Report: NC needs to spend more to save drivers time, gas as Triangle grows

"In Raleigh, the average driver loses 31 hours each year stuck in traffic congestion, and cumulatively, the area's drivers waste over 9 billion gallons of fuel because of traffic congestion," according to TRIP spokeswoman Carolyn Bonifas Kelly.

TRIP found 44 percent of North Carolina's urban and major roads are in poor to mediocre condition.

"Many of the state's roads are simply deteriorated and congested," Kelly said.

Key findings of the TRIP report: Keeping North Carolina mobile

- Since 2000, the state's population has grown 26 percent; Population is projected to increase another 20 percent by 2035.
- Vehicle miles of travel (VMT) in North Carolina increased 29 percent from 2000 to 2016.
- Traffic crashes in North Carolina claimed the lives of 6,668 people between 2012 and 2016, an average of 1,334 fatalities per year.
- North Carolina's overall traffic fatality rate of 1.23 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is higher than the national average of 1.13.
- The traffic fatality rate on North Carolina's non-Interstate rural roads was more than four times higher than on all other roads and highways in the state in 2015.
- 18 percent of North Carolina's major locally and state-maintained urban roads and highways have pavements in poor condition.
- 10 percent of North Carolina's bridges are structurally deficient, meaning there is significant deterioration to the major components of the bridge.

The driving factor is growth. North Carolina is the fourth-fastest-growing state in the country.

North Carolina Chamber President Lew Ebert says investing in bridges and roads is vital to boosting the state's economy and keeping its competitive edge.

"It's not Austin or Atlanta, but we have congestion too," he said. "So, I think companies are busy thinking about congestion, traffic, things like completing (Interstate) 540."

The report suggests that North Carolina needs to invest more in roads and bridges to make sure the Triangle doesn't become another Atlanta or Houston.