

# Early County News

YOUR HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1859

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Wednesday, November 07, 2007

FRONT PAGE

## Report critical of congestion, GDOT funding shortfalls



Georgia faces a \$51 billion shortfall through 2035 in funding for needed road, highway and bridge repairs and improvements, according to a new report released last week by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group.

Because of the funding shortfall, many projects that are needed to improve roadway conditions, enhance traffic safety, boost economic development opportunities and relieve traffic congestion will not go forward.

The report also found that increases in population and travel in the state have contributed to worsening traffic congestion, which threatens to reduce quality of life and impede economic development.

According to the report, entitled "Future Mobility in Georgia: Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," \$62 billion in highway transportation funding will be available in the state through 2035. However, the

Georgia Department of Transportation estimates \$113 billion is needed during that time to complete highway and bridge projects on the existing transportation plans of state, regional and local agencies.

Georgia's population increased by 45 percent, to 9.4 million people from 1990 to 2006 - the fifth highest level of population growth in the nation, and the largest growth east of the Mississippi.

Since 1990, travel on Georgia's highways has increased at a rate 10 times greater than new lane capacity was added.

The TRIP report identifies the 20 most congested sections of roadway in the Atlanta metro area. Topping the list is the 8.6-mile section of I-75 and I-85 from I-85 South to I-85 North.

The report notes that Georgia's 2006 long-range transportation plan found that "the inability to meet the state's ever growing transportation needs, and the congestion which will result from this failure, will in all likelihood choke off or greatly reduce forecasted levels of economic growth and degrade the quality of life of its residents."

Georgia faces a significant challenge, with nearly two-thirds of its bridges due for major repairs over the next 20 years. The TRIP report contains a list of the most structurally deficient bridges in the state.

The TRIP report also found that traffic fatalities on Georgia's roadways are occurring at a rate higher than the national average and traffic fatalities on the state's rural, non-Interstate routes are occurring at a rate significantly higher than on all other roadways in the state.

The TRIP report also notes GDOT estimates that there is also an additional \$23 billion funding shortfall for transit, aviation and ports in Georgia through the year 2035.

The TRIP report can be found online at [www.tripnet.org](http://www.tripnet.org).