

Historically, the Office of Transportation Data at the Georgia Department of Transportation has collected traffic count data from portable and permanent traffic collection devices that are installed at data collection sites. The primary purpose of collecting this data is to support an annual Highway Performance Monitoring System report that is required by the Federal Highway Administration.

There are currently about 1,000 portable traffic collection devices. Throughout Georgia, these devices are installed at approximately 17,000 sites each year for a 48-hour period to count and classify the traffic.

In addition, there are approximately 240 sites with permanent Automatic Traffic Recorders throughout Georgia. These recorders count and classify the traffic 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The Traffic Counts that are collected from the permanent and portable traffic collection devices are used in the calculation of the Annual Average Daily Traffic estimates. The Georgia Department of Transportation uses the statistically valid Annual Average Daily Traffic estimates for estimating the Traffic Counts for the remaining road segments.

Throughout Georgia there are 30 sites that collect Weigh-in Motion data. According to the Federal Highway Administration guidelines, 10 of these sites must be on interstate highways. Weigh-in Motion technology is used to measure vehicle counts, axle and gross weight, vehicle classification, and speed data. Weigh-in Motion data is used for pavement and capacity studies, enforcement and inspection purposes, and for analysis of truck transport practices.



Installing portable traffic collection device



Permanent Automatic Traffic Recorder



Portable traffic collection device



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Traffic Counts: Frequently Asked Questions



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Office of Transportation Data
Traffic Data Collection Branch**

1. What is a traffic count?

A traffic count is a count of traffic on State Routes, major county roads, and major city streets. All traffic counts represent typical 24-hour period, counting traffic in each direction of traffic flow.

2. What are traffic counts used for?

Traffic counts are used to determine traffic patterns and flows for modeling purposes. They are also used in developing plans to aid in alleviating congestion with the construction of new routes or alternate designs.

For Example:

- The Office of Materials Research uses a combination of truck percentages and Annual Average Daily Traffic data to develop factors that assess the deterioration of pavement.
- The Traffic Operations Office uses the volume data to calculate crash rates and address safety issues.
- The Federal Highway Administration requires every state to submit an annual Highway Performance Monitoring System report containing traffic count data, physical characteristics, and other pertinent road data. This report is used in legislation, and to determine State funding of highway and road projects.

3. Why is a black tube stretched across the street?

The black rubber tube is part of a Department of Transportation's portable traffic collection device and is attached to a traffic counter. For 48 hours, the portable traffic collection device will count the amount of traffic that crosses the rubber tube.

4. Why are traffic counts conducted?

The state and federal government require traffic counts on various streets and roads in the state so they can determine various other pieces of information, including:

- Pollution in the environment
- Annual vehicle miles traveled, which helps to determine if a certain road might require asphalt resurfacing or replacement
- Number of vehicles on the road in a 48-hour period
- Peak travel hours in a given area
- Vehicle movement
- Assisting with budgeted funding for road repair or replacement
- Determining if a road needs to be widened to accommodate more traffic
- Determining if a traffic light is required, due to volume increases in area

5. On which streets are traffic counts conducted?

Streets are prioritized and scheduled for traffic counts according to road type (interstate, State Route, or local road). Depending on the street, traffic is counted:

- Every year
- Every three years
- Based on events (i.e. schools and colleges) in session

6. How are traffic counts conducted?

Traffic counts are collected by permanent Automatic Traffic Recorders and portable traffic collection devices.

- The permanent Automatic Traffic Recorders are installed under the surface of the roadway. These sites count traffic 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, and 365 days a year. The data from these sites is downloaded daily.
- The portable traffic collection devices are set up on top of the roadway. These sites count traffic for a 48-hour period. Every effort is made to collect the traffic counts during typical travel conditions and not on holidays or weekends.