



South Carolina faces multiple road challenges, report says

By [Melina Druga](#) | September 24, 2021 | [Featured](#)



South Carolina faces challenges maintaining its aging road system and reliably accommodating growing traffic, according to a report by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation research nonprofit.

The report, "Moving South Carolina Forward: Providing a Modern, Sustainable Transportation System in the Palmetto State," examines multiple factors. These include the impact of Act 40, the state legislature's 2017 Roads Bill; the importance of reauthorizing federal surface transportation programs; and the challenges the state faces accommodating future transportation growth and sustaining adequate funding.

From 2014 to 2019, vehicle travel in the state grew at the fifth highest rate in the country while the state's population is forecasted to increase to approximately 6.4 million people by 2040. The report forecasts these factors will make road congestion worse. A total of \$2.1 billion annually will be lost in terms of time and wasted fuel.

In some areas, drivers might waste up to 22 gallons of fuel and lose as many as 56 hours annually.

The movement of truck freight from or through South Carolina is expected to spike 65 percent by 2040. Currently, 465 million tons are shipped annually.

Statewide, 18 percent of major roads are in fair condition, 18 percent are in poor condition, 25 percent are in mediocre condition, and 39 percent are in good condition.

Statewide, 8 percent of bridges are rated poor or structurally deficient. Bridges in these conditions have significant deterioration of the bridge deck, supports or other major components and are either closed or lower weight limits are posted.

The South Carolina Department of Transportation forecasts the number of bridges that are either in poor condition or restricted to carrying lighter weight vehicles will increase by 81 percent by 2040.

From 2015 to 2019, auto accidents killed 5,018 people. The traffic fatality rate was 1.73 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2019, the highest in the country. On rural roads, this increased to 3.46 per 100 million vehicle miles of travel.

Following the release of the report, state Secretary of Transportation Christy Hall issued a statement.

"Thanks to the investments by the General Assembly in the 2017 Roads Bill, SCDOT has been able to triple our construction work," Hall said. "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."

Hall urged U.S. Congress to pass the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

"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," Hall said.