

Many municipalities lack the funds to complete suggested road improvement projects from TRIP



By Alan Collins

JEFFERSON COUNTY, AL (WBRC) - Alabama needs to invest more dollars into roads and bridges according to TRIP, a Washington, DC research group.

TRIP released a report Thursday that included [50 Alabama projects](#) that could improve not only your commute but decrease vehicle collisions and grow business in the state.

The top of the list is I-65 from Hoover to the exit 252. The report by TRIP took information from ALDOT and then did its own analysis. Highway 59 from 1st Avenue North to Chalkville Road would improve with additional lanes, according to TRIP.

TRIP said Alabama is not investing enough in improving roadways and that is creating a problem with more people traveling by vehicles and the number of traffic fatalities we see in the state.

"We saw in 2015 travel increasing at a significant rate in the state. The growth issues are quite compelling in Alabama and in terms of traffic safety much higher than the national average. So that is a critical factor," Rocky Moretti with TRIP said.

The cost for fixing all 50 projects across Alabama is an estimated \$4.6 billion. Moretti said TRIP is not telling the state or local government where to find that money, just that it's work that needs to be done if road safety and economic growth are important to Alabama.

However, places like Jefferson County are facing money issues to do more road work.

West Oxmoor Road is a county road that goes through Homewood. Travelers will tell you the road needs improvement and certainly paving would help. At this time for Jefferson County, paving roads is on an as-needed basis. The worst roads come first.

County commissioners had hoped to add more roads if the county got \$15 million dollars from the revamped sale tax but Jefferson County Judge Michael Graffeo struck it down as unconstitutional.

Now there is talk in Montgomery of raising a gas tax to fund road projects. But, Jefferson County Commissioner Joe Knight, who just returned from the state capital, said rural lawmakers are already talking about opposing the idea if a bill is ever introduced.

"Forty cents of the dollar comes back to my community. We don't have any say so where the other 60 cents goes. Some have even said we don't want our tax dollars going to the Northern Beltline in Jefferson County. That is a misperception I think," Knight said.

Again the gas tax proposal is still in discussion phase. Knight says commissioners are appealing the judge's ruling meanwhile they will pave and fix roads and bridges with their existing budget as best they can.