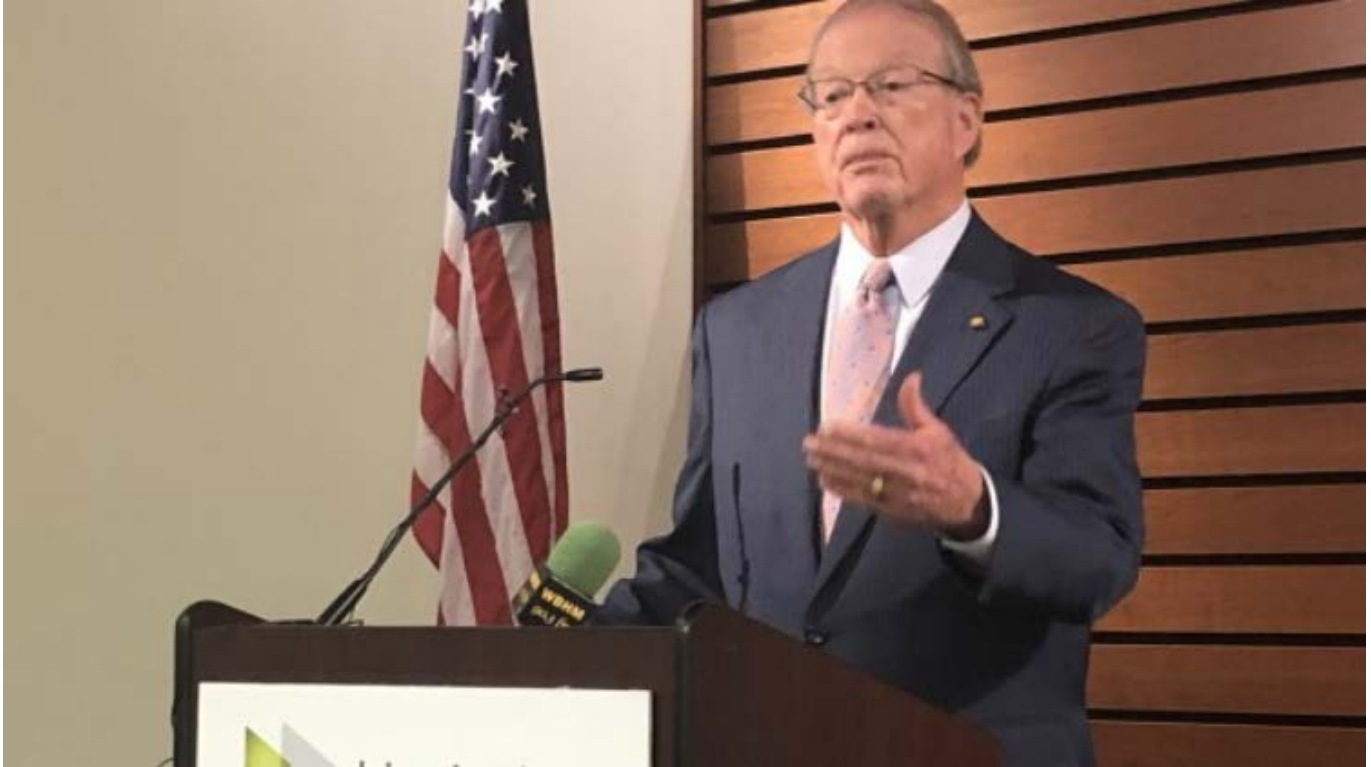


Report Highlights Alabama's Poor Roads as Officials Consider the 'T Word'



State Sen. Jabo Waggoner says he supports a gas tax increase for infrastructure improvements.

By Sherrel Wheeler Stewart, WBHM

The state's roads are in bad shape. Those potholes and accidents costs the average driver in the Birmingham area about \$1,800 a year, according to a [new report](#) from a Washington, D.C.-based transportation group.

The report comes as state lawmakers prepare to convene next week in Montgomery for the start of the legislative session. Gov. Kay Ivey is expected to make an announcement Tuesday on a plan to improve state infrastructure. She supports a gas tax increase for roads and bridges.

More than 40 percent of Birmingham's major roads and highways are in poor or mediocre condition according to TRIP, a national transportation nonprofit research group.

Some state officials say area roads could get much-needed repairs or be replaced with money from a proposed gas tax increase.

Rocky Moretti, an analyst with TRIP, says Alabama's vehicle fatality rate is higher than the national average, and the deteriorating roads are a problem.

"If the state had the ability to go ahead and fund a variety of safety improvements, those numbers would come down," Moretti says.

Building support for a tax increase in a Republican-controlled legislature can be a hurdle. Longtime state Sen. Jabo Waggoner, a Republican, supports the increase.

"It is the 'T' word, and you don't find Republicans every day that are going to vote for a tax," he says. "But listen, I've heard all the facts and figures and this is something I support."

Waggoner says the American Society of Civil Engineers recently gave Alabama roads a D-plus.

"You know, that's close to failing. We have school buses going over these bridges every day," he says.

The state's poor infrastructure also stands in the way of recruiting new business, Waggoner says. He predicts the gas tax will pass.

But the state GOP executive committee this past weekend said it will not support a tax increase without tax cuts in other areas.

The legislative session starts March 5.