New Data for New Purposes

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FCSM Session on Leveraging Official Statistics Programs to Address Emerging Issues: Providing Information Relevant to the Coronavirus Pandemic
Pre-Pandemic

- Traditional statistical products are annual and monthly
- Vetting is a deliberative process
- Preliminary estimates are based on stable trends
- General wish for more timely products
The Pandemic arrives

- Anecdotal evidence of immediate effects on transportation system
- Strong hunger by departmental leadership for immediate data to understand magnitude of changes
The BTS Response

- Search for surrogate indicators
- New approaches to preliminary measures
- New sources for traditional measures
- Rapid prototyping
- Numbers now, vetting later
- Daily and weekly products
The BTS Response

- The Week in Transportation
- Daily statistics for the Secretary
- Daily travel reported weekly from mobile devices rather than surveys
- County transportation profiles for geographic detail
- Travel on the 4th of July – setting a new norm for timeliness
Making the BTS Response Possible

- Previous development of the daily travel data system as exploratory research
- Previous development of the data pipeline
- Contacts with data sources for traditional compilations
- Cross-office team
- Pre-existing arrangements for telework
- Sense of challenge and urgency
The new normal

• Daily statistics reported weekly to capture temporal variation, tabulated at the county level to capture geographic variation
• Explore and vet the new data sources
• Remote operations
COVID-19 Related Transportation Statistics

Responding to interest in the most recent pandemic-related data, BTS has created web pages of transportation statistics allowing comparison of pre-COVID-19 and current numbers for passenger travel and freight shipments.

These pages present a wide range of data on all transportation modes from various sources, and BTS will add more measures as they become available.

DAILY TRAVEL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- What it shows: The percent and number of people staying home and not staying home each day, and the number of trips taken each day for 10 different distance groupings.
- How recent: One-week lag
- Update Frequency: Weekly on Monday
- Geography level: National, State, County

MOBILITY OVER TIME BY STATE AND BY TRIP DISTANCE