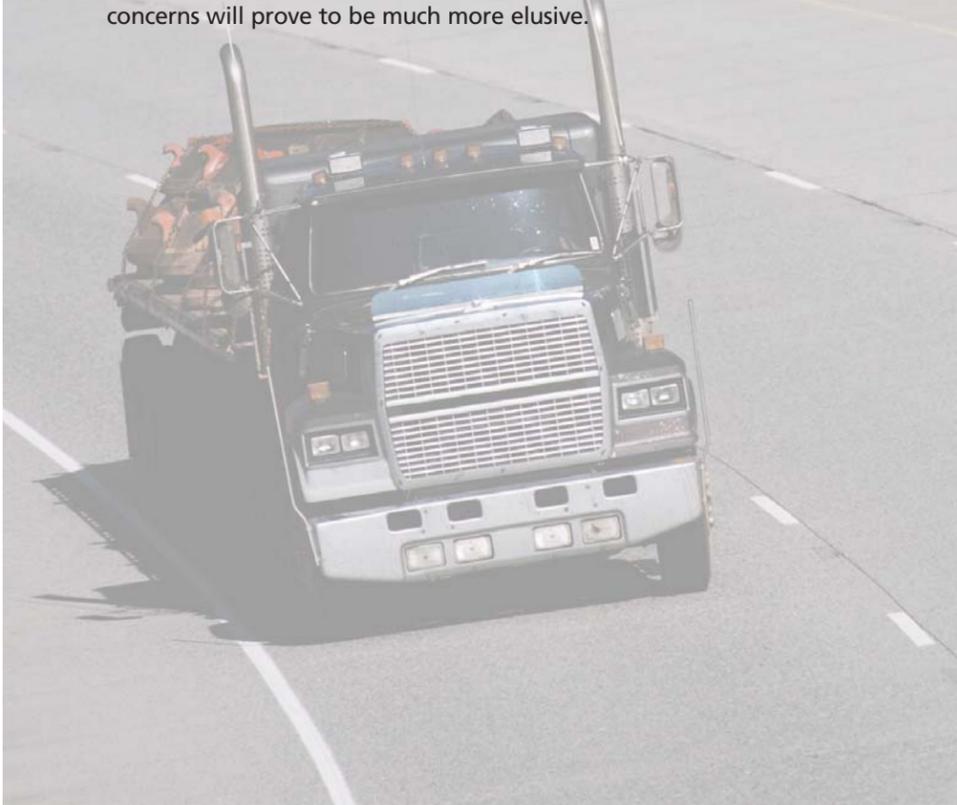


Conclusion

Widening roads, separate lanes for trucks, and increased use of ITS systems are just some of the ideas being discussed to solve Ohio's freight-traffic woes. But all of these proposals are running into the same roadblock: Money.

In recent years, ODOT spent \$300 million annually on new construction, but by July of 2004 that amount will shrink to zero due to higher maintenance and operating costs, bond sales restrictions and increased allocations to local governments. Additionally, future federal revenues are uncertain and only expected to grow minimally in the next seven years. Of ODOT's current highway budget, 85 percent is used for preservation, and a \$300-million construction program has allowed for expansion by only one-third of one percent per year.

The impact of freight-truck traffic is apparent across the state. Rest areas with no available parking, rutting in highways, and the ever-present lines of cars trailing behind an 18-wheeler can be seen daily. Finding a workable solution to Ohio's freight-truck traffic concerns will prove to be much more elusive.



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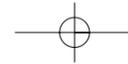
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An OCIA **Special**Report



Ohio's
Freight-Truck
Traffic
Dilemma



In terms of geography, Ohio is the 35th-largest state in the nation. Population-wise, our more than 11.3-million Buckeyes amount to the 7th-highest total in the country. But, Ohio is among the national leaders with the 4th-largest amount of truck traffic. Overall freight numbers place the state 2nd, and without major improvements to our transportation network being No. 2 in this category might not be a good thing for Ohioans.

Highway Headache

Freight-truck traffic in Ohio accounts for 18-million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per day, representing an 89-percent increase in the last 25 years. In the past decade alone these numbers have grown 42 percent.

For the most part, this increased freight-truck traffic is concentrated on the state's principal roadways. All of Ohio's interstate highways currently carry at least 15,000 trucks per day, with 83 percent of trucks traveling in Ohio using the Interstate highway systems and 94 percent using Ohio's designated macro-highway corridors.

All this is occurring on a transportation network that already features urban interstates carrying traffic volumes 50 percent above capacity.

Projections indicate that daily truck VMT will increase to more than 30 million over the next two decades. During that time, the number of trucks on Ohio's roads will increase an additional 62 percent. By comparison, automobile traffic will only increase 48 percent.

Top 10 Roadway Segments for Freight-Truck Traffic

Rank	Road	County	Annual Tons	Annual trucks	Daily Trucks
1	I-80	Lorain	122,523,631	7,697,152	25,657
2	I-80	Wood	121,165,776	7,391,412	24,638
3	I-80	Erie	119,568,066	7,307,923	24,360
4	I-80	Sandusky	117,987,581	7,207,487	24,025
5	I-80	Protage	98,203,816	6,129,746	20,432
6	I-71	Richland	94,635,385	5,729,111	19,097
7	I-71	Morrow	94,607,163	5,730,659	19,102
8	I-71	Ashland	94,474,715	5,865,108	19,550
9	I-71	Medina	92,405,025	5,775,663	19,252
10	I-71	Delaware	92,076,601	5,589,618	18,632

Source: ODOT

The Nation's Marketplace

One of the many reasons for the disproportionate amount of truck traffic in Ohio is its geographic location. Within a 600-mile radius, or roughly one-day's drive, lies 50 percent of North America's population and 60 to 70 percent of its manufacturing capacity. Where there are people there is a need for products, and shipping by truck remains a popular option for wholesalers and suppliers.

Here's what Ohio's roads mean to the nation's trucking industry:

- 7.5 percent of U.S. freight tons and 14 percent of U.S. highway freight value are dependent on Ohio's highway system
- 32 percent of all U.S. total freight tonnage passes through Ohio

In Spring 2002, ODOT Director Gordon Proctor highlighted Columbus as "the biggest truck center in Ohio" because of distribution centers in the area. In 20 years, he estimated that 30,000 trucks a day could use Columbus highways.

This reliance on trucking, and the resulting congestion, might be starting to impact the costs consumers are paying at the grocery store and elsewhere. A recent report found that areas with higher levels of traffic congestion have higher rates of consumer inflation, as traffic congestion makes it more expensive to deliver goods.

With commercial-truck travel expected to nearly double by 2020, the increasing levels of traffic congestion are likely to increase business costs and make it harder for regions with high levels of traffic congestion to attract and retain businesses in their core urban areas.



Rural Dilemma

Ohio's more than 300 miles of rural, two-lane roads actually carry more than 30 percent of the state's truck traffic, with many having more than 4,000 trucks per day. While not traveled heavily by commuters, these routes often experience symptoms of congestion due to the abnormally large amount of trucks. Each truck causes as much congestion as 2.5-3.5 cars. Motorists on these routes must often travel at lower speeds with few passing opportunities. With slower speeds and slower accelerations, truck impact on congestion is felt most at interchanges, traffic signals and on hills.

Many of these roads are located in the northern third of the state, and include all or portions of U.S. 24, State Route 2, U.S. 20, U.S. 6 and U.S. 30. Due to the length of these two-lane arteries, widening the roads is unlikely because of high cost.

Carry That Weight

The highways in Southeast Ohio, which serve the coal and steel industries, carry the heaviest truck payloads. Studies have found that one 80,000-pound truck puts as much wear and tear on a road as 9,000-10,000 cars. Heavy-truck traffic results in greater costs to maintain existing facilities and the need to provide increased structural strength on new and rehabilitated roads and bridges.

Although freight-truck traffic will grow significantly in the future, truck payloads will decline slightly from an average of 16.1 tons per truck to 15.9 tons due to an economic trend of producing and trading lighter, higher-value goods as well as making more frequent shipment of smaller loads. But even this minimal reduction in payloads will be negated by the higher volume of trucks that will be on the roads.

