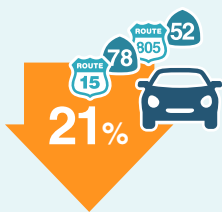


June 2020

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 19, 2020, a statewide stay home order was issued to protect the health and well-being of Californians. During the first month following the stay home order, when San Diegans were working from home or were not working at all, there were drastic impacts to weekday travel patterns. More recently, as the statewide orders have allowed counties to move into different phased reopening procedures, people are traveling more. In May, SANDAG released two InfoBits analyzing eight freeway traffic hot spots in the region. In the reports, SANDAG analyzed the differences in weekday travel patterns between mid-March and mid-April 2020 (Month 1), and between mid-April and mid-May 2020 (Month 2), compared to the same periods in 2019. This new report continues this analysis, looking at the next four weeks of data between mid-May and June 5, 2020 (Month 3).

Did you know?

Despite the stay home order, travel on the San Diego region's freeways did not stop, and has been increasing.



Average daily traffic volume was down 21% the first week in June, versus the 50% drop when it was at its lowest the second week in April.



The number of **vehicle miles traveled (VMT)** increased in Month 3, up 19% since the stay home order took effect in Month 1.



The average **peak period speed** at the eight local hot spots analyzed continued to be significantly faster in Month 3, compared to last year, even though traffic continued to increase.

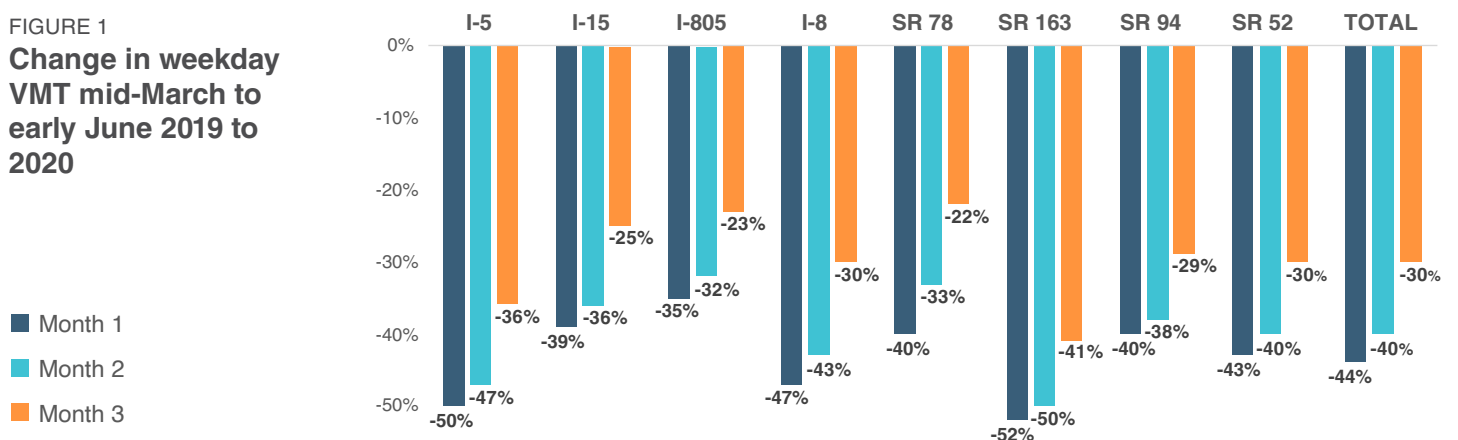
Key Findings

SANDAG used two measures to track freeway activity: VMT and the number of vehicles on our roads, or daily traffic volumes.

During Month 3 of the stay home order, vehicles traveled more than 514 million miles on our eight local freeways on weekdays. While this is 30% lower than the 730 million miles traveled compared to the same time in 2019, it is higher than Months 1 and 2, where nearly 434 (19% lower than in Month 3) and 460 (12% lower than in Month 3) million miles were traveled.

When comparing the three months analyzed, the greatest decrease in VMT was on SR 163 and I-5.

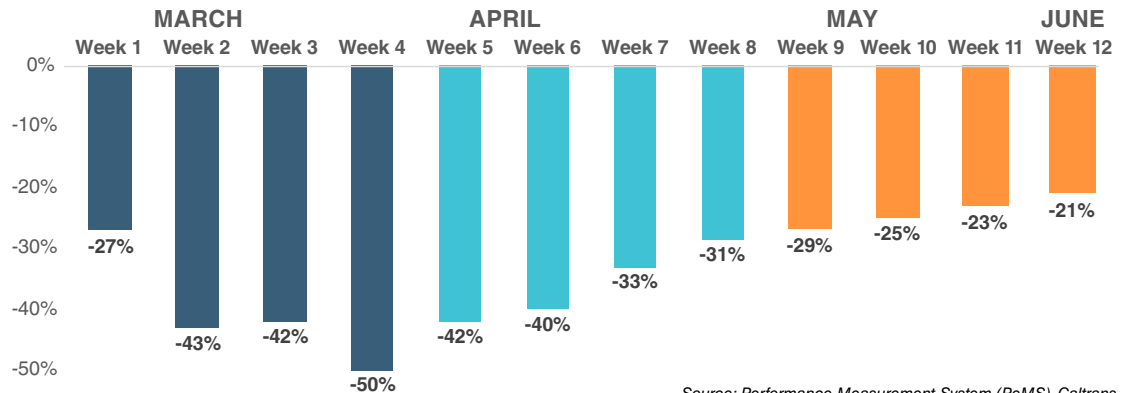
FIGURE 1
Change in weekday VMT mid-March to early June 2019 to 2020



Source: Performance Measurement System (PeMS), Caltrans

How have daily freeway traffic volumes changed week to week during the past three months? As the figure below shows, when examining eight of the region's freeway hot spots (described in Figure 3), the average daily traffic volumes decreased 27% from the first week to 50% in the fourth week, but have increased every week since, with volumes decreasing 21% in the first week of June (Week 12).

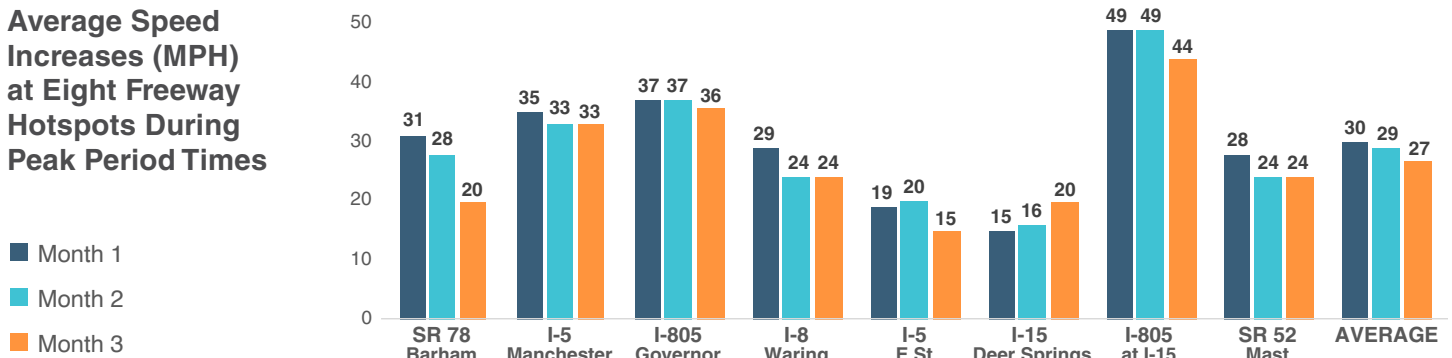
FIGURE 2
Average Decreases in Daily Traffic Volumes at Eight Freeway Hotspots Mid-March to Early June 2019 and 2020



Source: Performance Measurement System (PeMS), Caltrans

Due to the significant reduction in freeway traffic, travel speeds during peak period travel times have increased. While daily traffic volumes have increased in Month 3, traffic was still moving 27 mph faster on average, compared to the same timeframe in 2019. This increase was 30 mph faster in Month 1 and 29 mph faster in Month 2.

FIGURE 3
Average Speed Increases (MPH) at Eight Freeway Hotspots During Peak Period Times



Source: Performance Measurement System (PeMS), Caltrans

As the region continues to monitor and respond to the current public health situation, freeway traffic patterns will be affected. As it does, SANDAG will track these and other data and the effects on the region's long-term planning efforts.

About info

SANDAG serves as the region's clearinghouse for information and data. InfoBits publish timely, relevant information informing the public while providing context on complex issues facing the region.

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