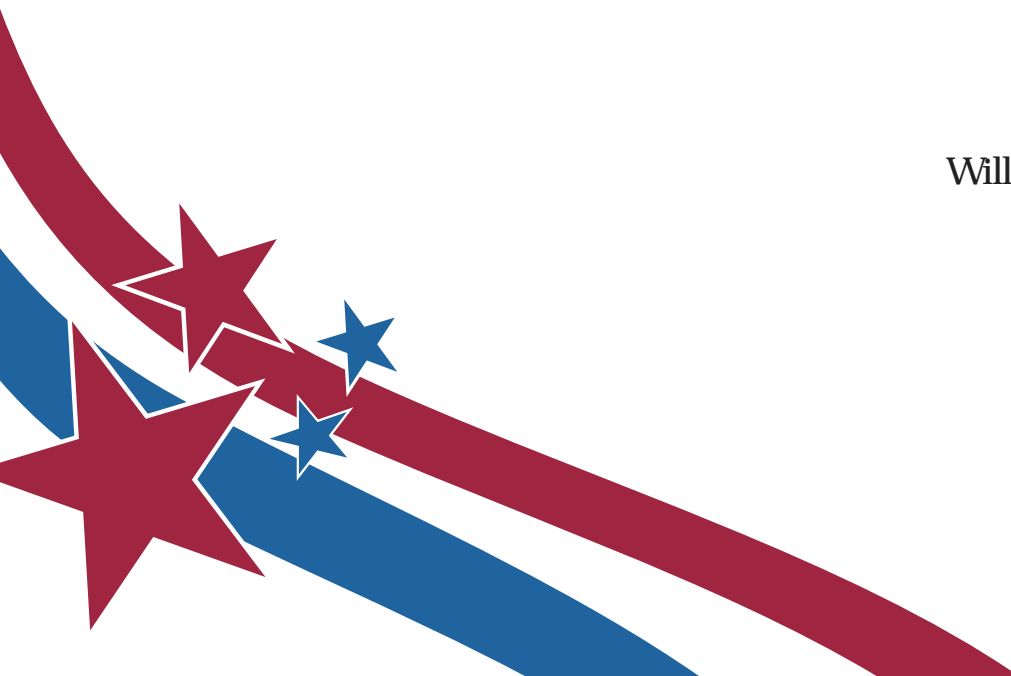




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Introduction

On March 9, 2020, Governor Phil Murphy declared a state of emergency in response to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in Bergen County, New Jersey (NJ.gov). Restrictions were placed on local businesses, construction projects, school districts, and more as state officials attempted to slow the spread of the virus and keep New Jersey residents safe during this time. This study aims to measure some of the financial and social impacts of the state's temporary lockdown. Each state in the United States has a variety of government-funded highways, roads, and bridges that are maintained by state workers and patrolled by state police. The upkeep of these public thoroughfares is funded in part by tolls that are paid by drivers using these roads. Under normal circumstances, these highways generate millions of dollars for the state and cause other social and economic impacts. The COVID-19 lockdown has resulted in a variety of economic ramifications for New Jersey residents and taxpayers.

COVID-19 significantly impacted the lives of many Americans, and this research was undertaken to study the effect of the pandemic on issues related to traffic and major highways in New Jersey. The goal of this study was to analyze data from both the Garden State Parkway and N.J. Turnpike and determine whether COVID-19 has affected the state at the economic and social levels. The specific questions that the research focuses on are: How did COVID-19 affect road safety on the Turnpike and Garden State Parkway? How many fewer vehicles were on major roads during the heavy COVID-19 months and what were the effects of the lower numbers on toll collection revenues? How were gas taxes affected as a result of COVID-19? What was the effect on highway road work production?

COVID-19 and Major Highway Road Traffic

The Garden State Parkway (GSP) and the NJ Turnpike (NJTA) are two of the most heavily traveled highways in the state of New Jersey. According to state records, in 2019 an average of 22.3 million vehicles (passenger and commercial) traveled per month on the New Jersey Turnpike, producing an average monthly toll revenue of \$98 million (NJTA NJ Turnpike Toll Revenue Comparisons). In 2020, a year in which New Jersey underwent a temporary lockdown, business closures and many residents work

commercial vehicles year (NJTA Garden State

7 D E O H

Gas Tax Revenue Comparisons (2019 and 2020)

Dollar amounts are in the thousands (000s)

Lopez

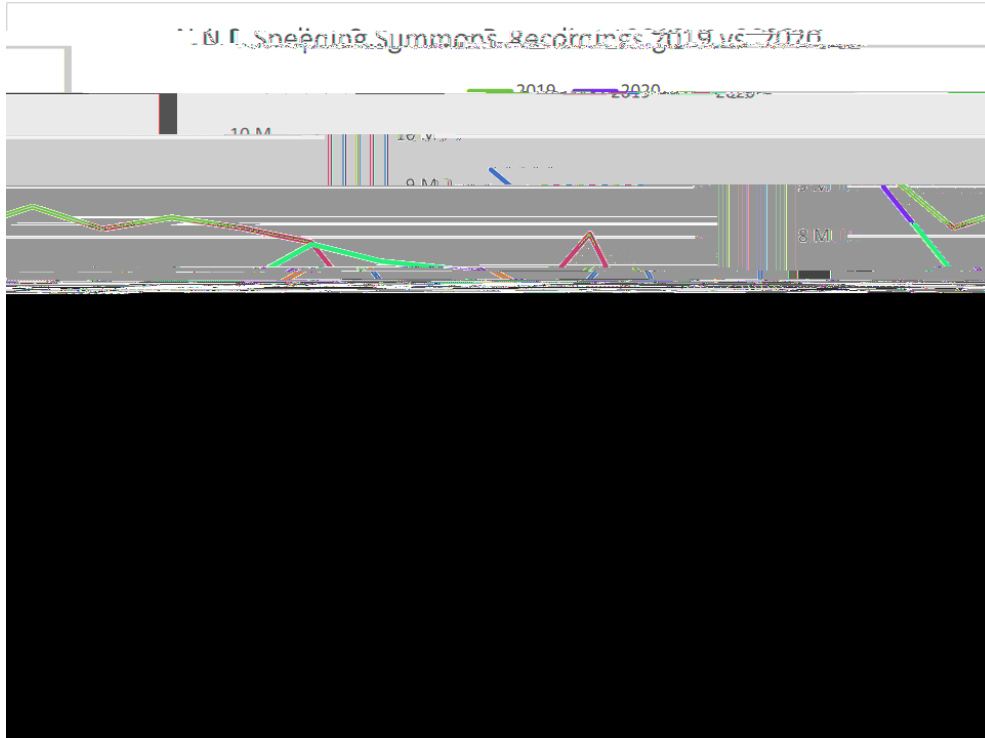
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I R U specific programs. These funds collectively provide funding for local facilities such as public libraries, justice system funds, law enforcement agencies, and local units of government (Oakland Press). A total of 91,215 speeding tickets were issued during 2019. A speeding ticket in New Jersey costs between \$85 and \$260 depending on how far over the speed limit one was driving (Improv). If each ticket were written for its minimal amount of \$85, the state would

Fig.



Motor Vehicles Fatalities inNJ

Although fewer cars were on the main highways during both of the shutdown, a number of drivers were killed in car accidents. Officials announced in February 2019 that irresponsible driving led to an increase of 5% in fatal crashes across New Jersey compared to the prior year (Daily Voice). The trend for fatalities can also be seen on a national level, leading to an increase of 30% despite having significantly fewer drivers on the roads (Daily Voice). This trend has concerned many individuals and the state of Division of Highway Traffic Safety has launched several social media campaigns and other awareness tools to bring attention to the issue of reckless driving. Pam Shadel, a Governor's Safety Association senior director, reported in an interview in May 2020 that law enforcement has reported many cases of heavy speeding across New

resolve its large deficits even before COVID. There are needs to fix potholes and sustain New Jersey roads in different ways, but COVID has introduced complications to how an already struggling economy will continue to find solutions to pay for their needs.

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