

## TRIP Grades South Carolina, State DOT Responds

SOUTH CAROLINA

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THE HIGHEST RATE IN THE NATION



1.73 VS 1.11  
(South Carolina) (Nationwide)

The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel

TRIP

September 27, 2021

Traffic crashes in South Carolina claimed the lives of 5,018 people from 2015 to 2019. South Carolina's overall traffic fatality rate of 1.73 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2019 is the highest in the U.S.

TRIP released its condition report for South Carolina, and while acknowledging the 2017 passage of a Roads Bill, said the state "faces challenges maintaining its aging system and reliably accommodating growing passenger and freight traffic to serve the needs of the state's growing economy."

The report, "Moving South Carolina Forward: Providing a Modern, Sustainable Transportation System in the Palmetto State," examines the condition, use, safety and efficiency of South Carolina's surface transportation system, the impact of the new spending (Act 40), and the challenges South Carolina faces to accommodate future transportation growth and sustain adequate funding.

According to the TRIP report, 18 percent of South Carolina's major locally and state-maintained roads are in poor condition and 25 percent are in mediocre condition. Eighteen percent of major roads in the state are in fair condition, and the remaining 39 percent are in good condition. Eight percent of South Carolina's locally and state-maintained bridges are rated poor/structurally deficient. A bridge is deemed poor/structurally deficient if there is significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components. Bridges that are poor/structurally deficient may be posted for lower weight limits or closed if their condition warrants such action. Since 2018, SCDOT has begun repairs on 211 of the 465 state-maintained bridges that were in poor condition or restricted to carrying lighter weight vehicles and prioritized by SCDOT for repair. Based on current funding, SCDOT anticipates that the number of state-maintained bridges that are either in poor condition or restricted to carrying lighter weight vehicles will increase by 81 percent by 2040, from 548 to 994.

"While the 2017 investment has provided a significant boost to the state's ability to address repairs and improvements, South Carolina will need to look for opportunities to increase transportation investment from all levels of government—federal, state, and local," said Dave Kearby, TRIP's executive director.

"Act 40 has been a game-changer for our state, and every county is benefitting from this investment," said Jennifer Patterson, executive director, SC Alliance to Fix Our Roads, in a prepared statement. "Since 2017, considerable progress has been made to improve our state-owned roads. South Carolina is in the midst of tackling a monumental task, and unfortunately, we cannot press pause while we play catch-up on these long-overdue repairs. While current funding levels will help get



us to a state of good repair, South Carolina is unprepared to financially deal with the immediate demands associated with population growth and continued economic development." Secretary of Transportation Christy Hall, issued a statement in response to the 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."

With South Carolina's population expected to increase to approximately 6.4 million people by 2040, and vehicle travel growing at the fifth highest rate in the nation from 2014 to 2019, the TRIP report finds that congestion is worsening, costing South Carolina drivers a total of \$2.1 billion each year in the form of lost time and wasted fuel—as much as of \$1,165 per driver in some urban areas. South Carolina drivers lose as many as 56 hours and waste up to 22 gallons of fuel annually as a result of congestion.

Hall also responded to the state's congestion problem.

"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 as 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."

The TRIP report includes a list of the worst highway freight bottlenecks in South Carolina. Regions with congested or poorly maintained roads may see businesses relocate to areas with a smoother, more efficient and more modern transportation system.

"Interstate 26 is the state's economic lifeline and truly the most SC-centric Interstate corridor in the state," said Rick Todd, president/CEO, SC Trucking Association, in a statement. "It has enabled the development and growth of our international, domestic, and tourism sectors like no other route. But when other modes fail, or I-26 bogs down, everything and everybody do too. To remain competitive, I-26, like all of our public infrastructure, must be improved, expanded, and modernized. The state and federal governments have dedicated funding for deepening South Carolina's shipping highway—the Charleston Harbor—they can do the same for I-26," said Rick Todd, President & CEO, SC Trucking Association.