

Alabama in Need of Road Repairs to Spur Economic Development



By [Esther Ciammachilli](#)



A [report](#) out this week from a Washington think tank outlines the top transportation maintenance projects it says are needed to improve economic growth in Alabama.

The [report](#) from TRIP, a transportation research group, finds it would take \$4.6 billion to make those improvements to state roads.

TRIP is a Washington transportation think tank. They released a report this week outlining the top road maintenance projects in Alabama that are needed to spur economic development.

According to the report, vehicle travel in Alabama has increased more than 54 percent since 1990. In just the last year that number is up 3.4 percent.

“That’s a positive sign,” says Rocky Moretti, director of research and policy for TRIP. “It reflects economic activity. It reflects people’s ability to be more mobile and take advantage of their ability to get places.”

More drivers means more wear and tear on roads and more traffic, Moretti says.

Of the top 20 projects, seven are in the Birmingham area, according to the report. The most urgent include widening Interstate 65 through portions of Birmingham and Shelby County. But there is also great need for road improvement in rural areas.

“We have a relatively nice and well maintained airport, but if you went out the road to that airport, you would not want to get on a plane if you thought it was maintained like the road,” says Don Mitchell, executive director of the Blount County Economic Development Council.

It’s hard to attract businesses to Blount County if the roads around the airport look as if four-wheel drive is needed to traverse them, Mitchell says.

Transportation improvements boost Alabama’s economy in the short-term by creating jobs and in the long-term by making the state more economically competitive, TRIP says.