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**DEFICIENT ROADWAYS COST EACH WILMINGTON DRIVER MORE THAN \$1,350 ANNUALLY, A TOTAL OF \$6.5 BILLION STATEWIDE. COSTS WILL RISE AND TRANSPORTATION WOES WILL WORSEN WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT FUNDING BOOST**

*Eds.: The report includes regional pavement condition, congestion and highway safety data, and cost breakdowns for Asheville, Charlotte, the Piedmont Triad, Raleigh-Durham and Wilmington.*

**Wilmington, NC** – Roads and bridges that are deficient, congested or lack desirable safety features cost North Carolina motorists a total of \$6.5 billion statewide annually – more than \$1,350 per driver in the Wilmington area - due to higher vehicle operating costs, traffic crashes and congestion-related delays. Increased investment in transportation improvements at the local, state and federal levels could relieve traffic congestion, improve road and bridge conditions, boost safety, and support long-term economic growth in North Carolina, according to a new report released today by [TRIP](#), a Washington, DC based national transportation organization. The report is being released in conjunction with the [North Carolina Chamber Foundation](#).

The TRIP report, “[North Carolina Transportation by the Numbers: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility](#),” finds that throughout North Carolina, 11 percent of major roads and highways are in poor condition. Nearly one-third of North Carolina bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. The state’s major urban roads are becoming increasingly congested, with drivers wasting significant amounts of time and fuel each year. And North Carolina’s rural non-interstate traffic fatality rate is nearly four times higher than the fatality rate on all other roads in the state.

Driving on deficient roads costs each Wilmington driver \$1,353 per year in the form of extra vehicle operating costs (VOC) as a result of driving on roads in need of repair, lost time and fuel due to congestion-related delays, and the cost of traffic crashes in which roadway features likely were a contributing factor. The TRIP report calculated the cost to motorists of insufficient roads in North Carolina’s largest urban areas: Asheville, Charlotte, Piedmont Triad (including Greensboro, High Point and Winston-Salem), Raleigh-Durham and Wilmington. A breakdown of the costs per motorist in each area along with a statewide total is below.

<b>Location</b>	<b>VOC</b>	<b>Congestion</b>	<b>Safety</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Asheville	\$ 251	\$ 380	\$ 318	\$ 949
Charlotte	\$ 378	\$ 898	\$ 237	\$ 1,513
Raleigh-Durham	\$ 268	\$ 502	\$ 235	\$ 1,005
The Triad	\$ 315	\$ 465	\$ 289	\$ 1,069
Wilmington	\$ 461	\$ 360	\$ 532	\$ 1,353
<b>North Carolina - Statewide Total</b>	<b>\$1.8 Billion</b>	<b>\$2 Billion</b>	<b>\$2.7 Billion</b>	<b>\$6.5 Billion</b>

The TRIP report finds that a total of 48 percent of major roads in the Wilmington urban area are in either poor or mediocre condition, costing the average Wilmington motorist an additional \$461 each year in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. Traffic congestion in the area is worsening, causing 18 annual hours of delay for the average Wilmington motorist and costing each driver \$360 annually in lost time and wasted fuel.

“As North Carolina’s population increases, we must invest in the future and continue to grow our economy – sufficient transportation infrastructure is key. It’s impossible to argue against the critical importance of transportation not only to businesses, but to the everyday quality of life and the safety of our families,” said Jake Cashion, North Carolina Chamber director of government affairs and TRIP board member. “The statewide business community, especially industries like manufacturing and logistics, rely on a strong transportation network and supply chain to move their products efficiently in and out of the state marketplace. This report underscores the critical nature of meeting the state’s need for safe and efficient mobility, as additional demands are placed on the current transportation system.”

A total of 30 percent of North Carolina’s bridges show significant deterioration or do not meet modern design standards. Twelve percent of North Carolina’s bridges are structurally deficient, with significant deterioration to the bridge deck, supports or other major components. An additional 18 percent of the state’s bridges are functionally obsolete, which means they no longer meet modern design standards, often because of narrow lanes, inadequate clearances or poor alignment.

“It is important that we invest in our transportation system in order to maintain our region’s competitive edge. Improving our roads, bridges and transit system will provide economic benefits and an improved quality of life,” said Danny McComas, president of MCO Transport, Inc. and chairman of the North Carolina State Ports Authority.

Traffic crashes in North Carolina claimed the lives of 6,585 people between 2008 and 2012. North Carolina’s traffic fatality rate of 1.23 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is higher than the national average of 1.13. The traffic fatality rate on North Carolina’s non-Interstate rural roads was 2.44 traffic fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel, nearly four times higher than the 0.64 traffic fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel on all other roads and highways in the state.

The efficiency of North Carolina’s transportation system, particularly its highways, is critical to the health of the state’s economy. A [2007 analysis by the Federal Highway Administration](#) found that every \$1 billion invested in highway construction would support approximately 27,800 jobs.

“With regards to the trucking industry, the importance of continued maintenance on our highways has a huge impact not only on my business, but also the safety of our residents,” said Anne Uthlaut, terminal manager with Bridge Terminal Transport. “When my drivers have a tire blowout on the highway due to the poor conditions of the road, often we end up absorbing the entire cost of a new tire, which can be upwards of \$400 in many cases. In addition, when that tire blows out, there can be debris that flies up and hits a car, causing a huge safety concern for anyone driving nearby.”

The Federal surface transportation program is a critical source of funding in North Carolina. But a lack of adequate funding of the federal program may result in a significant cut in federal funding for the state's roads, highways and bridges. In fact, the impact of inadequate federal surface transportation revenues could be felt as early as summer of 2014, when the balance in the Highway Account of the federal Highway Trust Fund is expected to drop below \$1 billion, which will trigger delays in the federal reimbursement to North Carolina and other states for road, highway and bridge projects, which would likely result in states delaying or postponing numerous projects. And if a lack of adequate revenue into the Federal Highway Trust Fund is not addressed by Congress, funding for highway and transit improvements in North Carolina could be cut by \$1 billion for the federal fiscal year beginning October 1, 2014.

“These conditions are only going to get worse if greater funding is not made available at the state and federal levels,” said Will Wilkins, TRIP’s executive director. “Unless Congress acts this year to adequately fund the Federal Highway Trust Fund, North Carolina is going to see its federal funding decrease dramatically starting this summer. This will result in fewer road repair projects, loss of jobs and a burden on the state’s economy.”