

INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES IN MISSOURI



The closure of several rural hospitals has increased

travel for hospital services for Missourians from these communities. Using the example of Twin Rivers Regional Medical Center in Kennett, Mo., and assuming similar hospital utilization patterns, local residents could be expected to travel **68,352 additional miles to receive the care** they used to receive locally. The same closure resulted in reduced obstetrics care in the bootheel region. The lack of access was chronicled by [The New York Times](#), which reported that **pregnant women now were required to travel significant distances** for OB care.

“It is essential to citizens. If infrastructure isn’t there, then trucks can’t bring goods, ambulances can’t get to where they need to go, people can’t get to jobs.” – Dan Ross, Executive Director of the Missouri Municipal League.

Distance has an influence on access to care in rural Missouri. According to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Office of Primary Care and Rural Health, “Rural Missourians generally have to travel excessive distances to obtain specialty care, such as cardiology, oncology and nephrology. Given the lower incomes and increased ages of rural residents, the lack of social services can mean no access to, or less consistent care for, vulnerable populations.” Similarly, the Missouri Foundation for Health’s report, [Transportation and Health in Rural Missouri](#), documented reduced rural health care access, finding “an individual may need to travel **more than a hundred miles round trip** to see a health care provider.”

Distance to care is further exacerbated by the state’s roads and bridges. According to the national transportation research group TRIP, **Missouri ranks 11th** of the top 25 states with the **highest percentage of major rural roads in poor condition**. Poor roads are a contributing factor for delays in emergency care and contribute to the higher rate of rural fatalities from motor vehicle accidents.



Expansion of rural broadband could help close the distance to care for rural Missourians. Broadband could support the expansion of telehealth for primary, specialty and behavioral health care services.

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