

**STORMS POSSIBLE**

High: 87  
 Low: 72  
 40% chance  
 of rain



**Saturday:** T-storms, 88/72

**Sunday:** T-storms, 88/73

**Monday:** Sunny, 84/66

**Complete weather:** B10

# The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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## Report: Georgia needs more money for road construction

By [David Wickert](#) - The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



A new report says Georgia has made substantial progress in addressing a backlog of road construction and maintenance in recent years, but needs to spend hundreds of millions of dollars more to improve its aging infrastructure.

Georgia made substantial progress in addressing a backlog of needed road construction and maintenance projects, but should spend hundreds of millions of dollars more to improve its aging infrastructure, according to a report released Thursday.

TRIP – an advocacy group backed by various transportation, insurance and business organizations – says in its report that dozens of projects lack sufficient funding to proceed over the next few years.

The report stopped short of offering a specific funding proposal or calling on state lawmakers to provide more money for roads and bridges.

But Rocky Moretti, TRIP's director of research and policy, said more road funding is "absolutely crucial" as Georgia prepares to absorb another 2.5 million people in coming decades.

"A lot of those people are going to be coming to the Atlanta area," Moretti said. "The region needs to continue to improve its transportation system."

In recent years, Georgia lawmakers have taken some big steps to address the state's transportation needs.

Three years ago, the General Assembly passed [House Bill 170](#), which boosted funding for road construction by about \$900 million a year. This year, lawmakers approved a [new](#)

[regional transit initiative](#) that could pave the way for billions of dollars in transit construction across metro Atlanta in coming decades.

The TRIP report says the HB 170 funding has been a boon to construction, road maintenance and safety improvements on Georgia highways. Among the highlights:

- The legislation is expected to generate \$5.4 billion for transportation improvements through 2021.
- The additional funding will help pay for [11 major construction projects](#), including [express lanes](#) on I-285 and Ga. 400 and new I-20 interchanges at I-285 east and west of Atlanta.
- The state has accelerated bridge construction. From 2011 to 2015, the Georgia Department of Transportation repaired or replaced an average of 67 bridges a year. That's expected to increase to 232 bridges a year from 2016 to 2020.
- GDOT also has boosted road maintenance funding from \$229.3 million in 2015 to \$457.7 million this year.

But the TRIP report identified dozens of projects for which there is no funding, including the rebuilding of the I-20 interchange at Panola Road in DeKalb County (expected to cost \$26.7 million), the widening Ga. 92 from Nebo Road to Picketts Mill Place in Cobb and Paulding Counties (\$30.2 million), the rebuilding of the I-85 interchange at Senoia Road in Fulton County (\$35 million) and the widening Ga. 20 from Union Hill Road to Corners Parkway in Cherokee and Forsyth counties (\$183.9 million).

Without additional funding, these and other metro Atlanta projects won't proceed until at least 2022, the report found.

At Thursday's press conference, GDOT Commissioner Russell McMurry said Georgia has made "tremendous progress" on road work but also faces tremendous challenges – especially on maintaining state highways. "We don't want to lose ground," McMurry said. "We have to keep the state of good repair (of roads) front and center."