

New report reveals findings highlighting traffic concerns in SC

by: [Katie Augustine](#) | September 22, 2021



CHARLESTON, S.C. (WCB D) – A national non-profit, TRIP, is sharing the results of a study conducted that looks at transportation in South Carolina. From conditions to bridges and roads to traffic congestion data, the report, released on September 22nd, highlights the biggest issues facing South Carolina’s transportation system.

The report is called ‘Moving South Carolina Forward.’

Key Findings:

Transportation numbers:

Transportation numbers are back to, if not exceeding, pre-pandemic levels in South Carolina. TRIP reports that during the height of the pandemic, transportation numbers dropped

37% for that time of year. More recent data, from June 2021 shows numbers are 4% higher than June 2019.

Because of that, traffic congestion levels are also rising to pre-pandemic levels.

Traffic congestion:

TRIP estimates that the annual cost of traffic congestion in the state is \$2.1 billion in lost time and wasted fuel.

“In the Charleston area, the report finds that the average motorist is losing an additional \$1,165 annually due to traffic congestion as a result of spending 56 hours annually stuck in traffic and wasting 22 gallons of fuel annually,” said Moretti.

Location	Hours Lost to Congestion	Annual Cost Per Driver	Gallons of Fuel Wasted Per Driver
Charleston	56	\$1,165	22
Columbia	43	\$842	17
Florence	30	\$697	13
GSA Metro	26	\$615	12
Myrtle Beach	32	\$745	14

Traffic fatalities:

From 2015 to 2019, there were 5,018 traffic fatalities in S.C., that’s around 1,000 people per year.

“Clearly a number that’s far too high,” said Rocky Moretti, the Director of Policy and Research for TRIP. “In fact, the report points out that the traffic fatality rate in South Carolina is the highest in the nation.

Year	Total Fatalities	Pedestrian Fatalities	Bicycle Fatalities	Share Bike and Ped.
2015	977	123	16	14%
2016	1,015	144	25	17%
2017	988	155	17	17%
2018	1,037	165	23	18%
2019	1,001	160	26	19%
TOTAL	5,018	747	107	17%
AVERAGE	1,004	149	21	17%

That number increases on the state’s rural non-interstate roads where the traffic fatality rate is 3.5 times the amount as on other state roadways.

Road conditions:

The following data includes roads maintained by both state and local governments.

The report finds that 18% of major roads in South Carolina are in poor condition and another 25% are in mediocre condition.

Location	Poor	Mediocre	Fair	Good
Charleston	16%	28%	19%	37%
Columbia	11%	29%	19%	41%
Florence	22%	31%	19%	28%
GSA Metro	20%	28%	18%	34%
Myrtle Beach	24%	29%	13%	34%
South Carolina Statewide	18%	25%	18%	39%

In the Charleston area, 16% of major roads are in poor condition and 28% are in poor condition.

Bridge conditions:

8% of bridges in S.C. are currently rated structurally deficient or in poor condition. 48% are rated in fair condition.

“Those bridges need continued work to make sure they don’t slip into poor condition,” said Moretti.

Location	Poor/Structurally Deficient		Fair		Good		Total Bridges
	Number	Share	Number	Share	Number	Share	
Charleston	37	7%	306	61%	157	31%	500
Columbia	43	7%	234	40%	309	53%	586
Florence	4	1%	148	53%	126	45%	278
GSA Metro	129	7%	673	39%	926	54%	1,728
Myrtle Beach	20	4%	177	38%	263	57%	460
South Carolina Statewide	745	8%	4,574	48%	4,136	44%	9,455

In the Charleston area, 7% of bridges are in poor condition and in need of immediate repairs while 61% are rated in fair condition.

“Based on current funding, they actually anticipate the share of bridges that are in poor condition in the state, or restricted to carrying lighter weight vehicles, are actually going to increase by 81% by 2040 unless additional funding is identified,” said Moretti.

Act 40 Funding projects:

In 2017, the S.C. legislature [passed Act 40](#) which state leaders estimate will raise \$625 million annually by raising the state’s gasoline tax by 12 cents per gallon over six years, two cents per year, and imposing a variety of fee increases on vehicles.

“The funding from the Act 40 legislation in 2017 was a vital step in moving towards South Carolina’s transportation improvements,” said Moretti.

A number of projects have been implemented and/or expedited because of this extra funding including:

- Widening 140 miles of the state’s interstate system
- 4,000 miles of paving projects
- Repairs on 211 of the the 465 bridges that have been identified as most in need of significant repairs

Smaller changes have also been made to improve the flow of traffic and roadway safety in the state.

These include adding rumble strips, paving shoulders, providing roundabouts, adding left-turn lanes where appropriate, and improving median barriers. Act 40 has provided funding to utilize these enhancements on 635 miles of the states rural interstate system.

“The South Carolina Department of Transportation finds that it still has a \$403 million annual shortfall in the amount that’s needed to maintain the state’s roads and bridges, improve the safety of the system, and also to continue to address reliability and traffic congestion on the system,” said Rocky Moretti, the Director of Policy and Research for TRIP.

SCDOT released the following statement in response to the findings and presentation of the TRIP report.

“Today’s report from the National TRIP organization reinforces what South Carolinians are seeing on our roads each day – active road improvement projects and work zones in all 46 counties. Thanks to the investments by the General Assembly in the 2017 Roads Bill, SCDOT has been able to triple our construction work. The TRIP report states that those investments have allowed SCDOT to make significant improvements to our pavements and bridges, progress toward a state of good repair that was promised in 2017.

“The TRIP report also reinforces something else South Carolinians see every day on our highways: congestion, which continues to increase. South Carolina is the 10th fastest growing state in the nation, and our transportation network must keep pace. While the 2017 Roads Bill provided a significant funding boost, it still fell just short of providing sufficient funding to deal with the explosive growth in our state.

“Congestion needs to be addressed on our urban and rural interstates, such accelerating the widening of I-26 between Charleston and Columbia. In addition, congestion and economic development needs must be tackled within communities all across South Carolina. The issue of congestion, delay and unreliability of the transportation network impacts every South Carolinian on a daily basis. Whether it is getting to work or school on time or the delivery of packages and freight all across the state, it matters if the network is operating smoothly.

“State and federal lawmakers are currently considering new one-time funding for roads from the American Rescue Plan Act and sustained federal funding increases for transportation infrastructure. Taken together, they represent a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve more of South Carolina’s roads and bridges more quickly to – not only get us to a state of good repair but also to begin to deal with the rapid growth in our state and to guard our future economic prosperity.

“I respectfully urge Congress to act to pass the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment Act to fund road and bridge work and for our state policy makers to continue their commitment to investing in infrastructure here in South Carolina.”

Christy Hall, Secretary of Transportation

TRIP is a national transportation research non-profit based in Washington D.C.

To read the full report, [click here](#).

It’s based on data gathered from the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), The Federal Highway Administration, The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the Bureau of Transportation Statistics.