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## Group lists Va's top 50 transportation projects

**AP** Associated Press

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RICHMOND, Va. (AP) -- Virginia's economic growth is dependent on the state tackling a variety of highway, public transport and railway projects, a transportation research group said Tuesday.

In its report, the group TRIP highlighted 50 projects it says are necessary for Virginia's economy, which includes 36 projects to build, expand or modernize highways, six projects to improve public transit and eight projects to improve the state's rail system.

"Virginia can't get where it wants to go - in both a literal and an economic sense - without an efficient transportation system," Will Wilkins, executive director of the Washington, D.C., group, said in a news release. "It is critical that Virginia's transportation system is adequately funded at the local, state and federal level. Thousands of jobs and the state's economic well being are riding on it."

Construction estimates show that Virginia would need at least \$44.7 billion to finance the top 25 projects, most of which are in northern Virginia and Hampton Roads. The projects would improve economic development by reducing travel delays and transportation costs, and making Virginia an attractive place to live, visit and do business.

Whittington Clement, board chairman of the Virginia Chamber of Commerce and former Virginia transportation secretary, called the report a "blueprint" for the state's economic future.

The report comes one day after the state Senate endorsed Gov. Bob McDonnell's \$4 billion transportation financing plan to jump-start mothballed highway projects.

McDonnell's plan, which cleared the Democrat-controlled Senate on Monday and already had passed in the House, would be the first major infusion of cash into Virginia's aging and ailing transportation system since the 17 1/2 cents-per-gallon gasoline tax was enacted in 1986.

Topping the TRIP list is a \$2.4 billion project that would add two to four lanes in multiple sections of the Interstate 95 corridor between Washington and Richmond. Another \$2.4 billion project to construct four additional lanes as part of the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel expansion.

Projects were ranked based on a variety of criteria, such as long- and short-term economic benefits, job creation and economic competitiveness, as well as the improvements levels for safety, access and mobility, the group said.

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Online:

TRIP: <http://www.tripnet.org/>