

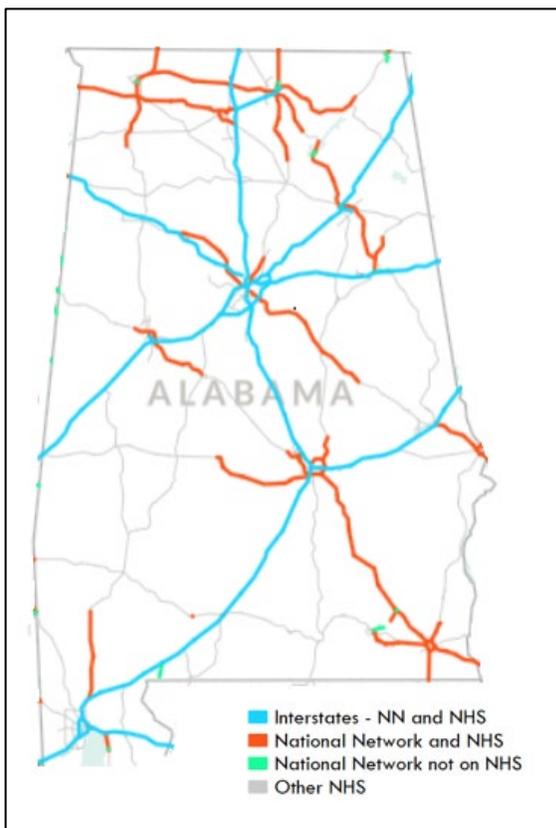
Overview of Truck Freight Movement in Alabama

An Overview of Truck Freight Movement in the United States

In 2018, the nation's transportation system, comprising mainly truck, rail, water, air, and multimodal channels, moved a daily average of nearly 51 million tons of freight which was valued at approximately \$52 billion. In the same year, trucks carried the largest amount of freight by both value and weight while rail held the second-largest modal share of freight movement followed by water, air, multiple modes and mail, pipeline, and others. Trucks carried about 11.9 billion tons of freight by weight which valued at nearly \$13 trillion followed by rail which, in comparison, carried 1.78 billion tons of freight by weight and nearly \$0.78 trillion of freight by value. The tonnage carried by trucks in 2018 represents a 2.76% increase in the same metric from 2017.

In 2017, single-unit trucks (straight trucks) and combination trucks (tractor-trailers) comprised roughly 3.5% and 1.05% of total registered vehicles nationally. Combination trucks and single-unit trucks traveled a total of 304,864 million vehicle-miles on both interstate and non-interstate highways in 2018. As of December 2019, the truck transportation industry employed approximately 1.5 million people nationwide. This figure represents a 20% increase from the number of total employed in the industry at the end of 2012.

The Truck Freight Network in Alabama



In Alabama, nearly 264 million tons of domestic shipments flowed within, from, and to the state in 2018 by trucks. In the same year, 22.5 million tons of foreign shipments flowed within, from, and to the state by trucks. This equates to trucks carrying roughly \$295 billion of domestic shipments and \$28.7 billion of foreign shipments within, from, and to the state.

About 86% of Alabama communities are almost entirely dependent on trucks to move their critical goods.

The federally designated National Network (NN), also known as the National Truck Network, and National Highway System (NHS) in the state of Alabama are displayed in Figure 1. NN comprises a network of approved routes for commercial truck drivers across the nation. Its primary purpose is to support interstate commerce by regulating the size of trucks. NHS, on the other hand, consists of roadways vitally important to the nation's economy and security, and largely promotes interstate commerce by focusing federal investments. While both networks are about 200,000 miles in length, the NN includes approximately 65,000 miles of highways beyond the NHS, and the NHS includes about 50,000 miles of highways that are not a part of NN.

Figure 1: National Network in Alabama for conventional combination trucks. Created by ATI. Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Freights Facts and Figures 2017 - Freight Transportation System Extent & Use*

Freight flows by highway, railroad, and waterway for the United States are shown below in Figure 2.

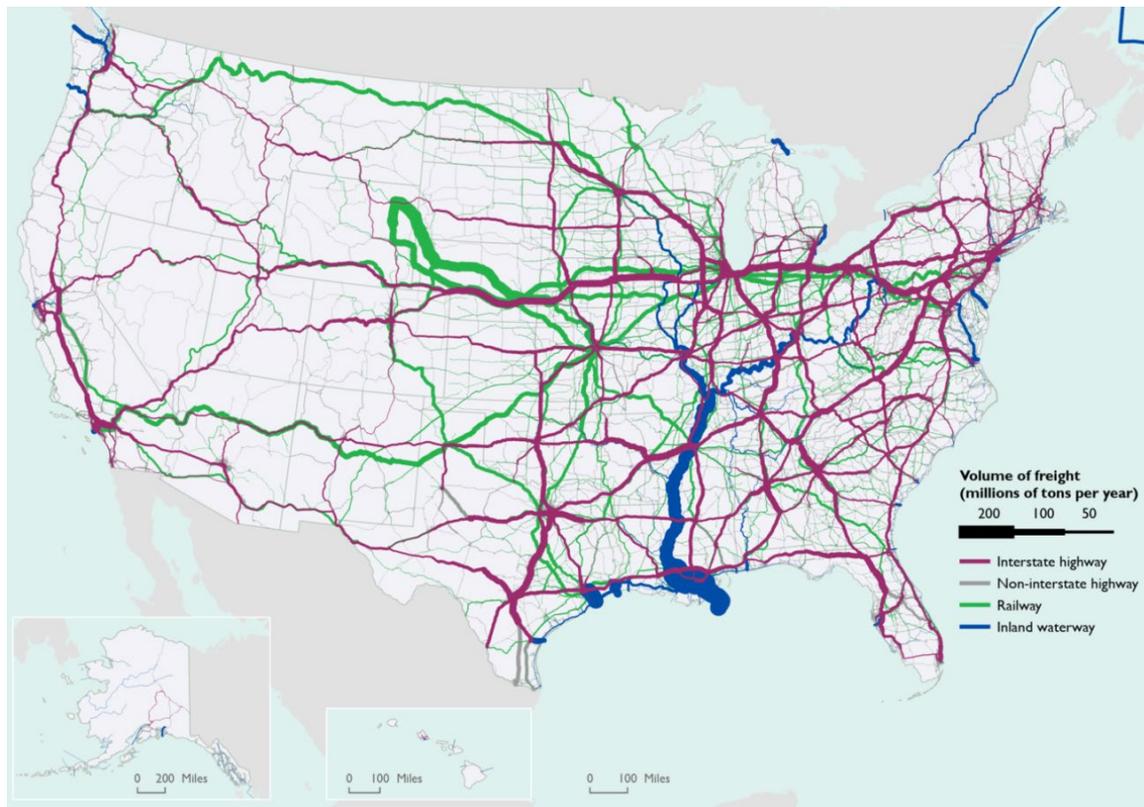


Figure 2: Freight flows by highway, railroad, and waterway based on 2015 freight data. Source: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *Freights Facts and Figures 2017 - Freight Transportation System Extent & Use*

In 2018, gravel, logs, and coal were the top commodities being carried by trucks within Alabama in terms of tonnage. These commodities were valued at nearly \$3.5 billion. In the same year, the trucking industry employed 111,790 people across the state. The vast majority of the 10,040 trucking companies based in Alabama in 2019 are small and locally-owned businesses.

Trucks drove 6.8 billion miles on Alabama public roads in 2018. Alabama's rate of fatal truck crashes per 100 million vehicle miles traveled is 1.25, better than the national average of 1.42.

Acknowledgement

This policy brief was prepared by Sanaa Rafique for the Alabama Transportation Policy Research Center, a unit of the Alabama Transportation Institute at The University of Alabama.

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