

What are Alabama's top transportation improvement needs?



Michael Seale, Reporter
Birmingham Business Journal

Representatives from TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based transportation research organization, presented to the Birmingham Business Alliance the results of a study that identifies the top 50 highway projects to support economic growth in Alabama.

The needed projects in the TRIP report would require an investment of \$4.6 billion to complete. The needed projects include 10 widening projects on 63 miles of Alabama's interstate system. Based on forecast traffic growth, approximately 630 miles of Alabama's Interstate Highway System are currently or will become congested and will need additional capacity to accommodate economic growth in the state.



Representatives from TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based transportation research organization, presented to the Birmingham Business Alliance the results of a study that identifies the top 50 highway projects to support economic growth in Alabama

Among the critical projects are adding lanes to a portion of I-65 in Shelby County; capacity improvements to portions of I-59 in Birmingham; adding lanes to a portion of I-65 in Birmingham; widening SR 119 from I-65 to US 280 in Birmingham; and widening US 411 in Birmingham among others.

"Birmingham serves as a crucial transportation hub in the Southeast, therefore we need to enhance our infrastructure in order to be competitive and protect our future in economic development," said [Brian](#)

[Hilson](#), president and CEO of the Birmingham Business Alliance. "The TRIP report outlines road projects that will spark economic growth and ensure public safety."

According to the TRIP report, 16 percent of Alabama's major urban roads are in poor condition. Nine percent of bridges are structurally deficient, meaning they have significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. An additional 13 percent of the state's bridges are functionally obsolete. These bridges no longer meet modern design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment.

Alabama's overall traffic fatality rate of 1.31 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2013 is significantly higher than the national average of 1.09. The fatality rate on Alabama's rural non-interstate roads was 2.11 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2013, approximately two-and-a-half times the 0.83 fatality rate on all other roads and highways in the state.

The report suggests that enhancing critical segments of Alabama's transportation system will boost the state's economy in the short-term by creating jobs in construction and related fields. In the long-term these improvements will enhance economic competitiveness and improve quality of life for the state's residents and visitors by reducing travel delays and transportation costs, improving access and mobility, improving safety, and stimulating sustained job growth.

"Investing in Alabama's transportation system and addressing these challenges by improving the condition and efficiency of the state's roads and bridges will be an effective step in boosting the state's economy, enhancing quality of life and making Alabama an attractive place to live, work and visit," said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP.

Michael Seale covers the banking, finance and legal beats for the Birmingham Business Journal