

bts NEWS

Spring 2002

A Newsletter for the Transportation Community

Volume 1, Issue 1

Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of BTS NEWS – a quarterly newsletter designed to keep you up on the happenings at the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), the federal source for transportation statistics.

First, let us introduce ourselves. BTS is a 10 - year-old agency in the U.S. Department of Transportation that collects and distributes information on all forms of transportation. We were created as the transportation counterpart to the more well-known statistical agencies of the federal government, such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the National Center for Educational Statistics.

Although we are growing rapidly, BTS remains a small agency engaged in many wide-ranging activities to improve the quality of transportation statistics and to make data more accessible to more people. These activities include

improvement of databases, collection of more data, and better dissemination of data.

Why is this important? We believe that better access to information leads to more informed decisions at all levels of government, in the private sector, and by consumers who are selecting their flights or their way to travel.

Transportation makes up 11 percent of our nation's Gross Domestic Product. With better information, we can make that significant part of our economy safer and more productive. We can improve mobility and security. And we can contribute to environmental efforts.

In this quarterly newsletter, we will tell you what the people at BTS are doing to improve transportation statistics. At the same time, we will offer tips and insights on finding transportation data because our mission is making good transportation data available to everyone.

—Dr. Ashish Sen, Director
Bureau of Transportation Statistics

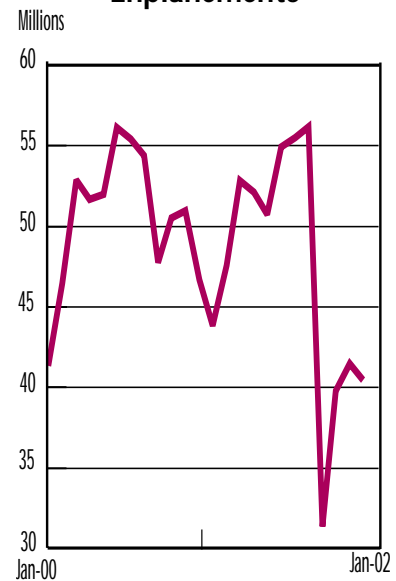


Transportation Indicators

Remember to check www.bts.gov the first week of every month for the latest *Transportation Indicators* report tracking more than 100 transportation trends.

- In the January issue you would have learned that consumer prices for all types of gasoline fell almost 6 percent between November and December.
- In the February issue you would have learned that the airlines operated 15 percent fewer domestic and 12 percent fewer international flights in October 2001 compared to October 2000.
- In the March issue you would have learned that there were 13 percent fewer passengers boarding domestic flights in December 2001 than in December 2000.

Domestic Airline Revenue Enplanements



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BTS Hosts Safety Data Conference

“Better safety data will save lives throughout our transportation system,” Rep. Robert A. Borski, the keynote speaker at the Bureau of Transportation Statistics’ Safety in Numbers Conference, told more than 100 members of the transportation community.

“Transportation safety requires good research, and good research requires accurate and timely data collection and analysis,” said Borski, the Ranking Member of the House Highways and Transit Subcommittee. “Improving highway safety is, by far, our greatest opportunity to save lives in transportation.”

He noted that almost 42,000 people died on the nation’s roads in 2000—about 95 percent of all transportation fatalities.

The January conference was another step by BTS toward improving transportation safety data. The session was designed to allow participants to

review progress on 10 intermodal safety data projects and to offer feedback.

“Working together, we must improve the quality of safety data so planners and decisionmakers can take the appropriate counter measures. Informed decisions will lead to fewer deaths and injuries,” BTS Director Dr. Ashish Sen said.

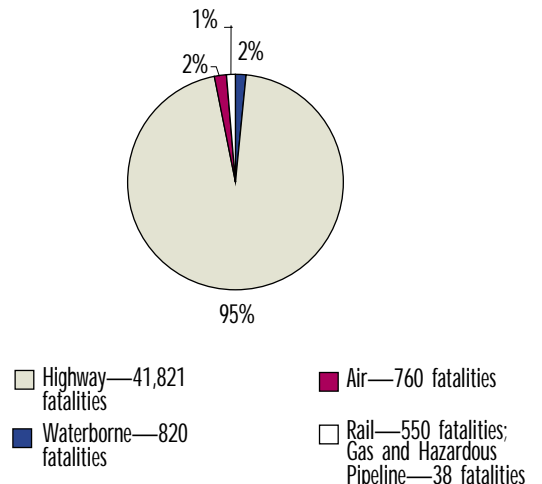
The Safety in Numbers projects began in 1999 when stakeholders at the National Transportation Safety Conference identified better data collection and reporting as a top priority to improve transportation safety.

BTS hosted four interactive workshops within each transportation mode to gather insights on current data limitations that affect transportation safety. The workshops culminated in the April 2000 Intermodal Safety Data Conference.

BTS prepared a Safety Data Action Plan—Safety in Numbers: Using Statistics to Make the Transportation System Safer—in response to the workshops and conference. The plan contains a set of recommended actions on key safety-related issues designed to improve the quality of safety data programs throughout DOT.

BTS hosted a retreat, in May 2001, for stakeholders to begin implementing research projects identified in the Safety Data Action Plan.

Transportation Fatalities by Mode, 2000



SOURCE: Bureau of Transportation Statistics, *National Transportation Statistics, 2001*, preliminary data, in press.

BTS Posts Annual On-Time Data on Website

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics released tables in February providing an in-depth look at flight delays in 2001.

A ranking of the nation’s major airports showed that 30 of the nation’s 32 major airports had better on-time performance for arriving flights in 2001 than in 2000. Chicago Midway Airport had the lowest

percentage of late arriving flights and New York Kennedy Airport had the highest percentage of late arriving flights during 2001.

A comparison of arrivals for 2000 and 2001 showed that the average flight in 2001 was 5.5 minutes behind schedule, about half the 10.4 minutes behind schedule for the average flight in 2000.

The number of late arrivals and late departures declined from 2000 to 2001 despite an increase in flights.

A ranking of all months since 1987 showed that December 2000 was the worst month for flight delays and September 1994 was the best.

For more information, check www.bts.gov.

BTS Goes to Alaska

Four Bureau of Transportation Statistics staff members headed north in late January to acquaint small Alaskan air carriers with new data-reporting requirements. Data gleaned from these reports will be used to set mail rates.

Small certificated air carriers (60 seats or less, payload under 18,000 lb), beginning in January, must file the same detailed monthly reports on traffic—passengers, flights, freight, load factor, distances and other information—that were previously required only from larger carriers. These detailed reports will be used by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and U.S. Postal Service to streamline mail distribution to carriers and, hopefully, keep mail rates in check.

Since most Alaskan communities are remote and isolated, much food and other provisions travel by

airmail. DOT sets the mail rates in Alaska—the only state where the U.S. Postal Service does not set rates. But mail rates are rising faster than the cost of living.

Part of the mail-rate review requires specific data from the air carriers. In January, the Office of the Secretary of Transportation ordered the 37 Alaskan carriers to begin reporting detailed data immediately so the review process can begin.

The first of the new reports from the Alaskan carriers, with January data, was due March 2nd. Such short notice required quick action to train the carriers.

Bernie Stankus, Jennifer Fabrizi, and Cecelia Robinson of BTS' Office of Airline Information, along with Thea Graham of the Office of Statistical Computing, visited small certificated Alaskan air carriers from January 28th to February 1st to provide training and software for the new reporting requirements.



Flight Delay Causes May Be Reported Soon

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) is reviewing comments from the public and interested parties on a proposal that would require the nation's largest airlines to file a monthly report detailing causes of flight delays and cancellations.

The 10 largest airlines now file a monthly on-time performance report with BTS on the numbers of delays and cancellations. These reports are



summarized in DOT's monthly Air Travel Consumer Report, available at www.dot.gov/airconsumer. Additional information on causes of delays and cancellations would provide more information for aviation system managers and for consumers making travel decisions.

BTS, in cooperation with the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, proposed a rule on flight delay causes late last year that recommends three categories of delays and cancellations:

- Air Carrier Responsibility—delays or cancellations for which the air carrier has responsibility and control, such as aircraft cleaning, aircraft damage, or awaiting the arrival of connecting passengers or crew.
- Extreme Weather.

- National Aviation System (NAS)—delays and cancellations attributable to a broad set of conditions such as weather (nonextreme), airport security and passenger screening problems, airport operations, heavy traffic volume, or air traffic control.

A flight is counted as "on time" if it arrives less than 15 minutes after the scheduled time shown in the carrier's computerized reservations system. Flights delayed 15 minutes or more, canceled, or diverted are recorded as late.

To view a copy of the proposed rule and the comments, go to the Docket Management System website, <http://dms.dot.gov/>, and follow the instructions for viewing Docket No. OST 2000-8164.

BTS Finds Public Satisfied With Government Security Efforts

Although 9 out of 10 Americans are satisfied with the federal government's efforts to tighten travel-related security, about the same number remain concerned about those issues, according to a Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) survey.

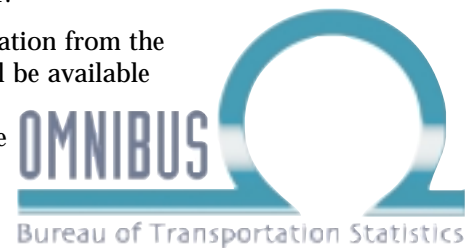
In response to BTS' monthly Omnibus survey, the public expressed satisfaction with the federal government's efforts on their three top transportation security concerns:

- the risk of terrorism against Americans traveling by air outside the United States,
- keeping computerized systems like air traffic control secure from terrorism, and
- the risk of terrorism against Americans traveling by air inside the United States.

BTS polled 1,000 households in February as part of the BTS Omnibus Survey, a monthly survey of public transportation attitudes and travel habits. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percent.

BTS conducts the Omnibus survey every month to provide transportation decisionmakers with information about the public's views on the transportation system and the way in which the public uses the system. Last fall, the Omnibus focused on Americans' holiday travel plans as a guide to attitudes about travel in the weeks following September 11.

More information from the Omnibus will be available on the BTS website in the coming weeks.



Recently from BTS

- Journal of Transportation and Statistics, vol 4 no. 1
- Mariner Survey Results
- Pocket Guide to Transportation 2002
- OmniStats

Upcoming from BTS

- State Transportation Profiles (monthly release of four states)
- Data Gaps—Interim Report
- Journal of Transportation and Statistics, vol 4 no. 2/3. Special issue on accessibility
- International Travel Trends
- Transportation Statistics Annual Report 2001
- Maritime Trade & Transportation 2002
- National Transportation Statistics 2001
- Government Transportation Financial Statistics

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