

August 2020

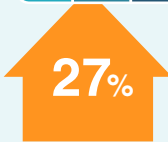
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 19, 2020, a statewide stay home order was issued to protect the health and well-being of Californians. Since then, daily travel on San Diego regional freeways has been drastically reduced because San Diegans are either working from home or not working at all. In May and June, SANDAG released three InfoBits analyzing eight freeway traffic hot spots in the region. SANDAG analyzed the differences in weekday travel patterns between mid-March and mid-April 2020 (Month 1), mid-April and mid-May 2020 (Month 2), and mid-May and early June 2020 (Month 3), compared to the same periods in 2019. This new report continues this analysis, looking at the next four weeks of data between June 8 and July 1, (Month 4).

Did you know?

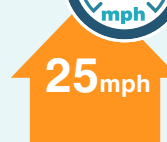
Despite the stay home order, travel on the San Diego region's freeways did not stop, and is slowly increasing.



Average daily traffic volume was **down 18%** the first week in July, versus the 50% drop when it was at its lowest the second week in April.



The number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increased in the fourth four-week period analyzed, up 27% since the stay home order took effect.



The average peak period speed at eight local hot spots **continued to be significantly faster** during the past 4 weeks, even though traffic was increasing.

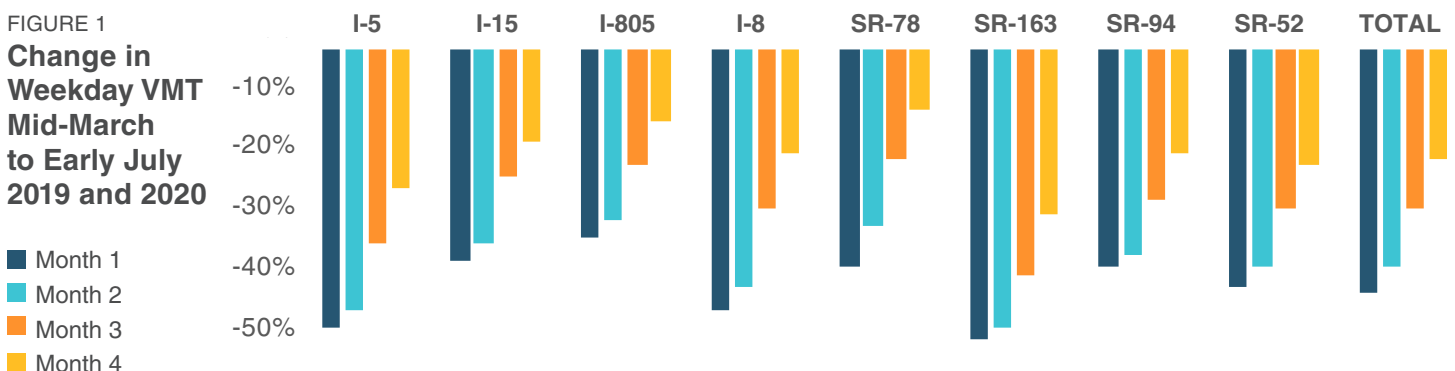
Key Findings

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

During Month 4 of the stay home order, vehicles traveled nearly 553 million miles on our eight local freeways on weekdays. While this is 22% lower than the 705 million miles traveled in the same time in 2019, it is 27% higher than Month 1, when nearly 434 million miles were traveled respectively.

When comparing the four months analyzed, the greatest decrease in VMT was on State Route 163 (SR 163) and Interstate 5 (I-5).

FIGURE 1
Change in Weekday VMT Mid-March to Early July 2019 and 2020



Source: Performance Measurement System (PeMS), Caltrans

How have daily freeway traffic volumes changed week to week during the past four 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 the exception of Week 16 (June 29–July 1). The average decrease at Week 15 was -16% and it was -18% at Week 16.

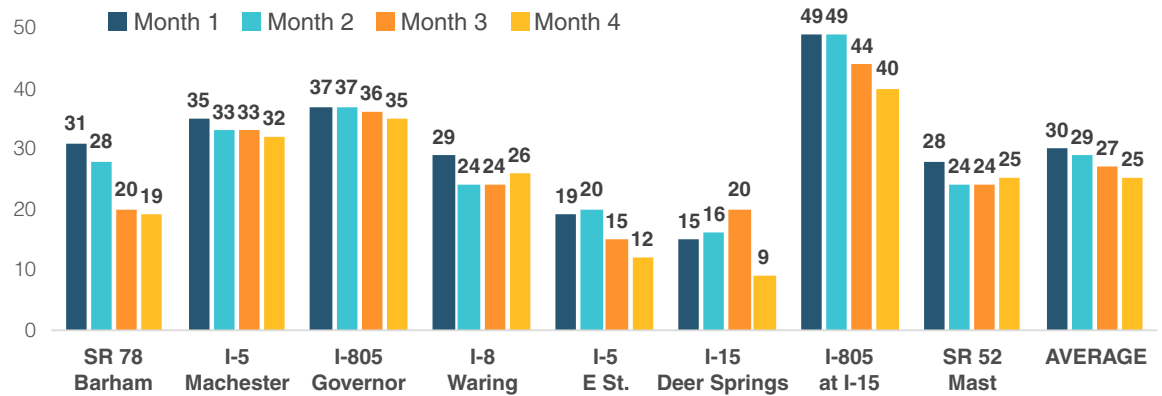
FIGURE 2
Average Decreases in Daily Traffic Volumes at Eight Freeway Hotspots Mid-March to Early July 2019 and 2020



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 4, traffic was still moving 25 mph faster on average, compared to the same timeframe in 2019. This increase was 30 mph faster in Month 1, 29 mph in Month 2, and 27 mph in Month 3.

FIGURE 3
Average Speed Increases (mph) at Eight Freeway Hotspots During Peak Period Times Mid-March to Early July 2019 and 2020



Source: Performance Measurement System (PeMS), Caltrans

As the region continues to reopen, traffic on our freeways will continue an upward trend. SANDAG continues to monitor the COVID-19 economic impacts and how telecommuting will factor in the region's long-term planning efforts.

About info**bits**

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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