

# The Connection



### Special points of interest:

- Road Safety
- Truck Speed Limits
- Logistics Costs
- Culture Benefits
- Declining Driving

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## How Can Roads be Made Safer?

Acting Federal Highway Administrator Jim Ray has called for increased safety on the nation's highways. State Departments of Transportation can reduce crashes by adopting more coordinated, system wide approaches to the problem.

"Safety is our top priority and, while the fatality rate on our nation's roads is the lowest in history, we are always seeking new ways to prevent tragedies where lives are lost," said Ray, the nation's top highway official. "We owe it to the traveling public to work even more creatively."

Each year, nearly 43,000 people-motorists, passengers and pedestrians-die on America's roads. Though the fatality rate (1.41 per 100 million vehicle miles travelled) is the lowest in the nation's history, the number of fatalities has hovered at about the same point for nearly five years.

FHWA safety officials met with transportation officials and safety experts in July via an online conference as part of a new effort to improve roadway safety. Nine tools surfaced as keys to reducing roadway fatalities each year:

- Roadway Safety Audits-State DOTs should formalize the use of these audits, which are comprehensive evaluations of existing or planned roads or intersections to identify potential safety improvements.
- Rumble Strips & Rumble Stripes-Used in centerline and shoulders, these cost-effective devices have shown demonstrable improvement in warning drivers of lane departure, reducing by 14% head-on collisions and opposite-direction sideswipe crashes. Shoulder rumble strips and stripes

have shown a 38% reduction in run-off-road crashes on freeways, and between 13 to 18% on rural roads.

- Median Barriers- Used to separate opposing traffic on divided highways, these barriers have a long history of reducing cross-median collisions. States are encouraged to use cable median barriers where appropriate to further heighten roadway safety.
- Safety Edge- This paving technique, giving a 30 to 35-degree slope to the road's edge, reduces the risk to drivers if their tire inadvertently falls over an otherwise near-vertical edge leading to loss of control and potential rollovers.
- Roundabouts- Roundabouts have demonstrated a 60 to 87% reduction in crashes.
- Turning Lanes- Stop-controlled intersections with significant turning volume can dramatically reduce crashes (up to 55%) with these lanes.
- Yellow Change Intervals- Studies show a one-second increase in the yellow signal interval can reduce red-light violations by as much as 50%.
- Urban Pedestrian Refuge Areas- Raised medians at pedestrian marked crosswalks have shown a 46% reduction in pedestrian accidents. FHWA recommends the median be from 4 to 8 feet wide.
- Walkways- Ensuring a sidewalk or pathway exists near a roadway can reduce pedestrian accidents by up to 88%. Pathways should be at least 4 feet wide.

## U.S. Logistics Costs Hit Record High

The cost of logistics in the United States rose by nearly \$100 billion in the past year, to \$1.4 trillion, a record high for the fourth consecutive year and the equivalent of 10.1% of the U.S. gross domestic product. That represents a jump of 7% from the \$1.3 trillion in costs for the previous year.

"For the second year in a row the U.S. supply chain industry has had to operate in a soft demand environment, with soaring fuel prices and even more pressure to perform efficiently," notes transportation consultant Rosalyn Wilson, author of the annual State of Logistics Report for the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP). The industry has reacted well, she observes, "with a more responsive supply chain that has enhanced visibility, added flexibility with dynamic rerouting and improved reliability." Pricing power, she adds, is now firmly in the hands of the manufacturers and retailers, rather than the freight carriers.

Transportation costs were up 6%, and for the carriers fuel surcharges were one of the major contributors to their revenue gains. "Average diesel fuel prices were 6.5% higher in 2007 than in 2006, and have almost doubled since 2000," Wilson

notes. For anybody wondering why it costs so much more to ship goods via truck, she points out, "These days it costs over \$1,100 to fill up a big rig with a pair of tanks that hold 250 gallons, compared to about \$720 last year. Fuel is close to or has surpassed labor as a trucking company's top expense." Manufacturers are using rail more often to move long distances, shifting trailer loads away from trucks and instead having them loaded on the much less expensive railroads.

The situation isn't any better for air freight operators; if anything, it might be worse. The Air Transport Association has estimated that every dollar increase per barrel of oil adds another \$465 million in airline fuel expenses. "Most air freight operators are reporting that prices are rising faster than freight rates are rising to cover them," Wilson observes.

Meanwhile, warehousing costs are up nearly 10%. "The move to more regionalized distribution centers continued in 2007," she says, "with many more firms announcing plans to relocate or open new centers serving smaller markets. These changes are being made to shorten delivery times and length of haul to save fuel."



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## Focus 81 Committee



On July 10<sup>th</sup> a press event was held to launch the new Highway Safety Corridor which runs 12.6 miles from just beyond Exit 175, Dupont/Pittston to just short of Exit 159, Nuangola, north and south bound. The corridor targets aggressive driving and includes increased enforcement by the PSP with doubled fines. This second safety corridor within the Focus 81 corridor is the result of a joint effort by Focus 81, PennDOT and the PSP.

Safety efforts like these are welcomed all along the Capital Corridor. The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance that is responsible for this good work also sits on the steering committee for the newly formed I-81 Multi State Coalition. We are now beginning to see better coverage of the Corridor from an oversight perspective. Groups like NEPA, the I-81 Coalition, and naturally, The Capital Corridor will work together to ensure both the safety and the prosperity of this corridor.

## Truck Speed Limiters—Is now the time?

Everyone is well aware that driving more slowly saves fuel and money. Several Canadian provinces are mandating truck speed limiters for both conservation and safety reasons. Many commentators are concerned that the speed differential between cars and trucks will lead to more accidents. Australia has had limiters since 1990 so their real time results could offer good lessons for those states and provinces contemplating legislation.

Chris Brooks, senior advisor, road safety, Australian Transport Safety Bureau, offered the following remarks:

“There is no good evidence that a 10km/h differential between light vehicle and truck speed limits creates a safety problem. If there is any such problem at all, it is small compared to the safety benefits of running trucks at 100 km/h rather than 110 km/h.”

The Australian National Road Transport Commission also determined that trucks exceeding the speed limit did so based upon weather, traffic, enforcement and road conditions. There was little consideration for any differences in speed between light car traffic and truck traffic. Speed limiters place everyone on a level playing field and shippers and carriers can't push drivers to drive too fast to meet a schedule.

There remain additional concerns that slowing the trucks will lead to more congestion and the potential for more accidents as frustrated light vehicle drivers try to pass on rural roads. The Australian experience is decidedly different.

Chris Brooks offered the following comments:

“In fact, overtaking-related crashes on rural roads are surprisingly uncommon...it may be that on two-lane roads with a general speed limit of 110 km/h, the presence of speed-limited trucks tends to constrain light vehicle speeds. If so, there may well be a substantial net safety benefit that would be lost if trucks were permitted to travel faster.”

In other words, rather than causing more accidents, speed-limited trucks are causing other traffic to slow down and thus reduce the likelihood of accidents.

Opponents of speed limiters are legion despite support from the Ontario Trucking Association and in Australia, the Australian Trucking Association. Mr. Brooks' remarks were stated on behalf of the government and not any association which possibly gives more credibility to Australia's 20-year experiment.

*Information provided by Canadian Transportation & Logistics*




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## Culture a Large Factor in Canadian Economy

A million jobs and \$84.6 billion – more than seven per cent of Canada's GDP – was indirectly due to the impact of the country's cultural sector in 2007, stated a Conference Board of Canada report released recently.

The independent think-tank's study bills itself as the most comprehensive look at the arts and cultural industries to date, as it takes into account the indirect effects of these items on the Canadian economy.

Direct contributions totaled \$46 billion, or 3.8 per cent of the GDP.

The report, called Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada's Creative Economy, highlighted digital technologies as one area of large growth because they allow producers to directly distribute their work to an international audience.

The analysis came just weeks after the federal government slashed \$50M from its art funding.





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## Driving Decline & Oil Consumption

Americans drove 12.2 billion miles fewer in June than the same month a year ago, a 4.7% decline, reported the U.S. Department of Transport.

At the same time, U.S. oil demand is at a 5-year low, according to figures provided by the American Petroleum Institute. The API said that total petroleum deliveries in the first seven months of the year fell by 3.6% from a year ago, while gasoline deliveries declined more than 2%.

The June driving decline was most evident in rural travel, which has fallen by 4%, compared to the 1.2% decline in urban miles, since the trend began last November. Since November, Americans have driven 53.2 billion fewer miles than last year, according to the DOT.

Figures like the above sometimes state the obvious. Fewer miles driven should directly relate to a decline in the demand for gasoline. In addition, most urban drivers have other transportation alternatives, easily explaining the difference between urban and rural travel patterns.

## Notes From The Director

As we enter September and focus in on the things we really need to accomplish, it becomes readily apparent that September and October are the months for conferences. This allows corridor and transportation officials to visit together and share best practices as they further their education on the current issues affecting all stakeholders. These events tend to re-energize people in general and often are the starting points for new initiatives with positive outcomes.

Over the next few weeks, I will strengthen my understanding on many issues:

- Customs and border protection
- Brokers and logistics
- US/Canada border priorities
- World oil prices
- Public/private partnerships

- The environment & sustainable transportation

On the subject of new initiatives, The Capital Corridor is beginning the planning process for a regional conference to be held in March or April 2009, at a location yet to be determined but close to the Thousand Islands Bridge. The planned theme is "Our Borders, Our Futures" and will involve speakers from both sides of the border. We will be contacting our stakeholders to identify the priority issues for discussion, then gearing the one-day event to match up the speakers with the priority issues. Keep watching our web site for updates or e-mail me with any suggestions. We expect to feature speakers from CBP, CBSA, trucking associations, universities, immigration experts, economic development officials, Chambers of Commerce and high-ranking government officials. Stay tuned!



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