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Wider I-81 among top state transport needs

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A Washington, D.C.-based transportation group ranked widening Interstate 81 as No. 8 on a list of 50 transportation projects needed to boost the state economy.

The non-profit group TRIP said adding two lanes to several sections of the highway could address several locations where crashes are common, and also ease commuter traffic strains in Harrisonburg, Roanoke and Winchester.

It estimated the cost at \$1.6 billion.

Top of TRIP's list was widening I-95 between Washington and Richmond, a \$2.4 billion project and another \$2.4 billion project to expand the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel between Norfolk and Hampton.

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 report comes a day after the state Senate endorsed Gov. Bob McDonnell's \$4 billion transportation financing plan for Virginia.