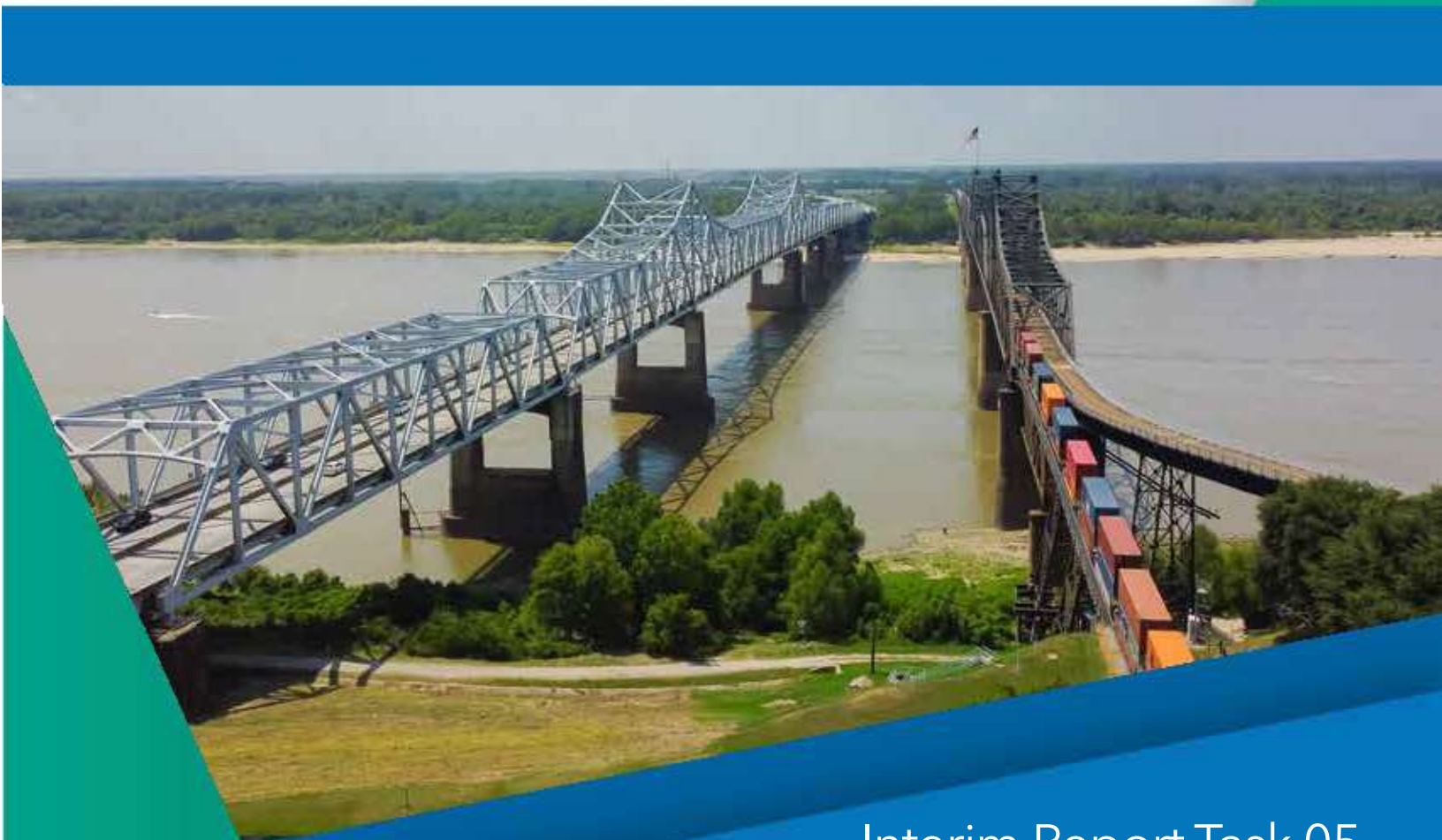




Interim Report Task 05 **Future Conditions of Highways/Freight**

September 2025

Prepared by:

HNTB



Mississippi Department of Transportation **MULTIPLAN 2050**

This Plan was prepared as a cooperative effort of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT), and local governments in partial fulfillment of requirements in Title 23 USC 134 and 135, amended by the IIJA, Sections 11201 and 11525, October 1, 2021. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the USDOT.

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1.0 Introduction

A thriving Mississippi requires a robust multimodal statewide transportation network to move people and goods, drive economic growth, and connect regions of the state. This memo, a component of the Mississippi Department of Transportation's (MDOT) 2050 MULTIPLAN, outlines future conditions of the state's highway and freight network, including estimated use, performance, and capacity of the transportation network in 2050 based on historic and anticipated trends.

Planning for the state's transportation system ensures investments improve infrastructure and anticipate changes to improve the condition and performance of the multimodal transportation system. Benefits include economic competitiveness, improved highway safety, and reduced vehicle wear and tear from poor infrastructure conditions, resulting in lower vehicle maintenance costs. This memo highlights key trends expected to affect highway infrastructure in the long run; this includes population and employment trends, present projections in increased travel demand on the transportation network, and estimated investment needs.

Data on population, employment, Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and travel on Mississippi's transportation network were collected and analyzed from data sources including the U.S. Census Bureau,¹ the University of Mississippi's (Ole Miss) State Data Center of Mississippi,² and the MDOT's Travel Demand Model (TDM).³ This data was reviewed to understand past trends and drivers impacting future travel demand.

To understand Mississippi's investment needs, the project team reviewed MDOT's project priority list based on areas of poor Level of Service (LOS) of D or F, as well as other factors such as increased Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) on roadways, the existing backlog of those needs, and future year of need (YON) projects. Most priorities are on Tier I or Tier II freight corridors, which are vital corridors for moving goods across the state and nationally. The project needs list was used to determine backlog funds and future investment needs and was also compared to the LOS needs projected from the TDM.

1.1 Key Findings

The findings of this report indicate that the ability of Mississippi's complex highway network to accommodate for changing travel demands will be crucial for the state's economic growth, traveler safety, efficient freight through movements, and other factors. Population growth is uncertain, with different sources showing both a decrease and increase in the state population into 2050. However, the forecast for non-farm employees is expected to gradually increase by approximately 2% between

¹ United States Census Bureau. Retrieved at: <https://www.census.gov/>.

² University of Mississippi Population Projections 2020-2050. Retrieved at: sdc.olemiss.edu

³ MDOT Travel Demand Model, 2024.

2025 and 2050, which indicates increased travel demand. In addition, GDP is also projected to increase by 28% between 2025 and 2050, reflecting increased travel demand.

Activity on Mississippi's roadway network and demand is forecasted to change through 2050 with increased Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and Vehicle Hours Traveled (VHT), increased freight activity including flows, tonnage, and value, as well as increased congestion on the state's Interstates with more traffic expected on roadways and economic growth.

The project priorities list for projects identified for a year of need (YON) in 2024 (backlog projects) and future investments for projects through the planning horizon (2050) was reviewed to determine an investment of approximately \$13.5 billion (accounting for inflation for future project costs) is needed for overdue and future investments. Despite past improvements, backlog projects still account for about 22% of the needed minimal funding. Funding gaps remain a barrier for the state and addressing them will be important for MDOT moving forward to meet statewide highway needs.

2.0 Trends and Drivers Impacting Future Demand

To understand Mississippi's transportation challenges, the state's economic trends, population trends, and several other key transportation trends were explored, which are presented in this section. Socioeconomic factors including past and future population growth, employment changes, and GDP growth are key to understand how Mississippi's future travel demands will change over time.

2.1 Demographics

Mississippi's economy and the state's population that drives the economy, including employment and GDP, impacts the demand for transportation. Employment in the state also influences how the transportation network is used, like number of trips taken per week, selected mode of travel, increase in remote work, types of commodities moved throughout the state, and other factors.

Population

Population is a key determinant of transportation demand. The number of Mississippi residents, the geographic distribution of people, and their socio-demographic characteristics drive the number and type of trips made on the transportation network, influencing everything from the number of home-based work trips, to travel time and length and freight traffic.

Historically, the population in Mississippi steadily increased from 1990 to 2017, nearing three million residents in 2017, an increase of approximately 18% since 1980. From 2017 through 2022, however, the population decreased slightly and leveled off in 2024, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (Table 1). Between 2017 to 2025, population has declined 1.2% in the state. Comparatively, the population nationally increased at a faster pace during the last several decades, increasing ~43% from 1980 to 2017. However, like Mississippi, the U.S. experienced decreasing growth percentages over the past fourteen years.

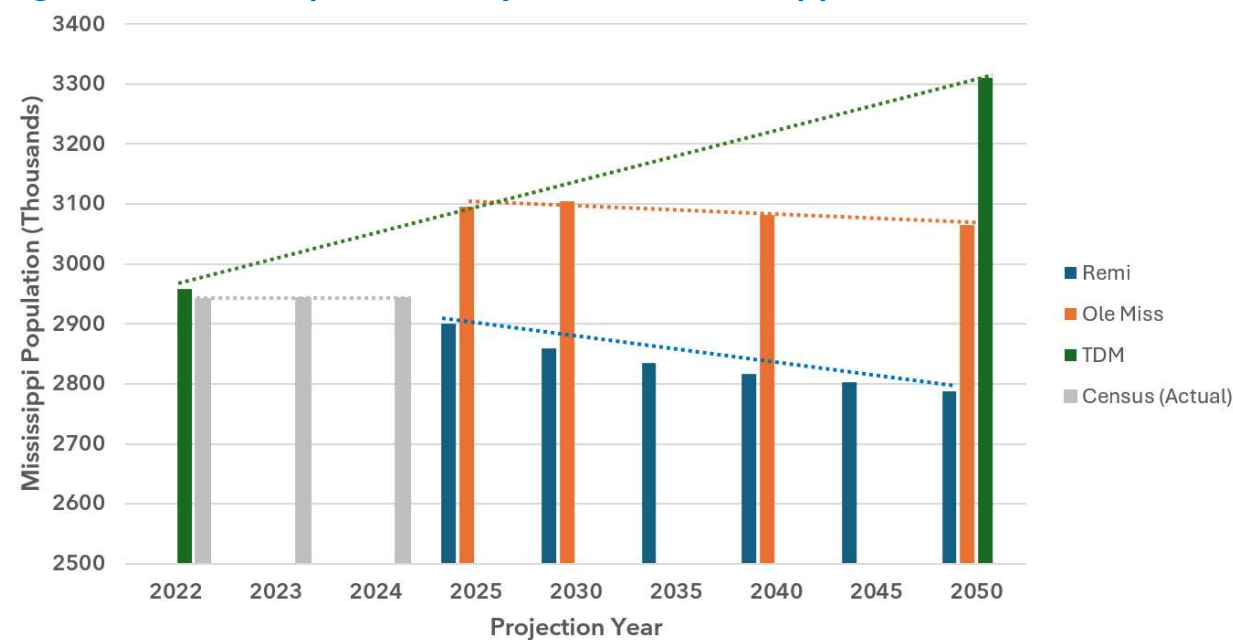
Table 1. Population Percent Changes and Growth Rates in Mississippi and the United States, 2000 to 2024

Year	Mississippi Population	Mississippi Population Change (%)	Mississippi CAGR (%)	U.S. Population	U.S. Population Change (%)	U.S. CAGR (%)
2000	2,848,353	-	-	281,421,906	-	-
2010	2,970,615	4.1	2.2	308,745,538	8.9	4.5
2020	2,958,536	-0.4	0.8	331,449,281	6.9	1.4
2023	2,943,172	-0.5	0.5	339,996,563	2.5	0.8
2024	2,943,045	~0	0.4	341,814,420	0.5	0.6

Source: United States Census Bureau

Future population projections for Mississippi vary significantly, leading to uncertainty. The Regional Economic Model, Inc. (REMI) forecasts a 4% population decline from 2025 to 2050, totaling a loss of almost 100,000 residents. In contrast, the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss) model predicts a population peak in 2030, followed by a 1.3% decline by 2050, with an initial increase of 0.3% between 2025 and 2030. The Ole Miss model starts with a 2025 base population approximately 200,000 higher than REMI's, which aligns more closely with the U.S. Census Bureau's 2024 estimate of 2.9 million residents. Meanwhile, the TDM projects an 11% population growth from 2022 to 2050, contrary to the REMI and Ole Miss forecasts. This variation among models introduces significant uncertainty in population projections. Figure 1 shows projections from these models and actual U.S. Census Bureau data from 2022-2024.

Figure 1. Future Population Projection for Mississippi, 2022 to 2050

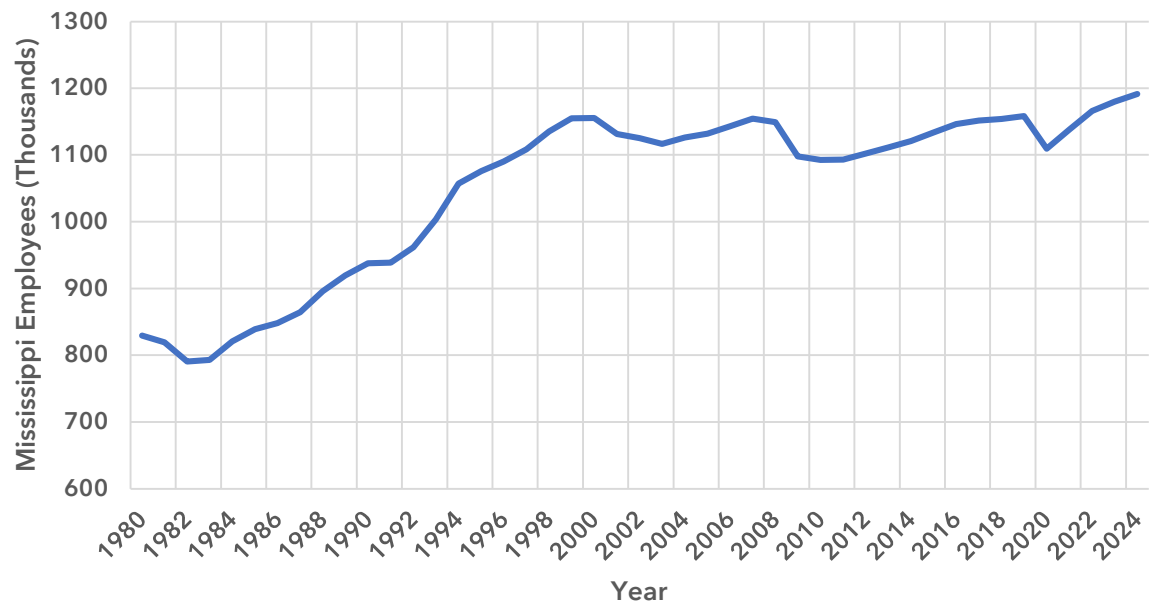


Source: United States Census Bureau, Traffic Demand Model (2024), REMI Forecast, Ole Miss Forecast

Employment

The total number of non-farm employees in Mississippi between 1980 and 2024 is shown in Figure 2. During this period, the total number of employees in Mississippi increased by approximately 30%. The increase in employment but slight decrease in population as discussed above reinforces the idea of the growth of working class-age population (20 to 64) relative to Mississippi’s whole population. Figure 3 shows a projected increase of 2% for the total number of non-farm employees in Mississippi between 2025 and 2050. Even though this projected increase is minimal, the need for improved infrastructure for working Mississippians commuting to work cannot be understated.

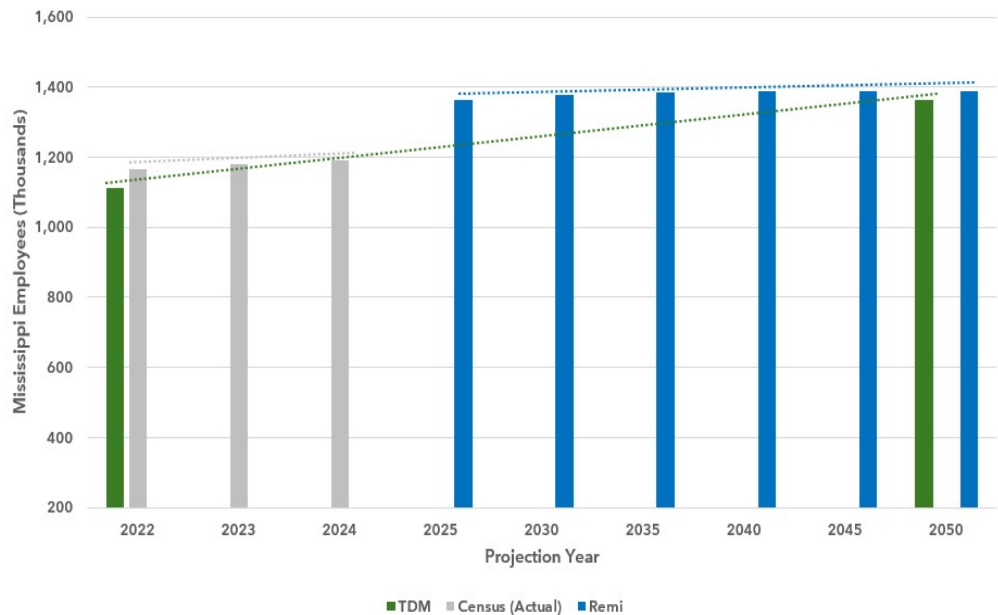
Figure 2. Total Number of Nonfarm Employees in Mississippi, 1980 to 2024



Note: Total, nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted.

Source: United States Census Bureau

Figure 3. Total Number of Non-Farm Employees in Mississippi, 2022 to 2050

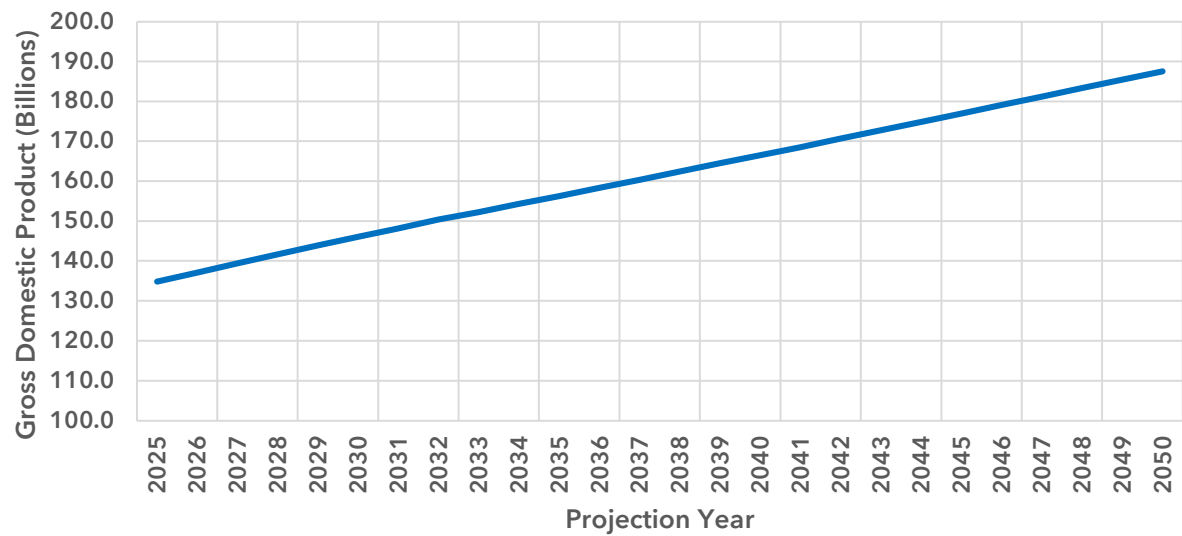


Source: United States Census Bureau, Traffic Demand Model (2024), REMI Forecast

Gross Domestic Product

GDP is an important metric to consider when evaluating the health of Mississippi’s economy; it measures the market value of goods and services produced over time and is crucial for evaluating Mississippi's economic health. REMI forecasts project Mississippi's GDP to increase from \$135 billion in 2025 to \$185 billion in 2050, a 28% growth, indicating continuous economic expansion.

Figure 4. GDP Forecast, 2025 to 2050



Source: REMI Forecast

2.2 Transportation

Population and economic activity drive transportation demand. They define the travel markets which dictate the number and type of trips made on the transportation network and determine total demand for transportation services. Key measures of transportation demand include VMT and VHT, which are discussed below.

Activity/Demand

Activity and demand on Mississippi roadways are projected to change through 2050. The magnitude of mileage traveled per day for a given year and time on the road is expected to increase as well as freight tonnage, travel, and value.

VMT and VHT

Growth in population is uncertain, but non-farm private employment and GDP in Mississippi is expected to grow regardless. The resulting impact on projected travel demand in Mississippi based on the 2050 E+C (Existing plus Committed) Highway Network is reflected in the additional VMT and VHT. Table 2 shows total annual VMT estimated by the statewide TDM forecast as well as that observed in 2013 and 2050, in billions. Percent change of VMT is also presented along with the compound annual growth rates (CAGR). Change in observed total VMT from 2013 to 2022 is 3.1% and

is projected to rise by approximately 14% from 2022 to 2025, per the TDM. The TDM forecast accounts for all roadways in the model, including urban, rural, and local roadways not maintained by the state. Table 3 presents total VHT in 2022 and projected VHT in 2050, with an expected 21% increase for both passenger cars and trucks.

Table 2. Total Estimated VMT, 2013 to 2050 (in billions)

Total VMT	2013 VMT	2022 VMT	2050 VMT	Change VMT (%) 2013-2022	Change VMT (%) 2022-2050	CAGR (%) 2013-2023	CAGR (%) 2023-2050
Total Daily VMT	38.8	40.0	45.5	3.1%	13.9%	0.3%	0.5%
Passenger Car Daily VMT	25.8	25.3	39.7	-2.0%	57.0%	-0.2%	1.6%
Truck VMT	4.6	5.0	5.8	9.4%	15.2%	1.0%	0.5%

Note: Sum of Passenger Car and Truck VMT to not equal Total Annual VMT as Total VMT also includes VMT for bicycles, buses, and light trucks. Trucks are considered a combination of "Single Unit Trucks and Combination Trucks". Years 2013 and 2023 VMT are reported values.

Source: FHWA Office of Highway Policy Information; Mississippi Public Roads Selected Statistics Extend, Travel, and Designation (2013, 2023); Traffic Demand Model (2024)

Table 3. Total Estimated VHT, 2022 to 2050 (millions)

Total VHT	2022 VHT	2050 VHT	Change VHT (%)	CAGR (%)
Total Daily VHT	921.1	1109.6	20.5%	0.7%
Passenger Car VHT	824.8	993.6	20.5%	0.7%
Truck VHT	96.3	116.0	20.5%	0.7%
VMT/VHT Ratio	43.4	41.0	-5.6%	-0.2%

Note: Year 2022 VMT is observed.

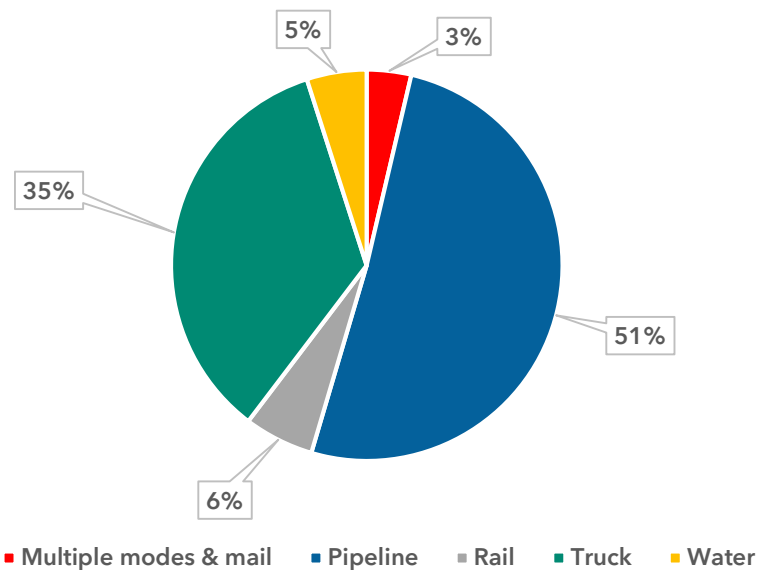
Source: FHWA Office of Highway Policy Information; Mississippi Public Roads Selected Statistics Extend, Travel, and Designation; Traffic Demand Model (2024)

Trucking

The number of trucks and cargo that utilize Mississippi's multimodal freight network is forecast to increase over the 2023 to 2050 timeframe. The distribution of total tonnage in Mississippi by mode is presented in Figure 5. As shown, trucks and

pipeline make up most of the total tons transported, at 86% combined. The remaining 14% include water, rail, and other multiple modes and mail categories. The amount of cargo transported inbound, outbound, and within the state by Air (including truck-air) and other unknown categories were not included as the percentage of these categories is close to 0% of total tonnage in Mississippi.

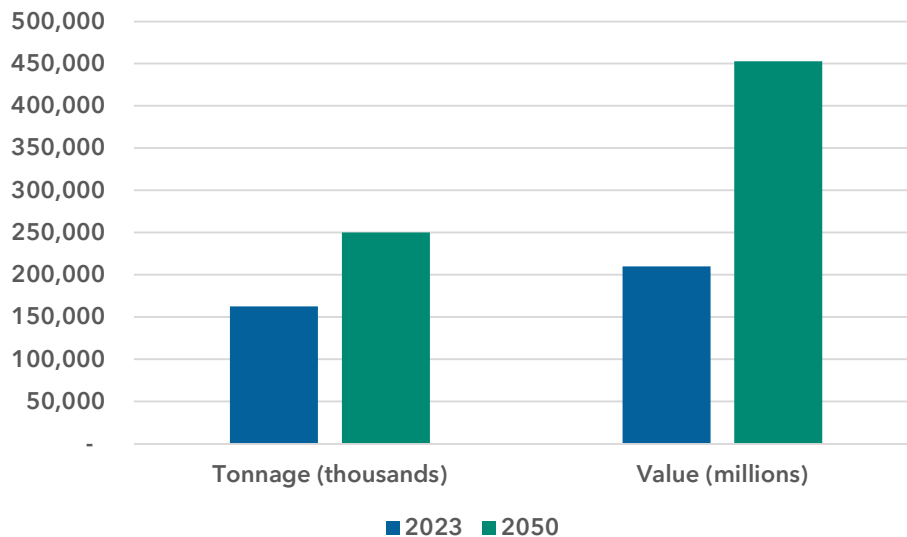
Figure 5. Percent of Total Tons (Inbound, Outbound, and Internal) by Mode, 2050



Source: Freight Analysis Framework Version 5

Figure 6 presents total truck tonnage and value in 2023 and 2050 with flow directions detailed in Table 4. Total truck tonnage is forecasted to increase by 54% from 2023 to 2050. Intrastate flows dominate, making up 56% in 2023 and expected to be 51% in 2050. Commodity value is forecasted to increase significantly for inbound and outbound flows, as well as total value. Increased highway cargo volumes and commercial vehicle volumes will impact infrastructure, especially pavement conditions, potentially accelerating degradation.

Figure 6. Total Truck Tonnage and Value (Inbound, Outbound, and Internal), 2023 to 2050



Source: Freight Analysis Framework Version 5

Table 4. Truck Commodity Flows by Direction, 2023 to 2050

Direction	2023 Tons (Millions)	2050 Tons (Millions)	Percent Change	2023 Value (Billions)	2050 Value (Billions)	Percent Change
Inbound	38.1	64.5	69%	\$88.7	\$177.2	100%
Intrastate	84.4	127.0	50%	\$40.7	\$70.4	73%
Outbound	35.2	58.6	66%	\$95.7	\$205.2	114%
Total	157.9	250.1	58%	\$225.1	\$452.8	101%

Source: Freight Analysis Framework Version 5

Highway Level of Service

Almost 90% of Mississippi's roadways are expected to operate at LOS A through 2050, with a daily volume to capacity ratio of less than 0.3 statewide. However, the increased VMT and VHT by 2050 would lower average daily travel speeds and worsen roadway LOS. Table 5 shows the distribution of lane-miles by LOS in 2022 and 2050. While most will remain at a LOS A, the forecasted decrease in percent lane miles for LOS A is 2.6%. LOS B, like LOS A, is designated as "slight congestion" roadways, which are expected to increase by approximately 11% by 2050. All other LOS designations (C - F) are forecasted to increase in lane-mileage through 2050, with the largest increase occurring for LOS F, though it will still only account for 0.6% of the total lane mileage in the state.

Daily congestion is expected to persist in urban areas like Jackson, Gulfport-Biloxi-Pascagoula area, Hattiesburg, and the Memphis Area. The LOS results correspond to

all roadways coded in the Mississippi travel demand model, including those that are urban, local, and not state-maintained.

Table 5. Level of Service in Mississippi Roads, 2022 to 2050

Level of Service	Lane-Miles 2022	Lane-Miles 2022 (%)	Lane-Miles 2050	Lane-Miles 2050 (%)	Lane-Miles Change 2022-2050	Lane-Miles Change (%) 2022-2050
A	54,525	91.3%	53,162	88.6%	(1,363)	-2.6%
B	3,104	5.2%	3,494	5.8%	390	11.2%
C	1,148	1.9%	1,554	2.6%	406	26.2%
D	461	0.8%	742	1.2%	281	37.8%
E	352	0.6%	731	1.2%	379	51.9%
F	134	0.2%	341	0.6%	207	60.5%
Total	59,724	100%	60,024	100%	-	-

Source: Traffic Demand Model (2024)

Figure 7 shows two maps with the forecasted LOS across Mississippi on the E+C network and segments with capacity needs to achieve a LOS C or better in the state by 2050. The most congestion in the state is occurring in urban silos including Jackson, Gulfport-Biloxi-Pascagoula, Hattiesburg, and Southaven. Table 6 identifies specific deficient roadway segments on Interstate highways with LOS D to F in rural areas and LOS E to F in urban areas on these multimodal corridors by 2050.

Figure 7. LOS on the E+C Network in 2050 (left), Needed Capacity to Achieve LOS C or Better, 2050 (right)

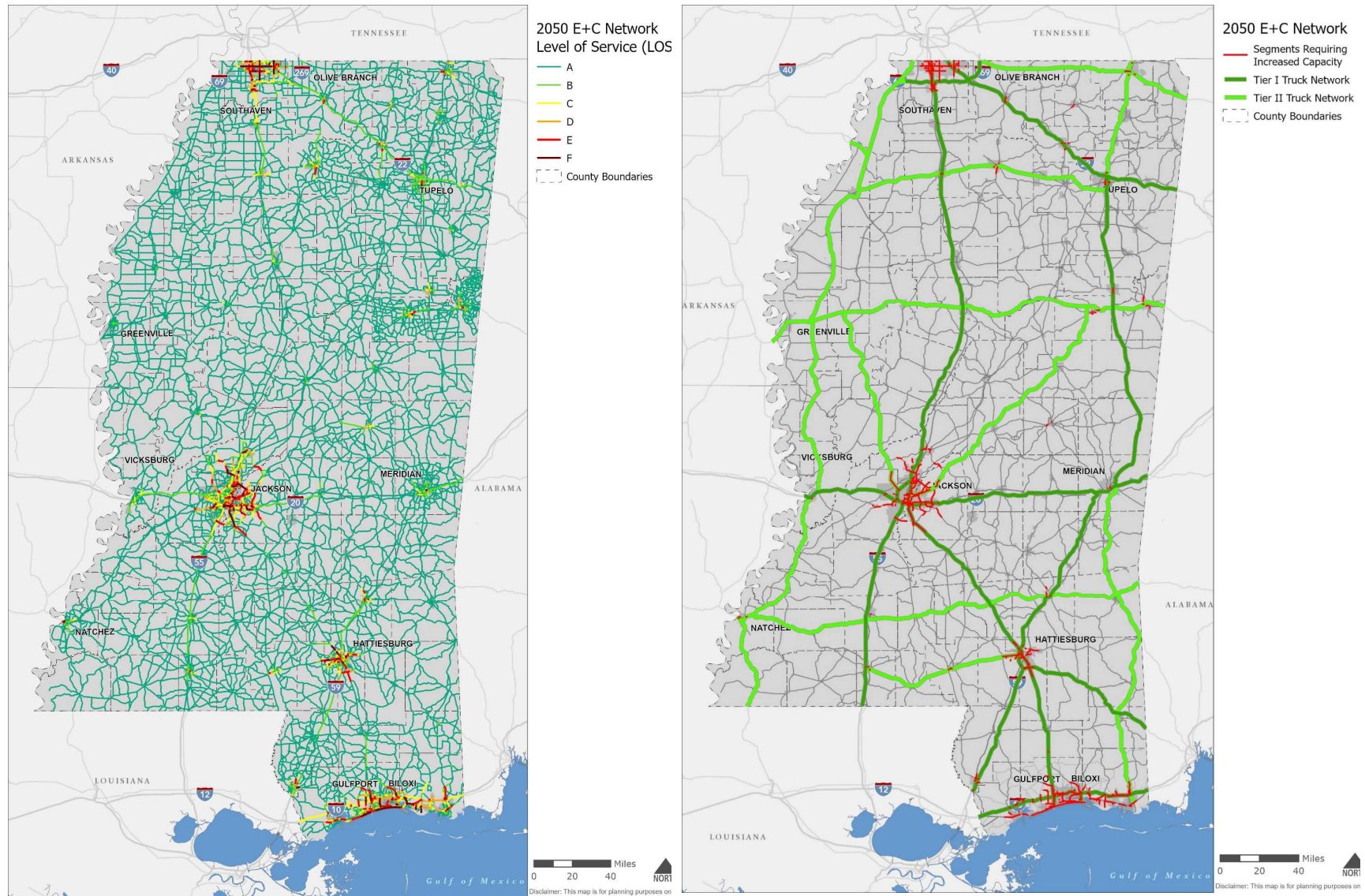


Table 6. Deficient Segments on Key Corridors of Statewide Significance by 2050

Key Corridor	Route	Description	Deficient Segments in 2050 (LOS<B)	LOS 2023	LOS 2050
Corinth-Meridian-Waynesboro	U.S. 45 / U.S. ALT 45	Vital north-south corridor linking the cities of eastern Mississippi along the Alabama border. Approximately 225 miles in length, this corridor links Corinth, Booneville, Tupelo, Columbus, the Starkville area, Macon, Meridian, and Waynesboro. It also provides a crucial link between I-40 in Tennessee, the Golden Triangle, and the state's Gulf ports.	West Point: U.S. ALT 45, Hazelwood Rd. to Truman Creek Rd.	C / D	C / D
			Columbus: U.S. 45, State Hwy 373 to U.S. Hwy 82	B / C / D	B / C / D
Vicksburg-Meridian	I-20	One of the busiest east-west corridors in the state, connecting Jackson to the major population centers of Dallas and Atlanta. Includes an important Mississippi River crossing at Vicksburg, as well as connections to port facilities along the Yazoo River.	Jackson: Springridge Rd. to U.S. 80 / Government St, including the I-220, I-55, and U.S. 49 interchanges and the I-20 Pearl River Bridge	B / C / D / E / F	B / C / D / E
Mt. Pleasant-Corinth-Iuka	U.S. 72	Highway connecting Corinth with Memphis metropolitan area and North Alabama, including Florence and Huntsville.	Corinth: State Hwy 2 (Kossuth Rd) to County Road 218	B / C / D / E	B / C / D / E
Jackson-Hattiesburg-Gulfport	U.S. 49	Vital corridor connecting three of the state's metropolitan areas. Additionally, this corridor links port facilities on the Gulf of America to much of the state's transportation network, including to some of Mississippi's largest industrial areas.	Jackson Area: I-20 to Star Rd/Main St.	D / E / F	E / F
			Hattiesburg Area: Irby Rd. to Southgate Rd. / Ollie Williams Rd.	C / D / E / F	C / D / E / F
			Gulfport Area: State Hwy 53 / Swan Rd. to U.S. 90 / Beach Blvd.	A / B / C / D / E / F	B / C / D / E / F
Gulf Coast	I-10 / U.S. 90	Critical east-west corridor across the state's Gulf Coast, which serves two large metropolitan areas. Serves the state's tourism, port, and shipbuilding industries and links the state with New Orleans and Houston to the west and Mobile and Florida to the east.	I-10: MS-LA border to MS-AL border	B / C	B / C / D
			U.S. 90: Lakeshore Rd. (Bay St. Louis) to Old Stage Rd. (Moss Point)	A / B / C / D / E / F	B / C / D / E / F

Source: Traffic Demand Model (2024)

2.3 Technology

New transportation technologies like Connected Autonomous Vehicles (AV's) and shared mobility services could transform how people and freight travel in the future. While studies have explored potential impacts, there is significant uncertainty on how these will affect transportation and alter travel patterns.

Factors contributing to this uncertainty include whether private car ownership will continue or shift to a shared use model, the pricing structure of AV's, and whether AV's deployment can be coordinated effectively with land use planning.⁴ The addition of AV's on roads along with privately owned vehicles on roads may worsen existing issues such as increased traffic congestion, reduced urban livability, heightened mobility issues, and ultimately a negative impact on safety.

3.0 Investment Needs

MDOT's project needs and priorities list includes projects that have been identified as possible capacity needs across the state. This list serves as a sketch planning tool to identify needs and the associated project costs. It is possible that this list does not contain all of the capacity needs across the state. The list was reviewed to determine estimated investment needs for backlog projects (with a year of need (YON) of 2024) and future project needs (Table 7). A rural highway is considered unacceptable when the level of service (LOS) is D or worse. An urban highway is considered unacceptable when the level of service (LOS) is E or worse. The YON is based on when the project's worst segment goes from a LOS C to D for rural roads or LOS D to E for urban roads. Backlog projects - all of which have a YON of 2024 - are included in Table 7 and total an estimated investment of nearly \$3 billion dollars. Prioritizing these backlog projects will be critical for improving LOS on congested corridors in the state.

Future investment needs in Mississippi for projects with a Year of Need (YON) of 2025 through 2050 is approximately \$7 billion dollars, or about \$10.5 billion dollars accounting for inflation (Table 8). The projects are ordered by YON and then a value to account for volume to unacceptable threshold and annual average daily traffic AADT. The LOS could fluctuate over time, meaning roadways with lower congestion could become more congested in the future with increased traffic on roadways. MULTIPLAN 2045 estimated future highway capacity needs at approximately \$4.8 billion or \$193 million annually.

⁴ World Economic Forum, Oct 16, 2024. Retrieved at: www.weforum.org

Table 7. Backlog Projects with Year of Need 2024

Project Name/Description	County	Cost Estimate
I-55 FM County Line Road to Old Agency Road [Add 4 Lanes]	Madison	\$81,500,000
I-20 Widening from the I-220 vicinity to the Pearl River	Hinds	\$566,472,290
I-55 Church Road to SR 302	Desoto	\$188,900,000
I-10 from MS 57 to the Alabama State Line (Includes Bridge Work)	Jackson	\$202,600,000
I-20 from Mississippi River thru Vicksburg (All phases/Projects)	Warren	\$332,615,259
I-10 from Louisiana State Line to Yacht Club Dr/Gex Dr. Interchange (Diamondhead)	Hancock	\$164,179,677
SR 305 from Lewisburg to Church Road	Desoto	\$86,539,909
Madison Connector	Madison	\$34,300,000
US 45 between US 82 to Holly Hill Road (ROW for 4 lanes - build 2 new lanes)	Lowndes	\$131,566,806
SR 463 I-55 to SR 22	Madison	\$101,751,627
SR 18 Brandon Bypass	Rankin	\$57,600,000
SR 43 from Texas Flat Rd to the SR 43/603 split in Pearl River County	Hancock	\$118,997,110
US 278 Amory By-Pass (Relocation 2LN)	Monroe	\$87,834,030
MS 471 from Grants Ferry Road to MS 25	Rankin	\$29,700,000
SR 15 from Laurel to Jasper County Line	Jones	\$33,300,000
SR 15 from 1 mile north of SR 4 to Falkner (Phase 1 - Grade/Drain Phase 2 - pave)	Tippah	\$129,972,276
SR 26 from SR 63 to SR 198 in Lucedale - Widen to 3 lanes	George	\$11,700,000
US 61 from end of 4 lane S of Port Gibson to beg of 4 lane N of Port Gibson	Claiborne	\$167,000,000
SR 26 from US 49 to 1st Street	Stone	\$5,950,000
MS15 from US80 to Muley Road	Newton	\$145,400,000
MS 6/US 278 from East end of the Marks Bypass to Approximately Tubbs Road	Panola	\$106,031,459
MS 4 Strayhorn to I-55	Tate	\$20,719,220
SR 493 FM Broadmoor to SR 495	Lauderdale	\$25,200,000
Four-Lane State Route 15 from Houston to Pontotoc in Chickasaw and Pontotoc Counties	Chickasaw/Pontotoc	\$150,985,805
Total		\$2,980,815,467

Source: Mississippi Department of Transportation

Table 8. Projects with Year of Need 2025 to 2050

Project Name/Description	County	YON	Cost Estimate
I-55 Terry to Byram	Hinds	2026	\$109,650,591
US 51 Hernando to Church Rd.	DeSoto	2026	\$128,303,743
MS15 from CR 262 to SR 21	Neshoba	2028	\$98,569,091
MS4 from Senatobia to Holly Springs	Tate	2030	\$291,763,139
I-55 from I-269 to Church Rd.	DeSoto	2031	\$325,569,500
State Rt. 601 from US 90 to Interstate 10	Harrison	2032	\$772,387,509
SR 15 from SR 41 to beginning of 5-lane south of SR-9	Pontotoc	2032	\$25,440,751
SR 7 Abbeville to Holly Springs Bypass	Lafayette	2032	\$188,792,523
I-55 Commerce St. to I-269	DeSoto	2033	\$95,775,458
US 11 from Industrial Park Rd. to 16th Avenue	Jones	2036	\$82,897,707
I-20 Widening from Natchez Trace to SR-18	Hinds	2043	\$179,715,423
SR 16 from SR 15 to SR 19	Neshoba	2047	\$605,760,794
SR 25 Grants Ferry to SR 471	Rankin	2047	\$77,700,000
SR 15 from Jones County Line to Stringer	Jasper	2047	\$147,100,000
SR 48 from Amite County Line to I-55	Pike	2047	\$130,600,030
MS 15 from Muley Rd. to CR 262	Newton	2047	\$378,900,000
MS 15 from Philadelphia to Winston County Line	Neshoba	2047	\$121,445,495
Marks Bypass	Quitman	2047	\$210,297,600
SR 27 I-55 to MS 18	Copiah/Hinds	2047	\$1,011,457,615
US 49 from end of 4 lanes north of US 82 to US 61	Sunflower	2047	\$1,954,000,000
Total			\$6,936,126,938

Source: Mississippi Department of Transportation

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