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Trends and Policy Considerations of VMT in mid-2020

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June 12th, 2020
IEPR Workshop



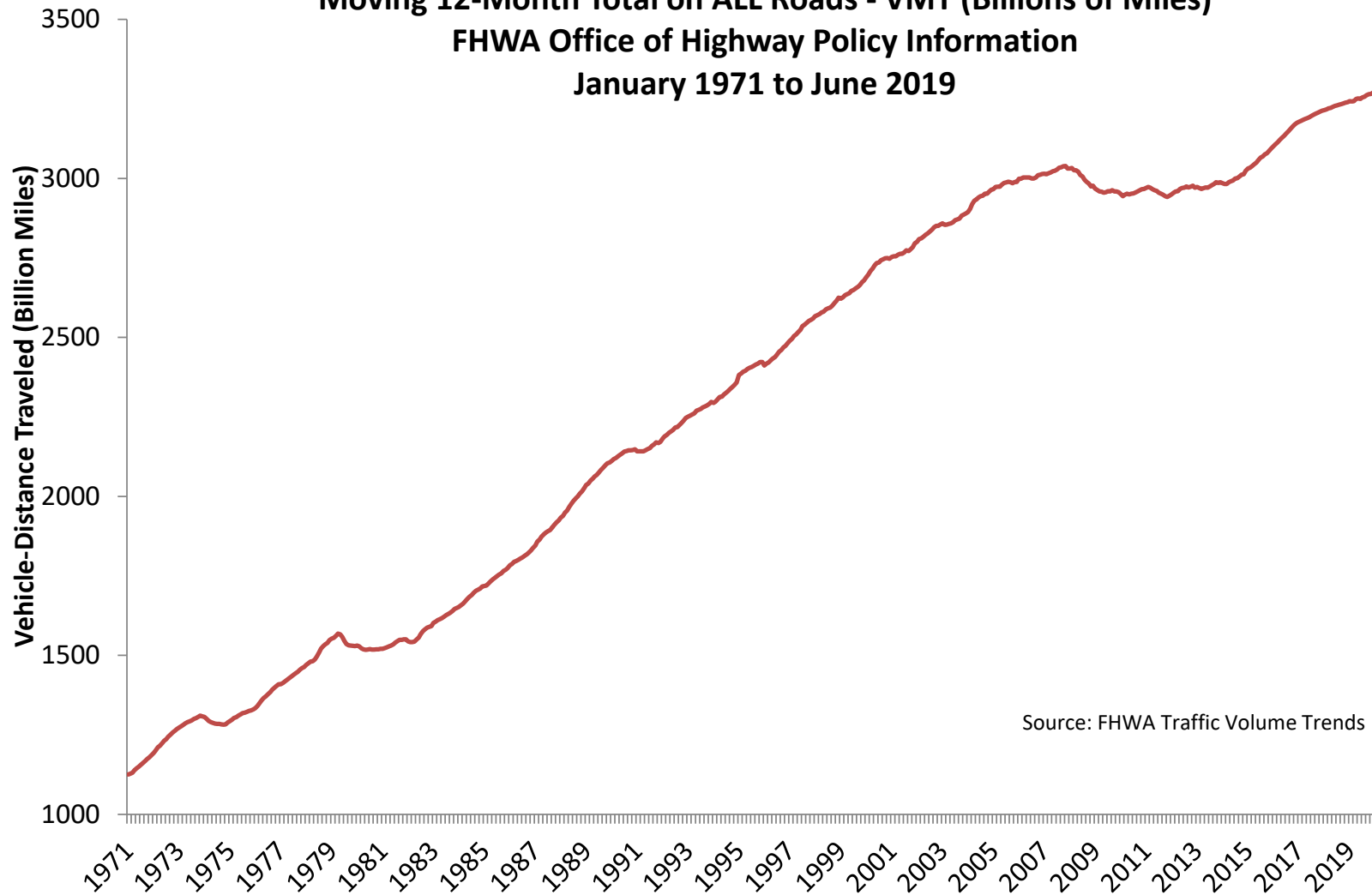
US Trends in VMT

United States

Moving 12-Month Total on ALL Roads - VMT (Billions of Miles)

FHWA Office of Highway Policy Information

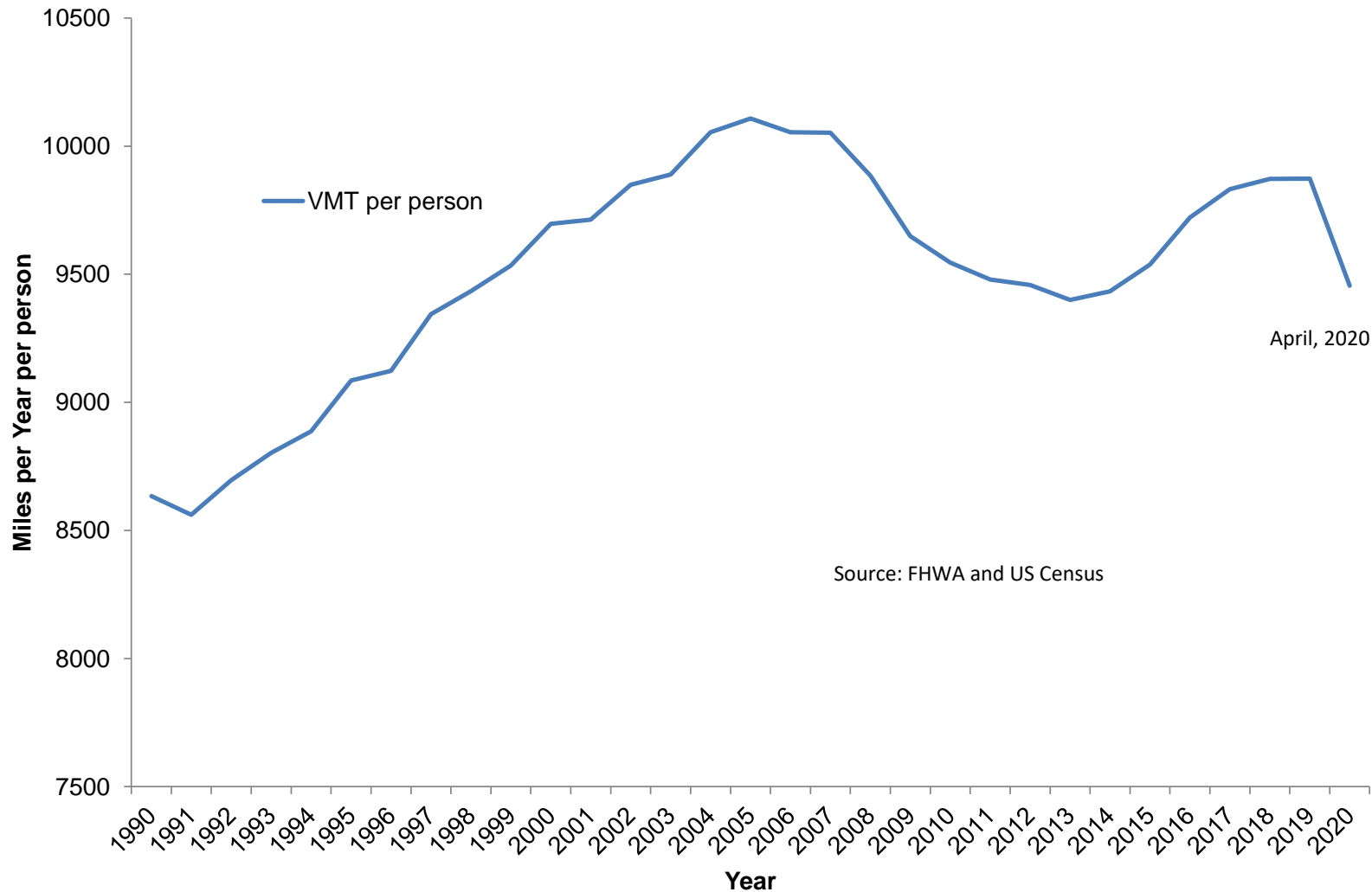
January 1971 to June 2019



- Note that this is a 12-month moving sum, so each data point reflects the previous 12 months of driving.
- The drop you see is the 4%, the largest on record.

US Trends in VMT per Capita

Vehicle Miles Traveled per Person in the United States
VMT and US Census Population Estimate for July of each Year



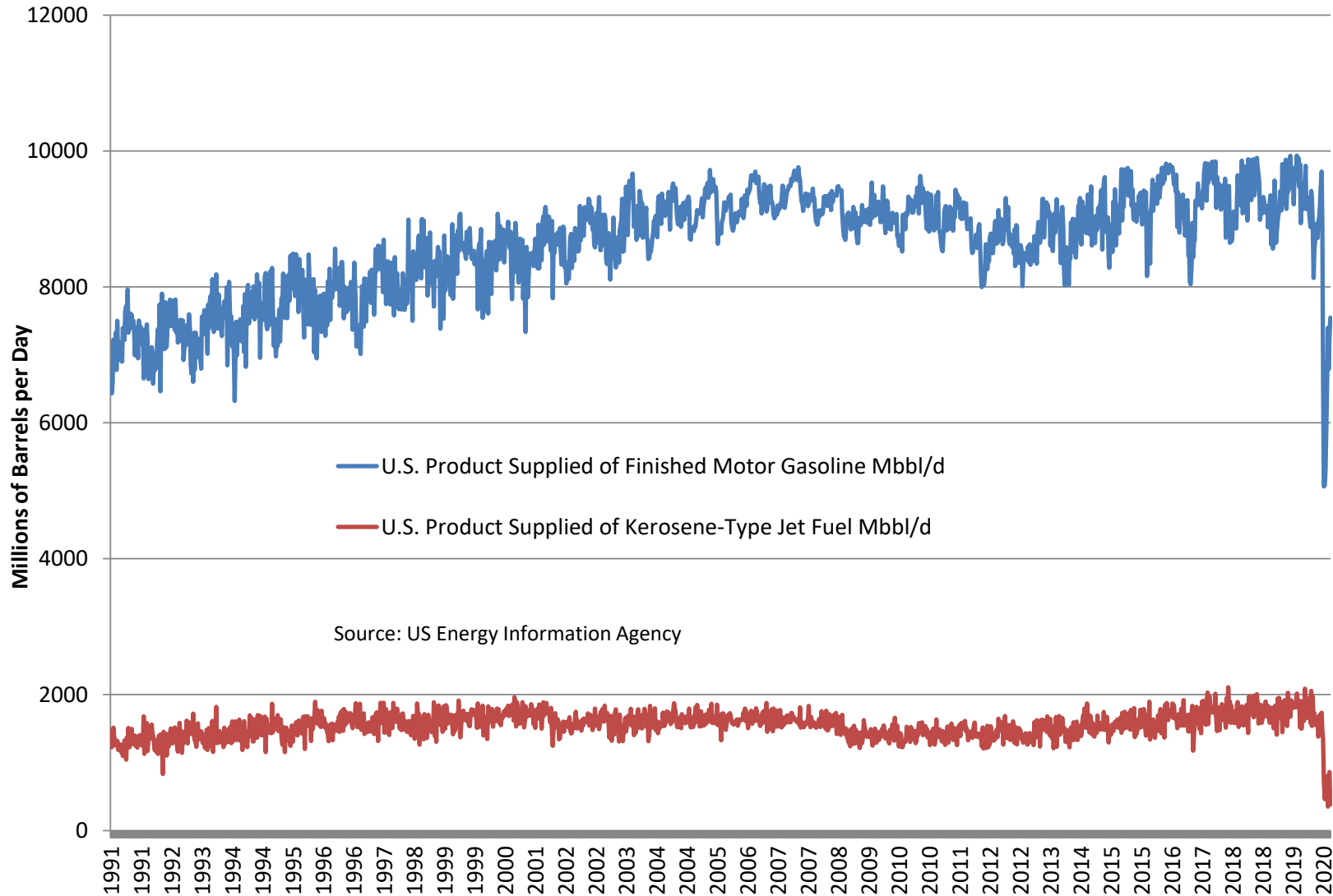
- April 2020 value is 6.5% off of the peak and is similarly the largest drop on record.

Measurement of VMT

- The TVT is the most dynamic and responsive dataset on national data on VMT.
- It is measured using a combination of HPMS data and sensor counts.
- While it is the longest running and best available VMT time series, it is not a direct measurement of VMT, but an approximation that is subject to revision.
- There is no collective and regular measurement of vehicle odometer data, at least rendered into national trends, that would constitute a more direct measurement of driving.

National Fuel Demand

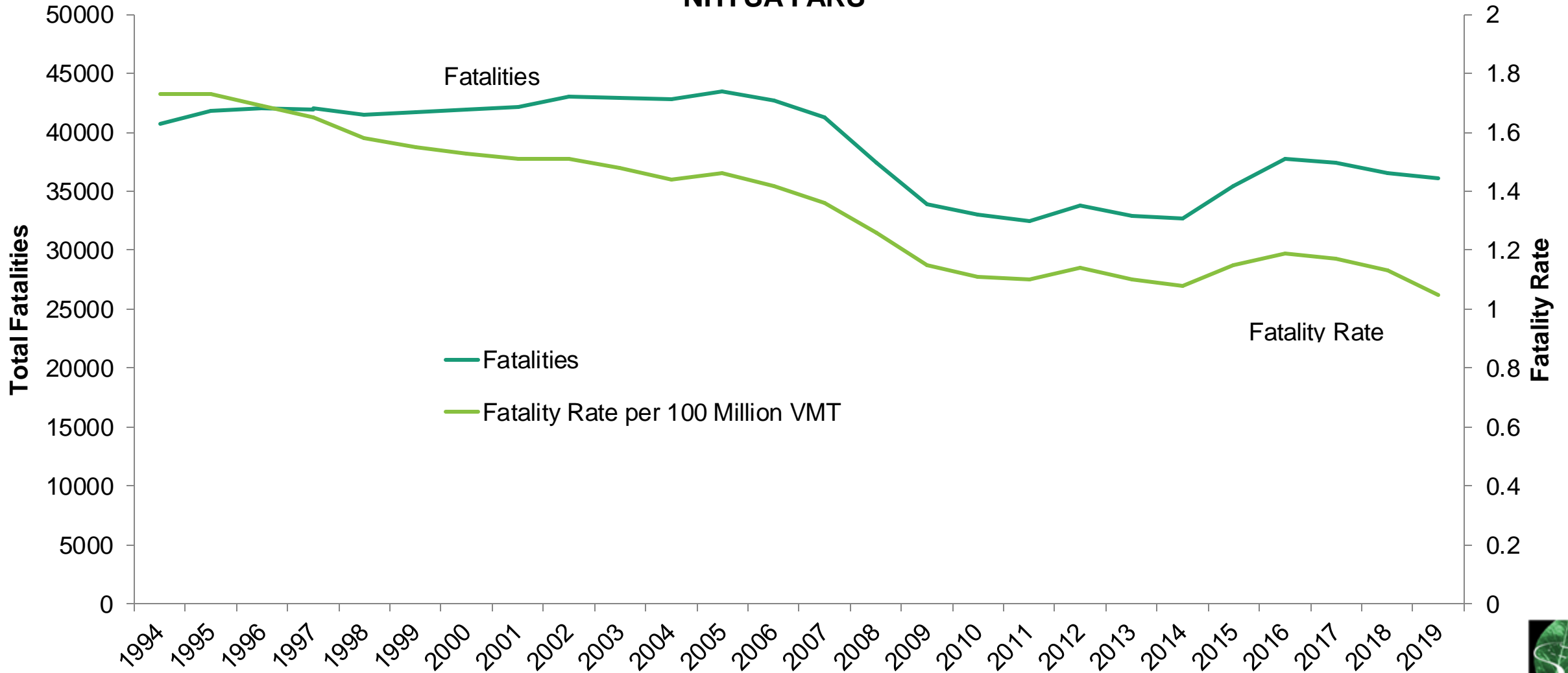
U.S. Weekly Product Supplied



- Drop in fuel demand largest on record.
- Fuel consumption lowest on record
- Recovery noted in gasoline
- Data through May 2020

Safety and Public Health Impacts

US Motor Vehicle Fatalities NHTSA FARS



Policy Responses - Telecommuting

- Telecommuting has expanded considerably as a result of the pandemic.
- Many companies have found that they can operate effectively with a much smaller footprint.
- Will this trend continue?
- Can policy encourage a continuation telecommuting?
 - Should employers receive tax credits or some other incentive per employee telecommuting?
 - What would be the equivalent social cost prevent?



Policy Response – Reduced Street Access for Vehicles

- The absence of vehicle traffic has allowed some cities to close streets to through traffic.
- Many cities are doing this, at least temporarily, how permanent will it be?
- Will this lead to long term changes in behavior?

Seattle will permanently close 20 miles of residential streets to most vehicle traffic

May 7, 2020 at 2:58 pm | Updated May 8, 2020 at 7:09 pm



A pedestrian crosses East Columbia Street in the Central District, which is closed to through traffic to give people space to walk and bike. (Ken Lambert / The Seattle Times)

Policy Response – Expanded Shared Mobility

- Many of us have learned how to function and survive without much personal vehicle driving.
- Can shared mobility, in the form of carsharing, micromobility, TNCs, and microtransit, step in to fill mobility needs as we re-learn how to be mobile in the post-Covid world?
- How will public transit evolve in the face greater health concern with physical proximity?



Summary

- VMT is likely to rebound as economies re-open.
- However, the forced reduction in VMT brought on by Covid-19 has taught us a lot about what is achievable in terms of function and survival.
 - Many companies (and governments) have learned that they continue operations rather well in the absence of physical office presence.
- The pandemic has been awful, but policy measures that build on lessons learned from this period could help set us on a trajectory of reduced reliance on personal driving, and the public health impacts that arise from it.



**THANK YOU,
QUESTIONS?**