

## Introduction

The rate of global economic growth and the integration of trade, finance, and manufacturing have increased greatly over the last two decades. Transportation plays a vital role in the changing global economy, linking people and places, facilitating trade and tourism, and encouraging economic competition and specialization. The North American<sup>1</sup> experience mirrors these worldwide trends. Reduced trade barriers and increasingly mobile populations have created a heightened need for information on transportation infrastructure and services within and across Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Two major initiatives, the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA)<sup>2</sup> and the subsequent North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA),<sup>3</sup> were significant milestones in the liberalization of trade in goods and services between the three countries on this continent.

This summary report, *North American Transportation Highlights*, provides key statistics on passenger travel, freight activity, transportation safety, and transportation energy use for Canada, Mexico, and the United States. It was developed under the framework of the North American Transportation Statistics Interchange, representing the transportation and statistical agencies of Canada, Mexico, and the United States, and was produced by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS).

Since 1997, a tricountry working group has been examining transportation and transportation-related statistics in the context of a North American Transportation Statistics project. The group's work forms the basis for the data tables included in this report. Participating

agencies include BTS and the Census Bureau from the United States; the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (Ministry of Communications and Transportation), the Instituto Mexicano del Transporte (Mexican Institute of Transportation), and the Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática (INEGI) (National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics) from Mexico; and Statistics Canada and Transport Canada from Canada.

*North American Transportation Highlights* provides data for 1996, the last year for which comparable data are readily available. All of the value data are reported in current U.S. dollars. Users should note that, for the sake of greater comparability across the three countries, data categories and definitions were extensively reviewed and modified when necessary. Therefore, data categories and definitions used in this compendium may not always correspond to those used in the specific national publications of Canada, Mexico, and the United States. Users who require data in original categories, currencies, or measures, a complete time series, or additional information, should contact the appropriate source agency in each country.

A number of standard symbols were adopted for use on the statistical tables:

- C = data are confidential
- N = data are nonexistent
- NA = not applicable
- NS = not significant
- P = data are preliminary
- U = data are unavailable
- e = data are estimated
- r = data are revised.

The unit "billions" in this publication means "thousand millions," i.e., 10<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup>For the purposes of this report, North America will refer to the countries of Canada, Mexico, and the United States.

<sup>2</sup>The FTA entered into force on January 1, 1989.

<sup>3</sup>NAFTA entered into force on January 1, 1994.