.⁶⁵

Nevada has four MPOs: the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County, the Lake Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the Carson Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.⁶⁶

Nevada's transportation infrastructure was ranked 1st overall by U.S. News and World Report, including 2nd in Bridge Quality and 16th in Road Quality.⁶⁷ Of Nevada's 48,234 miles of road, 6,753 miles, or 14 percent, are in "poor" condition.⁶⁸ Of Nevada's 1,944 bridges, 31, or 1.59 percent were reported as "structurally deficient."⁶⁹ Measured by deck area, 13,435 square meters, or 0.83 percent, are structurally deficient.⁷⁰

Project Selection/Oversight Body

Nevada's Department of Transportation (NDOT) is overseen by a 7-member board of directors made up of the governor, the lieutenant governor, the state controller, and four members^c appointed by the governor.⁷¹ The appointed members need to be a licensed professional engineer, a licensed general contractor with experience as principal of a firm, or have an expertise in finance and business administration.⁷² The governor serves as chair and the vice chair is elected annually by the Board.⁷³

The Board is provided broad authority to oversee policy and transact business for the NDOT.⁷⁴ The Board meets monthly to review all NDOT contracts and agreements, to approve construction contracts above \$5 million, and service agreements over \$300,000.⁷⁵

The NDOT develops the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the STIP, and presents both to the board of directors for review and approval.⁷⁶ While federal requirements detailed above require a STIP to be produced every four years, Nevada updates the STIP annually.⁷⁷ The NDOT also produces an annual "Work Program," which details projects anticipated to be worked on during the current fiscal year, within the next 2-3 years, and within the next 4-10 years.⁷⁸

^c The four members are selected from Nevada's three highway districts: two must be selected from the highway district containing a county with a population over 700,000 (Clark County), one selected from the highway district containing a county with a population between 100,000 and 700,000 (Washoe County), and one selected from the third highway district that does not include a county with a population over 100,000.

Utah

Background

Utah is the 13th largest state⁷⁹ and has the 30th largest population.⁸⁰ It is 84,897 square miles⁸¹ and features 3,051 bridges and 1,871,580 square meters of deck area.⁸² Utah has 49,290 miles of road⁸³ and 103,208 lane miles, 75 percent of which are considered rural.⁸⁴ Utah maintains approximately 16,000 lane miles and 1,813,034 square meters of bridge deck.⁸⁵

Utah has four MPOs: Cache MPO, Dixie MPO, Mountainland Association of Governments, and the Wasatch Front Regional Council.⁸⁶

Utah's transportation infrastructure was ranked 2nd overall by U.S. News and World Report, including 31st in Road Quality and 5th in Bridge Quality.⁸⁷ Of Utah's 49,290 miles of road, 10,844 miles, or 22 percent, are in "poor" condition.⁸⁸ Of Utah's 3,051 bridges, 87, or 2.85 percent are structurally deficient.⁸⁹ Measured by deck area, 21,432, or 1.15 percent, are structurally deficient.⁹⁰

Project Selection/Oversight Body

The Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) is overseen by the Utah Transportation Commission (UTC). The UTC consists of seven part-time members appointed by the governor on a nonpartisan basis with the consent of the Utah State Senate.⁹¹ One commissioner is selected from each of the four regions established by the UDOT and three commissioners are selected at large.⁹² At least one at-large commissioner must reside in a rural county, and there cannot be more than two commissioners from any single region.⁹³ One commissioner is selected by the governor to serve as chair, and the UTC selects one member as vice chair to act in the chair's absence.⁹⁴

The UTC is responsible for, among other things, determining priorities and funding levels for projects each fiscal year, engaging the public and receiving public input on transportation matters, advising the UDOT on transportation policy,⁹⁵ and developing a written project prioritization process for new capacity projects.⁹⁶

The UDOT develops the rural long-range transportation plan and combines that plan with the urban long-range plans — developed by the four MPOs — to create the statewide long-range transportation plan, also known in Utah as the "Unified Plan."⁹⁷ The statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan is reviewed, revised, and approved by the UTC.⁹⁸ Similarly, the STIP is developed by the UDOT in cooperation with the MPOs.⁹⁹

Utah uses a set of strategic goals to direct its project prioritization: preserving and optimizing current infrastructure, utilizing technological advancements to improve mobility, assessing safety and identifying locations for safety improvements, and considering new capacity projects only after the previous goals have been duly considered.¹⁰⁰ For major new capacity projects, which Utah defines as projects that cost more than \$5 million and add new roads, interchanges, or lanes or modify existing interchanges for capacity or economic development purposes,¹⁰¹ the project list is prioritized based on transportation efficiency and safety factors.¹⁰² The UTC has discretion, after consulting with MPOs and the UDOT, to consider other factors in

prioritizing major new capacity projects, and prioritizing one project over other higher-ranked projects.¹⁰³

Delaware

Background

Delaware is the 49th largest state¹⁰⁴ and has the 45th largest population.¹⁰⁵ It is 2,489 square miles¹⁰⁶ with 879 bridges and 980,591 square meters of bridge deck area.¹⁰⁷ Delaware has 6,452 miles of road¹⁰⁸ and 13,954 lane-miles, almost 60 percent of which is urban.¹⁰⁹ The State of Delaware maintains 5,425 miles of road and 323 bridges.¹¹⁰ Delaware has three MPOs: the Wilmington Area Planning Council, the Dover/Kent County MPO, and the Salisbury-Wicomico MPO.¹¹¹

Delaware's transportation infrastructure was ranked 3rd overall by U.S. News and World Report, including 22nd in Road Quality and 6th in Bridge Quality.¹¹² Of Delaware's 6,452 miles of road, 1,161, or 18 percent, are in "poor" condition.¹¹³ Of Delaware's 879 bridges, 39, or 4.44 percent are structurally deficient.¹¹⁴ Measured by deck area, 58,474 square meters, or 5.96 percent, are structurally deficient.¹¹⁵

Project Selection/Oversight Body

The Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) is advised by the Council on Transportation (COT).¹¹⁶ The COT consists of nine members appointed by the governor, with each county represented by at least two members, and no single political party holding more than a one seat majority or plurality of another political party.¹¹⁷ The COT advises the secretary, deputy secretary, and transportation directors of the DelDOT, as well as the governor, and is responsible for considering transportation matters, including the budget and capital improvement program.¹¹⁸

Delaware's three MPOs maintain their own long-range transportation plans,¹¹⁹ which are reviewed and approved by the DelDOT and used by the department in its internal review process for projects.¹²⁰ The DelDOT annually prepares and updates the statewide 6-year Capital Improvement Program and submits it to the COT.¹²¹ The first four years of the Program are the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan.¹²² Projects listed in the Capital Improvement Program are ranked based on a formula-based prioritization process, developed by the DelDOT and approved by the COT.¹²³

The formula is statutorily required to consider: safety, service, and condition factors; social, economic, and environmental factors; long-range transportation plans and comprehensive land use plans; and continuity of improvement.¹²⁴ The formula is not used for projects for dirt roads, suburban street aid projects, municipal street aid projects, or system preservation projects.¹²⁵ System preservation projects are prioritized based on performance measures for pavement management, bridge management, and safety management projects.¹²⁶

The DelDOT's current formula^D is split between quantitative and qualitative factors and assigns weights:

Quantitative	
Safety	33%
System Operating Effectiveness	24.8%
Revenue Generation/Economic Development/Jobs & Commerce	7.9%

Qualitative	
Multi-Modal Mobility/Flexibility/Access	15.6%
Impact on Public/Social Disruption/Economic Justice	7.2%
Environmental Impact/Stewardship	6.5%

The COT is responsible for collecting public comments on the Capital Improvements Program, and, following the public comment period, the COT can make priority changes in an open meeting by documenting the reasons and justifications for changes using the priority formula-based process.¹²⁷ After the public comment period, the COT approves and adopts the DelDOT's Capital Improvement Program.¹²⁸

Minnesota

Background

Minnesota is the 12th largest state¹²⁹ and has the 22nd largest population.¹³⁰ It is 86,936 square miles.¹³¹ There are 13,329 bridges and 6,497,340 square meters of bridge deck area.¹³² Minnesota has 139,449 miles of road¹³³ and 286,708 lane-miles, almost 83 percent of which are rural.¹³⁴ The State of Minnesota maintains 1,821 miles, or 4,036 lane miles, of roadway and 4,543 bridges, or 4,229,450 square meters of bridge deck area.

Minnesota has eight MPOs: the Metropolitan Interstate Council, the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks MPO, the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments, the St. Cloud Area Planning Organization, the Twin Cities Metropolitan Council, the Rochester/Olmsted Council of Governments, the La Crosse Area Planning Committee, and the Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization.¹³⁵

Minnesota's transportation infrastructure was ranked 4th overall by U.S. News and World Report, including 11th in Bridge Quality and 15th in Road Quality.¹³⁶ Of Minnesota's 139,449 miles of road, 19,523 miles, or 14 percent, are in "poor" condition.¹³⁷ Of Minnesota's 13,329 bridges, 709, or 5.32 percent are structurally deficient.¹³⁸ Measured by deck area, 219,116 square meters, or 3.37 percent, are structurally deficient.¹³⁹

Project Selection/Oversight Body

The commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is responsible for developing and adopting the state's long-range transportation plan,

^D The Department recommended, in February 2019, changes to the project prioritization criteria to incorporate new performance measures and other collected data.

known as the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan.¹⁴⁰ For TIPs, Minnesota uses a series of "Transportation Planning Partners": MPOs; Regional Development Commissions (RDCs); and Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs).¹⁴¹ There are 12 RDCs¹⁴² which were created to coordinate state, federal and local planning efforts for their region and coordinating ATPs.¹⁴³ ATPs are groups made up of representatives of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, MPOs, Regional Development Commissions, counties, cities, tribal governments, special interests and the public.¹⁴⁴ ATPs were created to generate a list of transportation investments for their regions based on recommendations for MPOs, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, and other transportation partners.¹⁴⁵ These lists are regions' TIPs.¹⁴⁶ Most of the federal highway and transit funds are targeted to Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs) for the selection of federally funded projects in Minnesota's STIP.¹⁴⁷

Minnesota does not have a direct oversight or advisory body.

Oregon

Background

Oregon is the 9th largest state¹⁴⁸ and has the 27th largest population.¹⁴⁹ It is 98,379 square miles.¹⁵⁰ There are 8,147 bridges and 5,030,363 square meters of bridge deck area.¹⁵¹ Oregon has 79,275 miles of road¹⁵² and 162,575 lane miles, 80% of which are rural.¹⁵³ The state maintains 7,660 miles of road and 2,737 bridges.¹⁵⁴

Oregon has 10 MPOs: Albany Area MPO, Bend MPO, Central Lane MPO, Corvallis Area MPO, Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments MPO, Middle Rogue MPO, Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System, Rogue Valley MPO, Salem-Keizer Area Transportation Study, and the Walla Walla Valley MPO.¹⁵⁵

Oregon's transportation infrastructure was ranked 5th overall by U.S. News and World Report, including 12th in Bridge Quality and 8th in Road Quality.¹⁵⁶ Of Oregon's 39,275 miles of road, 3,142, or eight percent, are in "poor" condition.¹⁵⁷ Of Oregon's 8,147 bridges, 444, or 5.45 percent are structurally deficient.¹⁵⁸ Measured by deck area, 230,374 square meters, or 4.58 percent, are structurally deficient.¹⁵⁹

Project Selection/Oversight Body

The Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) is overseen by the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC).¹⁶⁰ The OTC is made up of five commissioners appointed by the governor from different geographic regions: one member must live east of the Cascade Range and no more than three members can belong to one political party.¹⁶¹ The governor appoints one of the members as chairperson and the chairperson appoints another member as vice chairperson.¹⁶² The OTC is statutorily required to meet at least quarterly,¹⁶³ although the 2019 schedule shows monthly meetings.¹⁶⁴

The OTC has broad authority to enter into agreements for itself, and the ODOT, related to projects and research, including design, construction and maintenance, planning studies, property acquisition and disposal, and public-private partnerships.¹⁶⁵

The OTC, with planning assistance from the ODOT, is responsible for developing and adopting the state's long-range transportation plan and STIP.^{166,167} For the STIP, which is the ODOT's capital program, the OTC coordinates with stakeholders in determining criteria for project selection from the STIP.¹⁶⁸

In determining criteria, statute requires the OTC to consider whether the project:¹⁶⁹

- Provides system enhancements and congestion relief
- Will decrease crash rate, improve the movement of people and goods, and preserve the public investment in the transportation system
- Supports economic growth and competitiveness, accessibility to industries, and economic development
- Provides the greatest benefit in relation to project costs
- Reflects environmental stewardship and community sensitivity
- Conforms to Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals and reduces the dependence on foreign oil
- To the extent practicable, enhances infrastructure resiliency against natural disasters
- Is located near mining or processing aggregate operations

The ODOT provides preliminary project lists, cost estimates and schedules, and a narrowed draft list of projects for inclusion in the draft STIP.¹⁷⁰ The OTC holds a public comment period for the draft STIP, after which it adopts a revised STIP.¹⁷¹

Appendix

Figure 1¹⁷²
Total Lane Miles, Urban and Rural

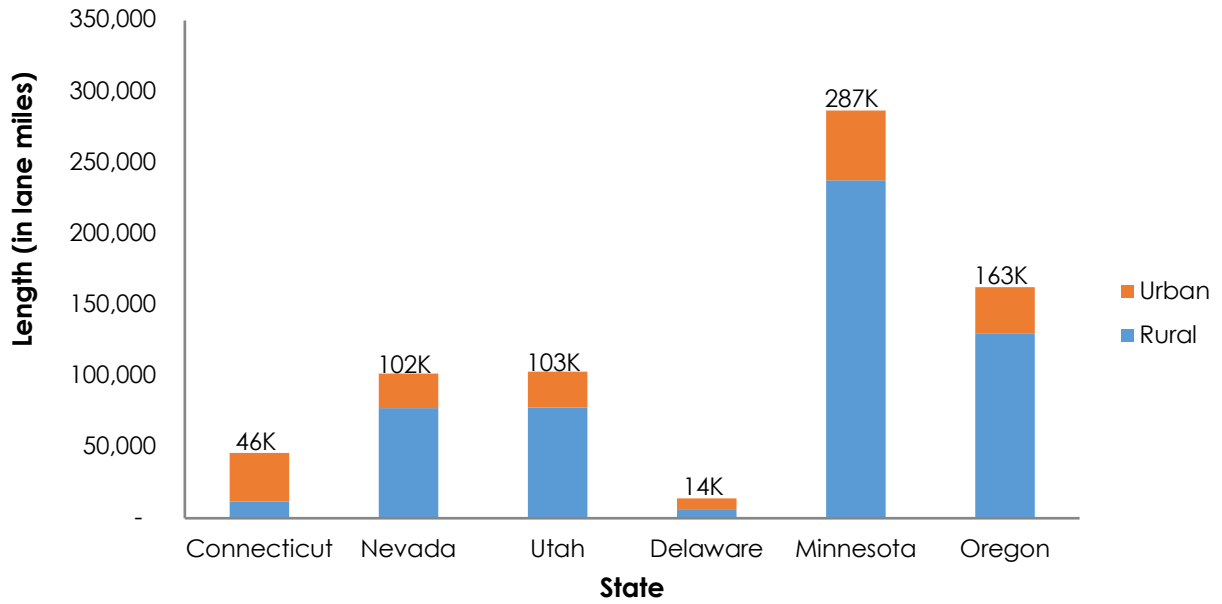


Figure 2¹⁷³
Road Condition by State

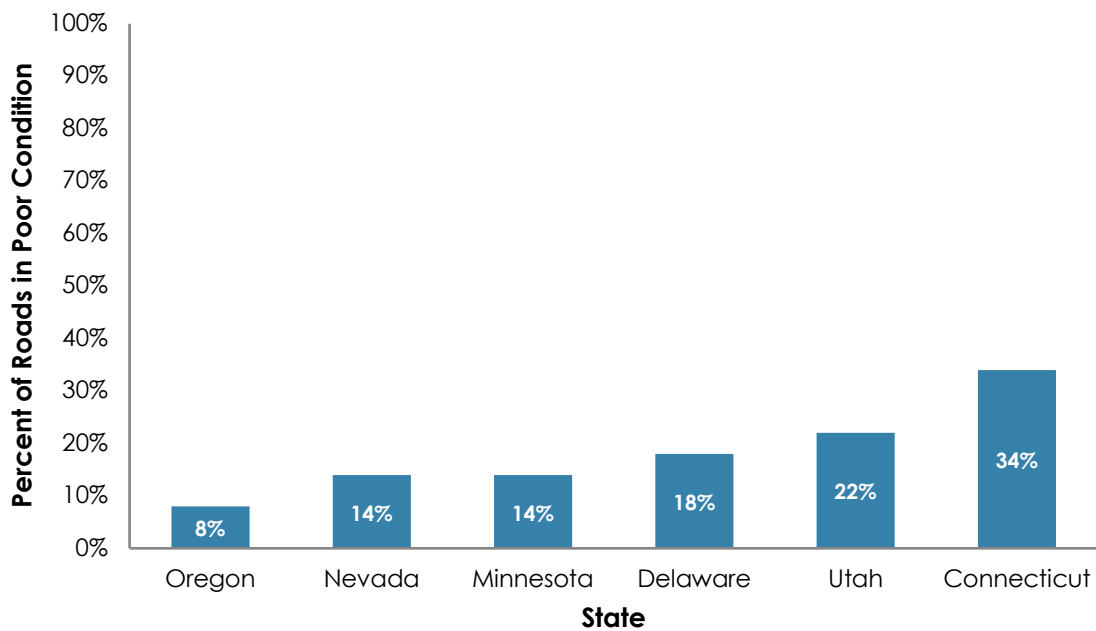


Figure 3^{174,175}
Road Density by State

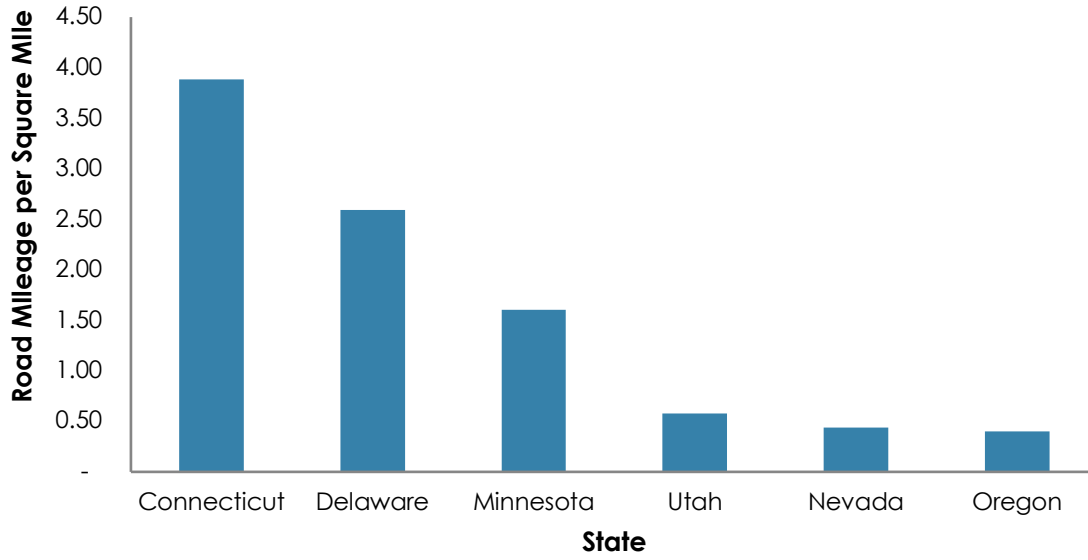


Figure 4^{176,177}
Bridge Density by State

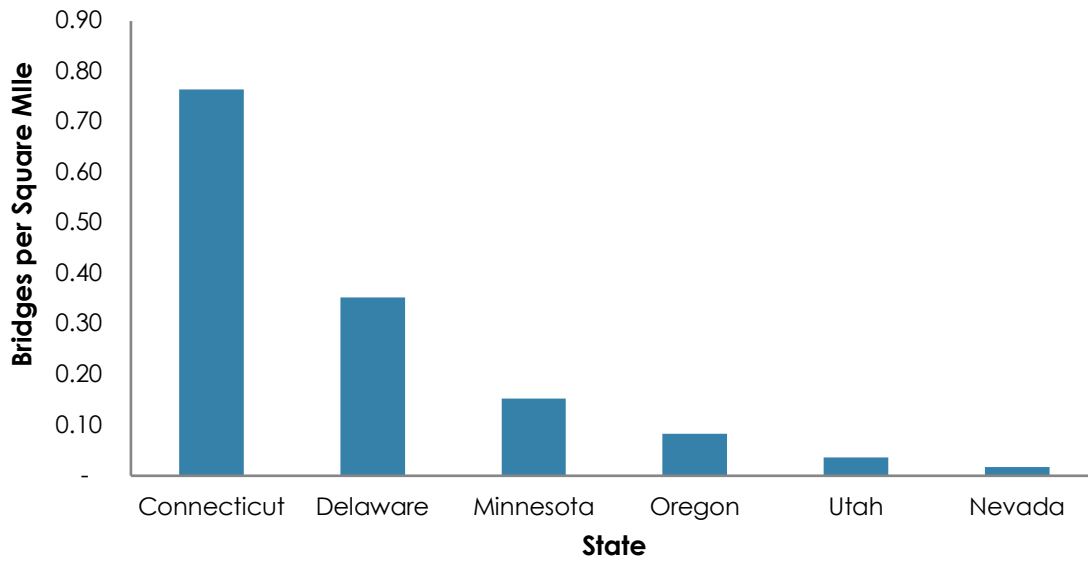


Figure 5¹⁷⁸
Structurally Deficient Bridges by State

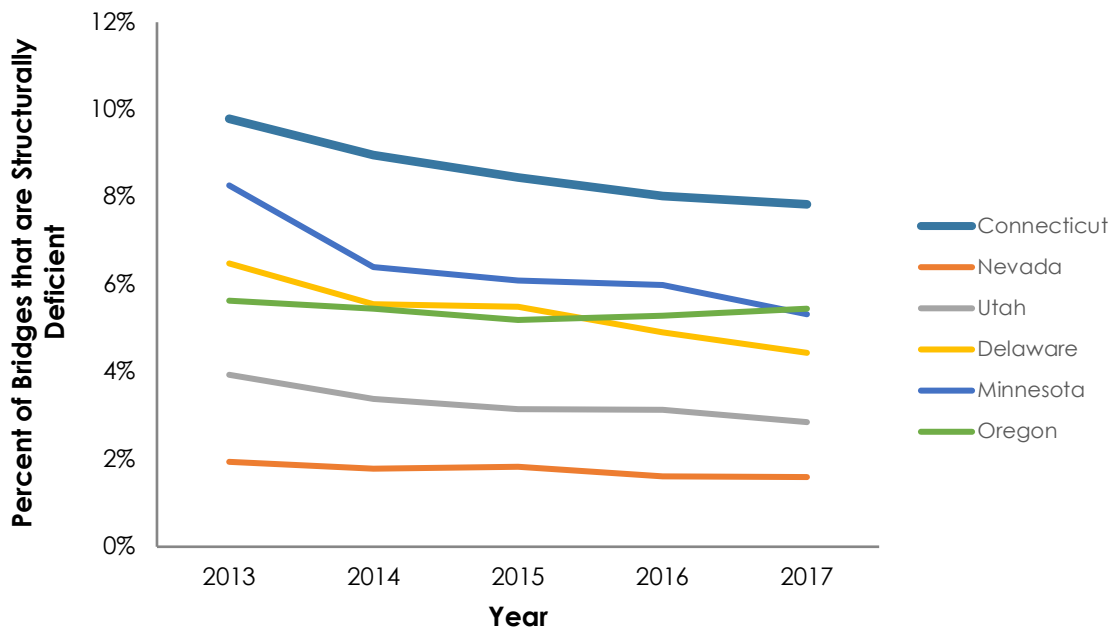
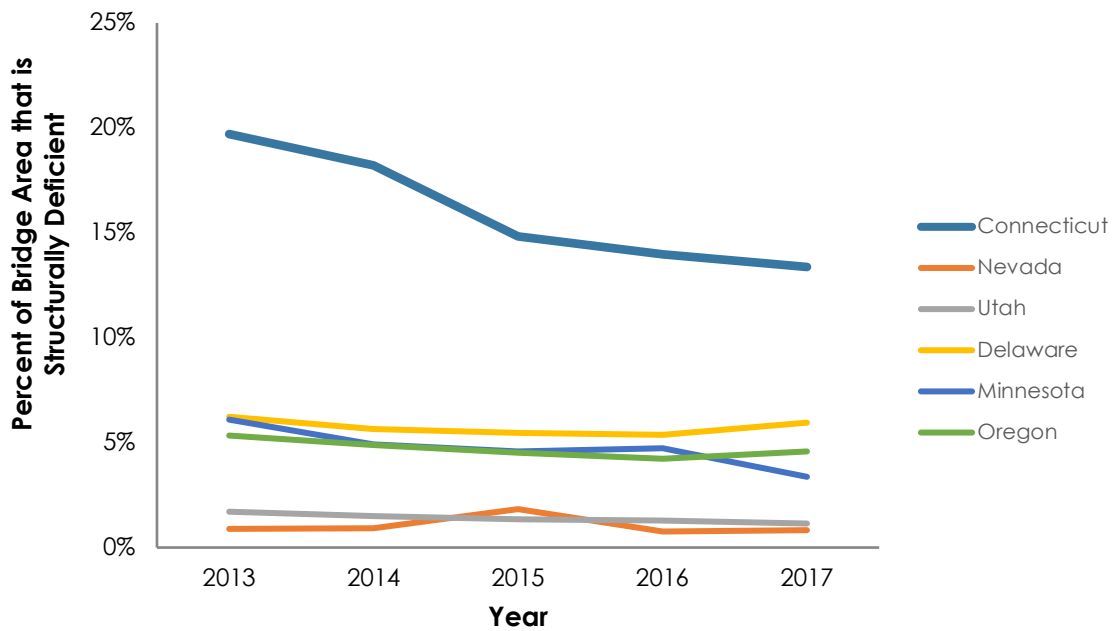


Figure 6¹⁷⁹
Structurally Deficient Bridge by Bridge Deck Area



Endnotes

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