

MINNESOTA 2050 ROAD & BRIDGE PERSPECTIVES

The Transportation Subcommittee of the Minnesota 2050 initiative: April Crockett, Margaret Donahoe, Brian Gage, Jim Grube

What is the trend line? Are things getting better or worse?

Through the continued efforts of the state and local governments, the overall transportation system remains one of the best in the country. Unfortunately, the efforts have been unable to keep up with the growth in travel by the public and commerce. As a result, the overall condition of the system is trending worse. However, not all attributes identified above are trending worse.

Safety – the state’s “Toward Zero Death” program is having a positive effect on the motoring public, as the number of highway crashes/fatalities are dropping. The attached excerpt from the “Minnesota Motor Vehicle Crash Facts, 2009” confirms the trend. On the other hand, as the economy improves and more people return to the roads during rush hours, it is possible we will see an increase in crashes.

Predictability – Generally, the public’s trip on the state highway system governs the decision making for the overall trip. In the metropolitan area, the amount of congestion on the highways affects predictability of trip time. The congestion level in the metropolitan area is measured by the miles of highway where travel speeds are slowed to 45 miles per hour (mph). Attached is an article from “Minnesota 2020” which indicated that congestion along the metropolitan highways was growing through 2007. As the economy has gone into recession through 2008, 2009 and 2010, traffic conditions along the metropolitan highways has improved, a condition that will reverse itself as the economy recovers.

In greater Minnesota, travel time predictability is measured by the number of interregional miles of state highway where highway speeds are within 2 mph of the signed speed limit. Attached is a page from Mn/DOT’s interregional corridor report which indicates that 98% of travel speeds along interregional corridors across the state are within 2 mph of posted speeds. The trend projection forecasts the condition will likely deteriorate to 96% by 2018.

Regardless of location (in the metropolitan areas or along inter-regional corridors), trip predictability is affected by weather and crashes. Technologies that have been implemented to improve trip length predictability in the Twin Cities metropolitan area include speed harmonization and ITS overhead signage.

Comfort – Comfort is generally measured through a pavement ride quality index. Generally, local government road conditions reflect conditions on Mn/DOT’s highways. Statewide information gathered on the state’s highways indicates the ride quality along both principal and non-principal arterials is below targets set by Mn/DOT, and projections indicate the number of miles falling below the targets is growing somewhat. In addition, the information indicates the number of miles having a poor quality ride rating is increasing. Generally, local government road conditions reflect conditions on Mn/DOT’s highways.

Sustainability – Sustainability is generally reflected in government’s expenditures for preservation and management. The attachments taken from Mn/DOT’s Statewide 20 year Highway Investment Plan indicate the state intends to invest heavily in preservation of its infrastructure.