Summary: Reason Report on Alabama Roads

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This is a summary of the Reason Foundation's 24th Annual Highway Report by Baruch Feigenbaum, M. Gregory Fields, and Spence Purnell (2019) as it relates to Alabama roads.

Summary Table (note: rankings are from 1 (best) to 50 (worst))

Performance indicator	Alabama ranking	Alabama indicator value	National weighted average
Overall highway performance ranking	10		
Urban other principal arterial pavement in poor condition, %	2	2.58%	14%
Maintenance disbursements, dollars per mile	2	$1,021	$11,929
Rural other principal arterial pavement in poor condition, %	12	0.45%	1.36%
Total disbursements, dollars per mile	16	$44,077	$71,117
Rural interstate pavement mileage in poor condition, %	16	0.71%	1.96%
Capital and bridge disbursements, dollars per mile	16	$25,903	$36,681
Urbanized area congestion, peak hours spent in congestion per auto commuter annually	18	12.25 hours per commuter annually	34.77 hours per commuter annually
Structurally deficient bridges	22	7.44%	8.86%
Urban interstate pavement mileage in poor condition, %	30	4.48%	5.18%
Administrative disbursements, dollars per mile	35	$7,151	$4,501
Urban fatality rate, fatalities per 100 million vehicle-miles	36	0.96 fatalities	0.77 fatalities
Rural fatality rate, fatalities per 100 million vehicle-miles	40	1.81 fatalities	1.71 fatalities
Overall fatality rate, fatalities per 100 million vehicle-miles	47	1.60 fatalities	1.18 fatalities

Reason 24th Annual Highway Report Summary

Introduction

The Reason Foundation annually produces a report that ranks the performance of state highway systems based on methodology developed by Dr. David T. Hartgen, emeritus professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. This method compares systems by taking into account system performance and available budgets per mile of responsibility. The 2019 report is based on data collected in 2016, with congestion and bridge condition data from 2017.

Alabama's Performance in the 24th Annual Highway Report

In the *24th Annual Highway Report* ranking of overall highway performance and cost-effectiveness, Alabama is ranked 10th out of the 50 states, which puts it in the "Very Good" category. Alabama's ranking in the Overall Highway Performance Ranking has improved by 10 positions between 2013 and 2016 (from 20th in 2013 to 10th in 2016).

For Alabama, some of the highest-ranked highway system characteristics reflect low maintenance disbursements per mile and high urban arterial pavement conditions (Alabama is ranked 2nd in both categories). At the same time, some of the lowest-ranked characteristics include the overall fatality, rural fatality and urban fatality rates (ranked 43rd, 40th and 36th in these three categories, respectively).

To put Alabama's highway system performance into context, Alabama ranks 24th in the number of state-controlled highway miles that include state highway systems, state-agency toll roads, university highway systems, state-owned properties, the interstate system, the national highway system, and federal aid system roads. Additionally, Alabama ranks 10th in the ratio of lanes per state highway agency with 2.71 lanes per mile which is larger than the national average of 2.52 lanes per mile.

Methodological Changes and Context

When comparing the latest Overall Highway Performance Ranking to the previous versions of the ranking, it is important to account for changes in the ways the rankings are calculated. According to the authors, for 2019 the number of ranking categories has been increased from 11 to 13 in order to give the roadway pavement and safety categories the same weight as the disbursements category and include a richer array of data. Additionally, the Urban Arterial Pavement Condition was added to ensure equal weight for rural and urban pavement conditions. Furthermore, using lane-miles instead of centerline–miles (as was done in the previous versions of the ranking) has allowed accounting for the fact that the average width of roads may differ significantly across states. Finally, safety rankings have been revised to avoid penalizing states for old but safe infrastructure (eliminating the ranking of narrow arterial lanes and functionally obsolete bridges) and include additional fatality measurements in the overall ranking.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Olga A. Bredikhina for the Alabama Transportation Institute at the University of Alabama.

Produced by the Transportation Policy Research Center, a unit of the Alabama Transportation Institute.

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