

Most traffic fatalities occur on rural roads

52 percent of traffic fatalities in the United States between 1999 and 2003 occurred on rural, non-interstate roads and highways, even though vehicle travel on these roads only accounted for 28 percent of travel during that period, according to a recent report released by TRIP, a national non-profit transportation research group.

TRIP's study, "Growing Traffic in Rural America: Safety, Mobility and Economic Challenges in America's Heartland," found that there has been an average of 22,127 traffic fatalities annually on the nation's rural, non-interstate roads between 1999 and 2003. During the same period, there was an average of 42,301 people killed each year in traffic accidents on all roads in the U.S.

"As a county commissioner in a rural area, I am able to see first-hand the consequences of rural road fatalities," said the National Association of Counties President-Elect and Umatilla County, Oregon Commissioner Bill Hansell. "State and local governments need additional funding for rural road safety improvements. Congress has a tremendous opportunity in the current reauthorization of the federal surface transportation program to boost investment for projects that will save lives on the nation's rural roads."

Additional findings of the study include:

- Between 1990 and 2002, vehicle travel on rural roads increased by 27 percent and commercial truck travel on rural roads increased by 32 percent.

- The nation's rural population has increased by 11 percent since 1990.
- Rural roads are more likely than urban roads to have two-lanes and to have poor roadway design.
- Motorists on rural, non-interstate roads are six-and-a-half times more likely to be killed while attempting to negotiate a curve than motorists driving on all other roads.
- Motorists on rural, non-interstate routes are approximately four times as likely to be involved in a fatal collision between vehicles going in the opposite direction than motorists traveling on all other routes.

The TRIP report found that the five states with the highest rate of traffic fatalities per 100 million miles of travel on rural, non-interstate roads are: Arizona, Florida, South Carolina, Montana and Kentucky. The five states with the largest number of rural, non-Interstate traffic deaths between 1999 and 2003 are: Texas, California, Florida, North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

For more information, visit the TRIP's website at www.tripnet.org, or contact CTSI at 303-861-0507.