

# KEY FACTS ABOUT NORTH CAROLINA'S INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM

The Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, which has been called the most ambitious public works project built since the Roman Empire, is the most critical link in North Carolina's transportation system.

- North Carolina has 1,046 miles of Interstate routes running the length of the state and connecting the state's major urban areas.
- North Carolina's Interstate system, which includes two percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 20 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Since funding of the Interstate system was approved in 1956, vehicle miles of travel in North Carolina have increased by 517 percent, the state's population has increased by 96 percent from approximately 4.4 million to 8.5 million and the number of vehicles in North Carolina has increased by 313 percent.

The state's Interstate Highway System saves the average North Carolina resident \$2,131 per year -- \$18.2 billion statewide -- in reduced accident costs such as medical expenses and lost productivity, the value of saved time and fuel, and reduced apparel, food, housing and transportation costs.

- By reducing travel times, the Interstate system saves each North Carolina resident 56 hours of travel time annually – 477 million hours statewide.
- North Carolina's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 227 million gallons.
- Consumer costs have been significantly lowered by the Interstate Highway System. The cost of transporting goods has been reduced because the time it takes to make trips has been decreased.
- The following chart indicates the total annual savings per person and statewide of the Interstate system.

	Per Person	Statewide (millions)
<b>Safety</b>	<b>\$83</b>	<b>\$709</b>
<b>Time and Fuel</b>	<b>\$896</b>	<b>\$7,653</b>
<b>Reduced Consumer Costs</b>	<b>\$1,152</b>	<b>\$9,837</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,131</b>	<b>\$18,198</b>

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**Traffic levels on North Carolina's Interstate highways are increasing as travel growth continues without the addition of new lanes.**

- Between 1990 and 2004, vehicle travel on North Carolina's Interstates increased by 86 percent, while lane miles on the system increased by 21 percent.
- Between 1990 and 2004, the average annual amount of travel per Interstate-lane-mile in North Carolina increased by 53 percent.

**Travel on North Carolina's Interstate highways is safer than travel on all other roadways in the state. North Carolina's Interstates provide travelers with a network of highways with a variety of safety designs that greatly reduce the likelihood of serious accidents.**

- North Carolina's Interstate highways have saved approximately 5,600 lives in North Carolina since 1956. This estimate is based on assuming that, if there were no Interstates, traffic would be carried by other major roads in the state, which have higher traffic fatality rates.
- The features that make Interstates safer than non-Interstate routes include: a separation from other roads and rail lines, a minimum of four-lanes, gentler curves and often paved shoulders, median barriers and rumble strips to warn drivers when they are leaving the roadway.

**The Interstate system is the backbone of the North Carolina economy and has played a critical role in improving business productivity in the state.**

- Every year, \$294 billion in goods are shipped from sites in North Carolina and another \$257 billion in goods are shipped to sites in North Carolina, mostly by truck.
- Ninety percent of the goods shipped annually from sites in North Carolina are carried by trucks and another five percent are carried by courier services, which use trucks for part of the deliveries. Similarly, 83 percent of the goods shipped to sites in North Carolina are carried by trucks and another 10 percent are carried by courier services, which use trucks for part of their deliveries.

*Data from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the U.S. Census Bureau was compiled and analyzed by TRIP, a nonprofit transportation research group based in Washington, D.C. Information is the latest available.*

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