SITE-K CONSTRUCTION ZONE

DAILY DIRT
BREAKING NEWS & UPDATES FROM THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Georgia's 50 Worst Highway And Transit Chokepoints Identified

Published on **April 19, 2010** in **Daily Dirt and Dixie Contractor.**

TRIP
a national transportation research group

Chokepoints Lengthen Commutes, Stifle Economic Development And Reduce Quality Of Life In Atlanta And Throughout The State

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, DC 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.

Included in the ten worst Georgia chokepoints are the following segments of roads, highway and transit: I-75 from I-285 to Wade Green Road NW in Cobb County, I-85 from I-285 to SR 316 in DeKalb and Gwinnett Counties, I-285 from Paces Ferry Road to SR 400 in Cobb and Fulton Counties, I-285 from SR 400 to I-85 in Fulton and DeKalb Counties, I-285 from I-85 to US 78 in Fulton and DeKalb Counties, the Atlanta AMTRAK station, SR 400 from I-285 to Holcomb Bridge Road in Fulton County, MARTA Blue and Green Trunk Line, and I-285 from US 78 to I-20 in DeKalb County. A full list of the 50 worst chokepoints throughout the state is included in the appendix of the report.

"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).

"In addition to causing a headache for motorists, Georgia's transportation chokepoints stifle economic development and growth at a time when it is desperately needed. Georgia can't get where it wants to go – in both a literal and an economic sense – without an efficient transportation system" said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "It is critical that Georgia's transportation system is adequately funded at the local, state and federal level. Thousands of jobs and the state's economy are riding on it."

Georgia's Transportation Chokepoints

The Top 50 Chokepoints and Remedies for Relief

April 2010

Executive Summary

The ease with which residents, visitors and businesses can access desired destinations has a significant impact on a region's economic well-being and quality of life. A reasonable level of mobility provides individuals and organizations with tremendous freedom in accessing activities and opportunities, and choosing where to live, work, play and shop.

When a transportation facility, including a roadway segment, an interchange, or a transit route, cannot meet the demand for reliable mobility, it chokes local, regional or interstate travel, diminishes the quality of life of residents and visitors and reduces business productivity.

Continued growth in Georgia's population and travel is straining the capacity of the state's surface transportation system and impeding the quality of life in the state by hampering commuting, commerce and other travel.

In this report, TRIP looks at the impact of growth on the state's surface transportation system and the potential consequences if Georgia is unable to make needed improvements to provide a level of mobility adequate to meet the needs of a fast-growing state.

As part of 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.

This report identifies Georgia's 50 worst surface transportation chokepoints. Addressing these chokepoints will be critical to maintaining the state's high quality of life by improving mobility, reducing delays, enhancing environmental quality and supporting economic growth. The major findings of the report are:

Georgia's quality of life and economic productivity are being reduced by chokepoints in the state's surface transportation system. These chokepoints include major roads, highways and public transit routes that impede routine travel, commuting or commerce, or that place limits on economic development opportunities because of out-dated design or lack of adequate capacity.

- Georgia's top 50 surface transportation chokepoints include urban interchanges and highway segments, public transit routes and sections of rural highways that are unable to meet a region's need for adequate mobility. This constraint on reliable transportation harms business productivity and reduces access to housing, employment, recreation, entertainment and social functions.
- **A list of Georgia's top 25 surface transportation chokepoints is included in the report. Additional information on the state's top 50 surface transportation chokepoints, including needed improvements, can be found in the appendix.**
- **Georgia's top 50 surface transportation chokepoints include 36 segments of roads or highways and 14 transit routes or facilities that either lack adequate capacity to meet regional mobility needs or to efficiently accommodate freight delivery in a corridor.**
- **TRIP ranked Georgia's top 50 surface transportation chokepoints by assigning each chokepoint an overall score based on the following factors: volume of daily travel or ridership; the severity of the congestion or crowding; the importance of the route or facility to local, regional and interstate travel; whether a route or facility provided mobility to non-motorists; and the impact of the chokepoint on overall quality of life in a region, including environmental and economic impact.**

The top ten surface transportation chokepoints in Georgia:

1. 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 hours each year. This critical corridor serves as a link through the Atlanta core and carries two interstates that provide critical personal and commercial mobility. Potential improvements include converting existing HOV lanes to managed lanes and diverting some traffic to other nearby roads.

2. I-75 from I-285 to Wade Green Road NW in Cobb County. This 10.5 mile section of I-75 is heavily congested, impeding access to downtown Atlanta and the I-285 loop and costing rush hour travelers an extra 52 hours of delay each year. The facility could be improved by constructing managed lanes and increasing capacity on US-41/Cobb Parkway to handle diverted traffic.

3. I-85 from I-285 to SR 316 in DeKalb and Gwinnett counties. This 10.7 mile section of I-85 carries 242,000 travelers per day and is a major commuting route serving northeast metro Atlanta as well as significant commercial travel. Congestion on this route impedes access between Atlanta, Gwinnett County and Athens and increases delay for through travel. Commuters using this route during rush hour are delayed an extra 50 hours per year due to congestion. Needed improvements include the conversion of HOV lanes to HOT lanes or managed lanes, the operation of Bus Rapid Transit, and building a parallel corridor on GA 13/Buford Highway to absorb some of the current traffic.

4. I-285 from Paces Ferry Road to SR 400 in Cobb and Fulton counties. Congestion on this 9.4 mile segment impedes access through and between the Atlanta metro area and costs rush hour commuters an extra 67 hours per year in delays. The western part of the Atlanta interstate loop serves north-south travel and provides personal and commercial mobility. The construction of managed lanes would help ease congestion and improve mobility.

5. I-285 from SR 400 to I-85 in Fulton and DeKalb counties. Because of congestion on this 6.4 mile segment, rush hour travelers are delayed an extra 57 hours per year. The northeast portion of the Atlanta Interstate serves east-west travel and provides personal and commercial mobility. Needed improvements include the construction of managed lanes and increasing interchange capacity.

6. I-285 from I-85 to US 78 in Fulton and DeKalb counties. Serving 214,000 travelers each day, this 5.6 mile segment costs rush hour drivers 40 hours of delay annually. It serves north-south interstate travel and provides personal and commercial mobility. The addition of managed lanes would ease congestion and provide improved access.

7. Atlanta AMTRAK station. Located at the corner of Deering Road and Peachtree Street, this main AMTRAK station in the Atlanta region is outdated. The station no longer meets Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and causes delays on the entire Norfolk Southern mainline when a train loads and unloads passengers. Constructing an alternate facility would improve freight and passenger rail flow through Atlanta and along the entire corridor.

8. SR 400 from I-285 to Holcomb Bridge Road in Fulton County. Congestion on this eight mile section impedes access between north Fulton County and Atlanta. Annually, rush hour commuters on this route spend an extra 69 hours traveling due to congestion. The construction of collector distributor roads and managed lanes would ease congestion and enhance mobility on this major commuter route to north metro Atlanta.

9. MARTA Blue/Green Trunk Line. This line includes approximately five miles of shared rail line between Ashby Station and Edgewood/Chandler Park Station. It serves the Georgia Dome, state office complex, municipal and county office complexes, Atlanta University Center, and various neighborhoods. It is also the connecting point to the north-south axis of the Red/Gold line. While Blue line trains can be up to eight cars, the limited platform length at the Bankhead station on the Green line only accommodates 2-car trains, limiting trains on the Green line to 2-cars. Increasing the Bankhead platform to accommodate 8-car trains will increase trunk capacity to 9,216 persons per hour from 5,750.

10. I-285 from US 78 to I-20 in DeKalb County. Rush hour commuters using this 7.8 mile section spend an extra 25 travel hours per year due to congestion. This southeast part of the Atlanta Interstate loop serves north-south travel and functions as a major corridor for personal and commercial travel. The construction of managed lanes would ease congestion.

Rapid increases in population, vehicle travel and economic activity in Georgia have outpaced improvements to the state's roadway and transit system, resulting in increased congestion. Reduced transportation reliability in the state may become an impediment to economic development and may reduce tourism.

- **Between 1990 and 2008, vehicle travel in Georgia increased by 48 percent, from approximately 73 billion miles of travel to approximately 108 billion miles.**
- **Between 1990 and 2010, Georgia's population increased by 56 percent, from approximately 6.5 to 10.1 million.**
- **Population gains are expected to continue at a significant rate in Georgia, increasing by another 4.6 million people to 14.7 million people in 2030, a 46 percent increase from 2010.**
- **Despite the nation's recent economic downturn, Georgia has experienced significant economic growth since 1990. From 1990 to 2008, Georgia's gross domestic product (GDP), increased by 73 percent, when adjusted for inflation. Georgia's rate of economic growth from 1990 to 2008 was the twelfth highest in the U.S. and higher than the national average of 52 percent.**
- **A report from the Reason Foundation found that traffic congestion in the Atlanta area is expected to more than double by 2030 unless the region's transportation system is improved.**
- **Trips in the Atlanta area take 35 percent longer to complete during rush hours, as compared to non-peak periods of the day. By 2030, the report found that unless major steps are taken to relieve traffic congestion in the Atlanta urban area, the average rush hour trip will take 85 percent longer to complete than during non-peak hours.**

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.

- **A recent, comprehensive evaluation of the state's mobility needs by the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) recommended spending $65 billion to expand the capacity of the state's highway and transit systems to improve personal and commercial mobility.**
- **GDOT found that 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).**
- **Georgia's unemployment rate more than doubled from 5.2 percent in February 2008 to 10.5 percent in February 2010.**
- **Making needed improvements to the state's transportation system can help boost Georgia'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, including approximately 9,500 in the construction sector, approximately 4,300 jobs in industries supporting the construction sector, and approximately 14,000 other jobs induced in non-construction related sectors of the economy.**
- Surface transportation projects that improve the efficiency, condition or safety of a highway or transit route provide significant economic benefits by reducing transportation delays and costs associated with a deficient transportation system. The benefits of transportation improvements include the following:

1. Improved business competitiveness because of reduced production and distribution costs as a result of increased travel speeds and fewer mobility barriers.
2. Improvements in household welfare as a result of better access to higher-paying jobs, a wider selection of competitively priced consumer goods, additional housing and healthcare options, and improved mobility for residents without access to private vehicles.
3. Gains in local, regional and state economies as a result of improved regional economic competitiveness, which stimulates population and job growth.
4. Increased leisure/tourism and business travel as a result of enhanced reliability of a region's transportation system.
5. A decrease in economic losses from traffic congestion in the form of delays and wasted fuel.

In order to accommodate the continued growth in vehicle travel, without experiencing a significant increase in traffic congestion, Georgia will need to both expand the capacity of its roadway and transit systems and make further improvements in the efficiency of its existing transportation system. These plans should continue to include and enhance:

- **Effectively increasing the transportation system through expanded road and highway capacity, improved freight movement corridors, improved public transit system and enhanced sidewalks and bike paths.**
- **Improving traffic flow and system efficiency through better traffic signalization, ramp metering, faster incident response times and driver information systems.**
- **Implementing programs to reduce the number of peak-hour vehicle trips, including telecommuting, flextime and ridesharing programs.**

The outcome of ongoing Congressional deliberations over a future federal surface transportation program will have a significant impact on Georgia's ability to relieve many of its surface transportation chokepoints.

- **Federal spending levels for highways and public transit in Georgia are based on the current federal surface transportation program, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which was approved by Congress in 2005. The SAFETEA-LU program expires on December 31, 2010.**
- **Congress is currently deliberating over a long-range federal surface transportation program to follow SAFETEA-LU. The level of funding and the provisions of a future federal surface transportation program will have a significant impact on Georgia's ability to address many of its surface transportation chokepoints.**

	County	Route/Facility	Description
1	Fulton	I-75 / I-85/ Downtown connector	8.2 mile section from I-75/I-85 Merge at Airport Connector to Brookwood Interchange
2	Cobb	I-75	10.5 mile section from I-285 to Wade Green Rd. NW
3	DeKalb, Gwinnett	I-85	10.7 mile section from I-285 to SR 316
4	Cobb, Fulton	I-285	9.4 mile section from Paces Ferry Rd to SR 400
5	Fulton, DeKalb	I-285	6.4 mile section from SR 400 to I-85
6	Fulton, DeKalb	I-285	5.6 mile section from I-85 North to US 78
7	Fulton	Atlanta AMTRAK Station	Corner of Deering Road and Peachtree Street in Atlanta
8	Fulton	SR 400	8 mile section from I-285 to Holcomb Bridge Road
9	Fulton / DeKalb	MARTA Blue / Green Trunk Line	Approximately five miles of shared rail line between Ashby Station and Edgewood / Candler Park Station
10	DeKalb	I-285	7.8 mile section from US 78 to I-20
11	Fulton	I-20	9.2 mile section from I-285 to Lee Road
12	Chatham	SR 204 / Abercorn St	4.4 mile section from SR 17/Ogeechee Rd. to Rio Rd.

13	Fulton	South Line	Central trunk line of Red and Gold line between Five Points Station and Lakewood / Ft. McPherson Station.
14	Clayton	Airport Station	Airport Station is a Heavy Rail Station that serves as the southern terminal for the MARTA Red and Gold lines
15	Clayton	I-75	10.7 mile section from I-285 to SR 155
16	Fulton	Central Atlanta Express Bus Corridor for CCT and GRTA routes	This is the central express bus corridor serving Downtown Atlanta primarily using Peachtree Street with portions of Park Place and Forsyth Street.
17	Fulton, Cobb	I-75	8.2 mile section from I-75/85/ Brookwood Interchange to I-285
18	DeKalb	I-20 East	7.4 mile section from I-285 to Evans Mill Road
19	Fulton	SR 400	9 mile section from Holcomb Bridge Road to SR 20
20	Muscogee	US Hwy 80	I-185
21	Bartow	SR 20	5.5 mile section from US 41/ SR 293 Intersection to I-75.
22	Fulton	Lindbergh Center Station / Canterberry Interlocking	Lindbergh Center is the Heavy Rail and bus station that serves as the northernmost station onMARTA Red and Gold Lines. Red and Gold lines separate at Canterberry Interlocking.
23	Bibb	SR 11/US 129/North Avenue	1.1 mile section from I-16 to SR 49/Shurling Drive
24	Chatham	I-516 /SR 21 interchange	Interchange with I-16
25	Fulton/ Gwinnett	SR 140/ Holcomb Bridge Rd/Jimmy Carter Blvd	10.6 mile section from SR 9/ Alpharetta St to I-85
26	Cobb/ Cherokee	I-575	8.1 mile section from I-75 to Sixes Road
27	Fulton, DeKalb	I-85	10.3 mile section from I-75/85 North/Brookwood Interchange to I-285
28	Fulton	Atlanta Intercity Bus Station	The current Atlanta Intercity Bus Station is a temporary facility serving Greyhound, Southeastern stages and other operators located at the corner of Brotherton street and Forsyth Street
29	Fulton	I-85	4.7 mile section from Jonesboro Road/ SR 138 to I-285
30	Fulton	I-85 South (Airport Connector)	4.5 mile section from I-285 to I-75
31	Clayton	Tara Blvd	2.7 mile section from S. Main St. to I-75
32	Muscogee	I-185	Interchanges with Manchester Expressway (US 27/SR 85)
33	Muscogee	I-185 interchange	Interchagne with BuenaVista Rd.
34	Fulton / Forsyth / Gwinnett	MARTA and GRTA	These express and local bus routes serve northern Fulton, Forsyth and NE Gwinnett counties

35	Fulton	SR 400	9.5 mile section from I-85 to I-285
36	Fulton	State Bridge Rd	3.8 mile section from SR 120 /Old Milton PKWY to SR 141/Medlock Bridge Road
37	Forsyth	SR 141/Peachtree PKWY/Bethelview Rd	8.2 mile section from McGinnis Ferry Road to Castleberry Road
38	Hall	SR 53/Dawsonvile Hwy	1.2 mile section from Sardis Rd. to Sidney Dr.
39	Fulton / DeKalb	Sidney Marcus Boulevard / MARTA 39	This bus route runs between Lindbergh Center Station and Doraville Station using Sidney Marcus Blvd, Buford Highway and Central Avenue.
40	Chatham	Chatham Area Transit Downtown Loop for CAT routes	All bus routes serving Downtown Savannah make the same downtown loop using W. Broughton St., Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, West Oglethorpe Ave and Abercorn Street.
41	Fulton	Haynes Bridge Rd/Main Street corridor	4 mile section from Old Alabama Rd to SR 120/ Old Milton Pkwy
42	Bibb	I-16	Interchange with I-75
43	Fulton	MARTA 2, 27, and 99	These bus routes serve the North Avenue Transit Station and are routed eastbound either on Ponce de Leon Avenue or North Avenue.
44	Cobb	Cumberland Transfer Center	The Cumberland Transfer Center is a transfer facility located on Cumberland Parkway between Cumberland Mall and the CSX Railroad tracks.
45	DeKalb	Cander Road Transfer Area for MARTA routes	Area of bus to bus transfers at Candler Road and Rainbow drive near South DeKalb Mall
46	Fulton	Camp Creek Parkway Transfer Area for MARTA routes	Area of bus to bus transfers a Camp Creek Market Place
47	Forsyth	SR 20	10-mile section from SR9/ Atlanta Rd to I-85
48	Fulton/Forsyth	McGinnis Ferry Road	8.7 mile section from Peachtree Industrial Boulevard to McFarland Pkwy
49	Muscogee	US Hwy 80 /Macon Road	9.1 mile section from US Hwy 80 /Macon Road to US 27 A
50	Richmond/Columbia	Wahington Rd (SR 104/SR 28)	1.7 mile section from I-20 to North Belair Rd./SR 383