

Nation's Freight Transportation Hampered by Inadequate Funding, New Report Says

By AllOnGeorgia - October 16, 2019



A new report released recently by TRIP, a national transportation nonprofit that researches, evaluates and distributes economic and technical data on surface transportation issues, indicates that the ability of the nation's freight transportation system to efficiently and safely accommodate the growing demand for freight movement could be hampered by inadequate transportation capacity, institutional barriers to enhancing the nation's freight facilities and a lack of adequate funding. TRIP's report found that freight delivery is expected to increase rapidly as a result of economic growth, increasing demand, growing international trade, changing business and retail models, and a significantly increased reliance on e-commerce by businesses and households.

The TRIP report, which highlights the need for federal action to modernize America's infrastructure, includes states with the highest value of freight by all modes of transportation in 2016 (Georgia ranks number 10 with approximately \$843 billion worth of freight), states with the largest annual projected increase in truck freight by value between 2016 and 2045 (Georgia ranks number 17 with a projected increase in inflation-adjusted dollars), and several other categories.

"Georgia DOT strategically works within our budgets and programs to develop projects that accommodate freight growth and logistics across the entire state transportation network," said Georgia DOT Commissioner Russell R. McMurry, P.E. "We look to leverage federal funds to address major mobility improvement projects that will help reduce congestion and significantly improve mobility for the growing freight and logistics industry."

McMurry also represents the department on the Georgia Commission on Freight and Logistics, which has met twice since its formation earlier this year. The commission, co-chaired by Sen. Brandon Beach and Rep. Kevin Tanner and comprised of elected officials, agency representatives and leaders from the private sector, will issue a report on its findings and recommendations to the Lt. Governor and Speaker of the House by December 31.

"Georgia's solid transportation and freight infrastructure is definitely a competitive advantage," said Tim Golden, chairman, State Transportation Board. "But we must continue to innovative ways to move freight more efficiently and reduce

highway congestion. The reward is economic growth and job creation."

One way is through Georgia's [Major Mobility Investment Program \(MMIP\)](#), which consists of major statewide improvement projects that will add capacity, improve mobility for motorists and freight, provide operational improvements and decrease travel times. Last year construction began on the first MMIP project – the widening of I-85 – which will improve personal and freight mobility in Barrow, Gwinnett and Jackson counties. Construction is also expected to start on two other major mobility projects in southeast Georgia – the widening of I-16 and the reconstruction of the I-16/I-95 interchange near Savannah.

Other projects are not far behind, including one that adds dedicated commercial vehicle lanes on I-75 northbound from Macon to McDonough. The I-75 project was advanced by a year in a recent update to the MMIP schedule due in part to increasing freight traffic in the corridor.

Georgia is well-positioned to address freight challenges with

- 15 interstates that directly connect to 31 percent of the lower 48 states
- 10 intermodal rail terminals
- 4,600 miles of active freight lines and plans for further development, including in rural Georgia
- Hartsfield Jackson-Atlanta International Airport, the nation's number one airport by tonnage
- Port of Savannah, the nation's largest and fastest-growing U.S. container port, and the Savannah Harbor Expansion Project (SHEP), which is deepening the Savannah Harbor by five feet to accommodate mega container ships
- Port of Brunswick, the nation's number two port for vehicle imports and exports
- Two inland ports and another in the works
- Last-mile road investments to the Port of Savannah
- and a program to improve structurally deficient bridges

The Georgia Department of Transportation continues to work strategically to tackle freight mobility challenges.

"Georgia has made significant investments to upgrade and maintain our transportation network, but our work is not complete. With Georgia's booming population, expected to move the state from eighth in population to fifth by 2040, a long-term federal commitment to infrastructure funding will enhance GDOT's ability to continue making strides in offering the smartest and most effective transportation solutions to keep people and freight moving," McMurry said.

TRIP's report, [America's Rolling Warehouses: Opportunities and Challenges with the Nation's Freight Delivery System](#), examines current and projected levels of freight movement in the U.S., large truck safety, and trends impacting freight movement. It concludes with a series of recommendations to improve the nation's freight transportation system.

"The future of our country's ability to compete in a 21st century economy by providing the safe movement of commerce is at stake, and this report helps bring a spotlight to the issue," said U.S. Chamber of Commerce Vice President for Transportation Infrastructure Ed Mortimer.

See the TRIP Report [here](#).

This is a press release from GDOT.