

TRIP identifies Georgia's choke points

New report reveals the economic turmoil behind the congested roads

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Multiple segments of I-75, I-85, I-295 and portions of the MARTA and AMTRAK systems in Atlanta top the list of the 50 worst transportation chokepoints in Georgia, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based national transportation research organization.

TRIP's report, "Georgia's Transportation Chokepoints: The Top 50 Chokepoints and Remedies for Relief," ranks the urban interchanges, highway segments, bus and rail transit routes and sections of rural highways that provide inadequate mobility. These transportation chokepoints impede local, regional or interstate travel, diminish the quality of life of residents and visitors, reduce economic competitiveness and stifle economic growth and recovery by hampering commuting, commerce and other travel. In addition to identifying the chokepoints, the report also provides potential improvements for each segment that would ease the burden on travelers and allow for improved mobility.

According to the TRIP report, the worst transportation chokepoint in Georgia is the I-75/I-85/Downtown Connector in Fulton County. This 8.2-mile section from the I-75/I-85 merge at the Airport Connector to the Brookwood Interchange carries 286,000 travelers per day and has the longest duration of congestion in the Atlanta metro area, costing rush hour commuters 47 additional hours of delay each year. Potential improvements to this chokepoint include converting existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to high-occupancy toll (HOT) lanes and diverting some traffic to other nearby roads.

"The TRIP report illustrates and further validates the need to pass supplemental funding legislation to address Georgia's transportation shortfall," said Mike Kenn, president of Georgians for Better Transportation.

As part of reversing its recent increases in unemployment and facilitating long-term economic growth, Georgia will need to address its numerous surface transportation chokepoints. Enhancing critical segments of Georgia's surface transportation system will boost the state's economy in the short term by creating jobs in construction and related fields. In the long term, these improvements will enhance economic competitiveness by improving access and mobility, which will stimulate sustained job growth, improving the quality of life for all Georgians.

Sustaining Georgia's long-term economic growth and maintaining the state's high quality of life will require increased investment in expanding the capacity of the state's surface transportation system, which will enhance business productivity and support short- and long-term job creation in the state. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has recommended spending \$65 billion to expand the capacity of the state's highway and transit systems to improve personal and commercial mobility. According to GDOT, an investment of \$65 billion in expanding the capacity of Georgia's highway and transit systems would result in the creation of 425,000 new jobs in the state over the next 20 years (including 250,000 in the Atlanta area) and the creation of \$480 billion in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in Georgia over the next 30 years (including \$170 billion in the Atlanta area).

Source: TRIP April 19, 2010