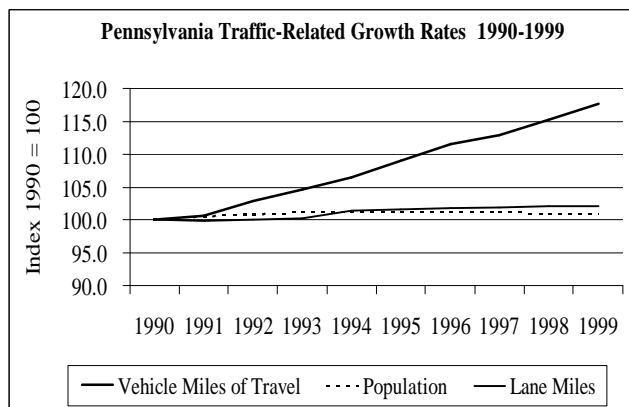


A Review of Traffic Congestion Trends and Related Mitigation Efforts

Report Highlights

- *Traffic congestion is increasing in PA, but is still not as severe as in many other parts of the country.* Overall, the percent of congested roads in Pennsylvania (with traffic-to-design ratios of 0.8 or greater) increased from 7% in 1995 to 8% in 1999.
 - Congestion increased most in the Lancaster area, rising from 13% of principal and arterial roads in 1995 to 23% in 1999. The Philadelphia area has the highest percentage of congested roadways, at 32% of such roads.
 - 15 of PA’s 44 most congested roads are in the Phila. area, 9 in the Lehigh Valley, and 8 are in south-central PA.
 - Vehicle miles traveled in PA grew by 18% between 1990 and 1999, while the number of lane miles grew by 2% and the population grew by only 1%.



- Despite these statistics, Pennsylvania’s urban areas are less congested than many of the nation’s other urban areas.
- *Availability of land and high construction costs affect PENNDOT’s ability to build new roadways.* Although PENNDOT spent over \$1 billion in congestion-related construction and betterment projects over the past 5 years, its ability to build new roads or expand existing roads is limited, especially in heavily urbanized areas.

- *Improved land use planning may help reduce new congestion.* PA was fifth in the nation in the number of acres developed between 1992 and 1997 while only 48th in the population growth rate. The Commonwealth has undertaken several initiatives in an attempt to control land use. Acts 67 and 68 of 2000 are the most recent efforts.
- *PENNDOT has an emerging role in managing highway operations.* After completing the interstate highway system, road maintenance became the priority. Now a new emphasis—highway operations—appears to be emerging. Highway operations refers to the active management of traffic through such efforts as the Congested Corridor Improvement Program, road access management, transportation system technology, traffic light synchronization, incident and work zone management, and public transit and carpooling.

Recommendations:

- *PENNDOT should selectively build new highway capacity and eliminate bottlenecks at strategic locations.*
- *PENNDOT should partner with municipalities to identify and address traffic signals that need to be retimed or upgraded.*
- *PENNDOT should continue and expand its current congestion mitigation efforts, including the Congested Corridor Improvement Program, State Operations Center, innovative contracting, and the Statewide Incident Management Committee.*
- *PENNDOT should “institutionalize” its partnership with Local Development Districts.*
- *Commonwealth agencies should consider employee public transit programs.*
- *The Center for Local Government Services should monitor the impact of recent Municipalities Planning Code amendments for ways to improve land use planning.*