

The Traveler

October 2007

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A Message from the Chairman

By Bean Mills

The 2007 legislative session wrapped up earlier this year with disappointing results for those of us concerned about the future of our state’s transportation system. The legislature did not make any progress in meeting our state’s growing transportation needs and left funding essentially flat.

Despite efforts of transportation advocates, the *NC Go!* call for increasing the highway use fee did not move forward. Also they failed to reach a consensus on the desperately needed “gap funding” for the North Carolina Turnpike Authority – funding that is required for the state’s first major toll projects. In fact, when the legislature chose to cap the variable rate of the gas tax it could be said we actually took a step backwards. This lack of action on the transportation front is a widely acknowledged problem that *NC Go!* has worked to hard highlight since the session adjourned.

In light of the legislature’s inaction, *NC Go!* has spent the last two months educating legislators and the media about the very serious transportation issues our state faces.

In September we drafted a resolution urging the Governor and legislators to call a special session for transportation and sign legislation that provides for a sufficient and sustainable funding resource to meet current, and address future, transportation needs throughout the state.

I hand delivered the attached *NC Go!* resolution and letters to Governor Easley, Senate President Pro Tem Marc Basnight and Speaker of the House Joe Hackney. We also sent the letter and resolution to major media outlets in the state. I received a response from Dan Gerlach, Governor Easley’s Senior Policy Advisor for Public Affairs, that acknowledged the Governor is working with legislative leaders and that there “needs to be a comprehensive and thorough look at transportation priorities.”

Since delivering the resolution, we have mailed a memo out to all legislators every two weeks concerning a different transportation issue. The issues covered thus far include: bridge sufficiency in North Carolina; the so called “perfect storm” of combining

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If you have an idea or article for the newsletter, please submit it via e-mail to ncgo@ncgo.org

construction costs, flat revenue, increased vehicle miles traveled and population growth; and, most dangerous intersections and roads. Each memo included easy-to-read supporting data.

We also sent each of the memos to major media outlets across our state to help ensure that transportation issues remain a priority in the news which has given us the chance to push our call for a special transportation study commission in the media.

In the coming weeks, we will mail additional memos to all legislators on congestion points in the state and the benefits of public transportation. We will also continue to inform the media about our communication with legislators.

I am happy to report that on October 29, 2007, Gov. Easley announced appointment of a special study committee – the 21st Century Transportation Committee. Included below is a copy of the *NC Go!* statement on the committee.

We have also included in this newsletter all of the materials so you can review what we have been distributing. If you have any questions about activities to date or those planned, please contact us at ncgo@ncgo.org.

Statement of Beau Mills, *NC Go!* Chair on Special Commission to Study Transportation Needs in North Carolina

October 29, 2007 - Today's announcement by State leaders of a special commission to study transportation in our state comes as welcome news to *NC Go!* Since the legislature adjourned earlier this year without addressing the growing transportation needs of the state, *NC Go!* has repeatedly urged the Governor and legislative leaders to move swiftly to appoint a special committee and convene a special session of the General Assembly.

Put simply, the time to act is now. Demand continues to increase rapidly and roadway congestion is a problem throughout the state. Most urban areas lack not only road capacity but need greater investment in bus, light rail or other transit options. Many rural areas lack adequate highways which impedes their economic development. Furthermore, transportation-related construction costs – for items like steel, concrete and asphalt – have jumped more than 75 percent in the past five years while funding has remained flat. Action is required because the problems are not going away.

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The diverse and respected members of the 21st Century Transportation Committee will have an opportunity to bring their visionary and innovative thinking together to identify how we manage and fund transportation in our state in the new century. Our population will grow by 50 percent by 2030, adding an additional 4 million people to our transportation system and their vehicles to our roads. Our economy requires an efficient and effective transportation system for a state that is transforming itself into a competitor in the global economy. New thinking will be required in considering how to raise the resources needed for a multimodal system that includes highways, bridges, rail, public transit and air – both for freight and people.

Much is at stake for this group, our legislature and our state as a whole. Our quality of life and safety is impacted greatly by our transportation system. Commutes are getting longer each day because of fast growing congestion. We lack available options for people in urban regions to avoid traffic. Increased options mean more road capacity **AND** transit solutions. No 21st century cities will succeed without robust public transportation systems.

North Carolina's economic climate is also at stake. For years we have been viewed as a top state for doing business – with a strong transportation system. If our state's highways, bridges, rails and ports cannot handle the demands of increased growth we will stop being a destination for new businesses and industries. Times have changed since we last adjusted our transportation program in 1989, and the time has come to find new ways to meet our needs.

The members of the Committee are all extraordinary people from a variety of backgrounds and expertise. *NC Go!* is hopeful that this study commission will work together to quickly come up with some innovative solutions. But unlike other recent transportation study commissions, this one must deliver results - the commission members, the General Assembly and leaders from across the state should fully engage in this issue and commit to following through with action. The public will have little patience for the job to be left incomplete, this time.

***NC Go!* Letter to Governor Michael Easley**

(Also delivered to Sen. Basnight and Rep. Hackney)

September 12, 2007

Governor Michael F. Easley
Office of the Governor
One East Edenton Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

Dear Governor Easley:

I am writing today on behalf of *NC Go!* to urge you to take immediate steps to address the transportation crisis in our state. The legislature took no action in the recent session on this critical issue. Elected leaders must establish a plan of action so we can meet our state's short- and long-term transportation needs.

NC Go! is a broad-based coalition committed to advocating for increased investment in our transportation system. *NC Go!* members include businesses, transportation advocates, chambers of commerce, transit agencies and individuals from around the state. On behalf of our more than 13,000 members and the more than 3.9 million employees, transit riders, citizens and drivers in North Carolina who our members serve, we are asking for your leadership in addressing the growing transportation needs of the citizens and businesses you represent.

Our transportation system is at the breaking point. Traffic is worsening and the quality of our roads and bridges are deteriorating – and the problems will only get worse over time. As our population increases, so does the number of personal and commercial vehicles on our roads and bridges, the number of riders using public transportation and the burden on all other forms of the multimodal system. Yet, we have not made any significant change in our priorities and funding for transportation. Additional demands placed on an already over-stressed system are resulting in decreased safety and increased congestion. These factors have a direct negative impact on our quality of life and the economy of our state.

Reports in recent months have been grim for transportation. The American Society of Civil Engineers gave North Carolina a “D” grade for its roads. AAA of the Carolinas reported that nearly one-in-three bridges are substandard. Compounding the problem is the high inflation rate for transportation construction materials – an increase of more than 75 percent since 2002.

The time has come for prompt action. A commission should be appointed as soon as possible. The commission should consider short-term needs which must be addressed immediately and identify broader long-term needs that demand attention in the near future. We must establish a strategy and action plan if we want to end the cycle of inadequate transportation investment. *NC Go!* hopes any recommendation from a special transportation commission will be dealt with either by a special legislative session, or at the latest, the start of the 2008 legislative session.

Included with this letter is a resolution from *NC Go!* and partnering organizations calling for immediate action to address the transportation funding problems facing our state. The undersigned organizations represent millions of citizens, employees, communities, businesses and public transportation users. Along with this resolution, other organizations such as the chambers of commerce in Charlotte, Winston-Salem and Wilson, as well as the American Council of Engineering Companies and the Professional Engineers of North Carolina have submitted their own resolutions or letters calling for immediate action. There is widespread support for our elected leaders to act now to address immediate transportation needs and seek long-term funding solutions. Our state’s future depends on definitive action now.

As you weigh the decision to appoint a special commission, please consider the impact of our highways, bridges, rails, ports and public transportation on the lives of North Carolinians and the businesses located here. North Carolina was regarded as the *Good Roads* State in years past. Now is the time to invest in transportation and regain that title.

Sincerely,

Beau Mills
NC Go! Chair

A Resolution in Support of Sufficient Funding to Meet North Carolina's Transportation Needs

September 12, 2007

WHEREAS, A comprehensive transportation system, inclusive of highways, rail, transit, ports and airports is essential to our state's economy as well as the preservation and enhancement of citizens' quality of life;

WHEREAS, Well-maintained highways and bridges are the arteries that enable commerce across the state and nation and improve the level of safety for roadway users;

WHEREAS, A comprehensive and efficient transportation system relieves congestion in urban areas, fosters economic development in underdeveloped areas and expedites the delivery of goods and services in all areas;

WHEREAS, North Carolina depends on a sound transportation infrastructure to encourage tourism, whose economic impact is more than \$14 billion spent annually by more than 60 millions visitors;

WHEREAS, The state's population is projected to increase by 50 percent by 2030, creating additional demands on transportation system that is already under capacity;

WHEREAS, The North Carolina Department of Transportation has acknowledged a \$65 billion shortfall between funding and needs over the next 25 years;

WHEREAS, Deteriorating highways, reduced transit options, overburdened ports and airports and congested roadways result from under investment;

WHEREAS, Those substandard conditions will have a long-lasting detrimental impact on our State's future economy and safety of the traveling public; and,

WHEREAS, The 2007 Regular Session of the NC General Assembly failed to include any new transportation funding in the state budget or through specific enabling legislation.

NOW, THEREFORE, let it be resolved that the undersigned organizations urge the Governor and the leadership of both the House and Senate to call a special session of the General Assembly to immediately address the shortfall in funding necessary to support and maintain a comprehensive multi-modal transportation system; and, that the General Assembly adopt and the Governor sign legislation providing for a sufficient and sustainable funding resource to meet current, and address future, transportation needs throughout the State.

NC Go!

**American Council of Engineering Companies of North
Carolina**

The Charlotte Chamber

North Carolina Economic Developers Association

The Highway 17 Association

North Carolina League of Municipalities

North Carolina Metropolitan Coalition

North Carolina Public Transportation Association

Professional Engineers of North Carolina

Regional Transportation Alliance

The Winston Salem Chamber

The Council of Independent Business Owners

The following memo was sent to every member of the NC General Assembly

DATE: September 21, 2007

TO: Members of the NC General Assembly
16 West Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096

FROM: NC Go! Executive Committee

RE: Transportation Funding in North Carolina

During this year's legislative session, our state's transportation system did not receive the investment it needs or deserves. In many areas around the state, the inadequate investment is evident in deteriorating highways and bridges, traffic congestion in urban areas and too few mobility options for rural communities. The safety of citizens and the health of North Carolina's economy depend on wisely investing in the future of transportation.

Our state is projected to see 4 million new residents by 2030, which means more congestion and competition for project funding around the state. Since 2002, costs for transportation construction have increased by more than 75 percent while funding has remained relatively flat.

For your information and as a sample of what counties around the state are experiencing, we have included with this letter a listing of bridges in the county or counties you represent. According to the NCDOT, a bridge is considered deficient if it is either Structurally Deficient or Functionally Obsolete. A bridge must be classified as Deficient before it is eligible for Federal bridge replacement funds. A sufficiency rating less than 50 qualifies a bridge for replacement funds.

- **STRUCTURALLY DEFICIENT:** A bridge is Structurally Deficient if it is in relatively poor condition, or has insufficient load-carrying capacity. The insufficient load capacity could be due to the original design or to deterioration.
- **FUNCTIONALLY OBSOLETE:** A bridge is considered Functionally Obsolete if it is narrow, has inadequate under-clearances, has insufficient load-carrying capacity, is poorly aligned with the roadway and can no longer adequately service today's traffic.

Sufficiency ratings of less than 50 certainly do not mean a bridge is an imminent danger, but it is one available composite indicator of condition. The factors which make up the overall rating include the deck, superstructure and substructure ratings. The lower the number – the worse the condition of the bridge. As reference, the Bonner Bridge over the Oregon Inlet has a rating of two out of 100. The I-35 bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota, was rated at 50.

Please weigh the importance of the transportation system in our state as you consider what level is an adequate investment in its future.

Bridge data was distributed to each General Assembly member, based on counties represented:

Sample:

COUNTY NAME	FEATURE INTERSECTION	FACILITY CARRIED	YEAR BUILT	NUMBER OF LANES	SUFFICIENCY RATING
AVERY	HORSE CREEK	SR1166	1958	02	4.0
AVERY	HENSON CREEK	SR1127	1963	02	4.0
AVERY	CREEK	SR1173	1964	02	6.0
AVERY	ELK RIVER	SR1306	1932	01	9.8
AVERY	BUCKWHEAT CREEK	SR1333	1961	01	11.8
AVERY	CREEK	SR1310	1961	01	13.0
AVERY	CURTIS CREEK	SR1321	1964	02	19.7
AVERY	ELK RIVER	SR1305	1950	02	21.4
AVERY	CREEK	SR1167	1962	02	24.2
AVERY	HORSE CREEK	SR1186	1968	02	24.9
AVERY	CREEK	SR1316	1961	01	25.7
AVERY	CREEK	SR1166	1965	02	27.2
AVERY	ROARING CREEK	SR1132	1969	02	28.9
AVERY	POWDER MILL CREEK	SR1130	1969	02	31.2
AVERY	CREEK	SR1150	1962	02	37.1
AVERY	FORK CREEK	SR1352	1961	02	37.3
AVERY	CREEK	SR1316	1964	02	37.9
AVERY	ASHLEY CREEK	SR1193	1964	02	38.1
AVERY	CREEK	SR1185	1966	02	38.1
AVERY	BANNER ELK CREEK	SR1341	1970	02	40.1
AVERY	CREEK	SR1114	1962	01	41.9
AVERY	CAMP CREEK	SR1525	1950	01	43.0
AVERY	LINVILLE RIVER	SR1536	1965	01	48.4

The following memo was sent to every member of the NC General Assembly

DATE: October 1, 2007

TO: Members of the NC General Assembly
16 West Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096

FROM: NC Go! Executive Committee

RE: Causes for Transportation Funding Shortfall

Our state is at a crossroads. Our transportation system faces the convergence of challenging factors and how we respond will have immeasurable impact for decades to come. *NC Go!* has referred to the situation as a *Perfect Storm* - separate weather events colliding to become a super storm. Our transportation funding problems might not be as dramatic or as urgent and dire, but the long-term effects will be felt on all of us.

Another difference is the fact the transportation crisis affecting our state isn't the result of two storms, but rather four – all coming together to impact commuters, trucks, businesses and all the citizens of North Carolina. The converging storms of population growth, increased driving mileage, stagnant revenues, and rising construction costs are depicted in the following pages. But, unlike the weather, we can change the course of events for our transportation system.

If left on their own, these factors will lead to crumbling and congested roads, unsafe bridges and a stressed transportation system. Safety will be compromised, and our quality of life will suffer from sitting in traffic jams and bottlenecks. Commerce will suffer as businesses find it increasingly difficult to move products, people and provide services in a timely and cost-effective manner.

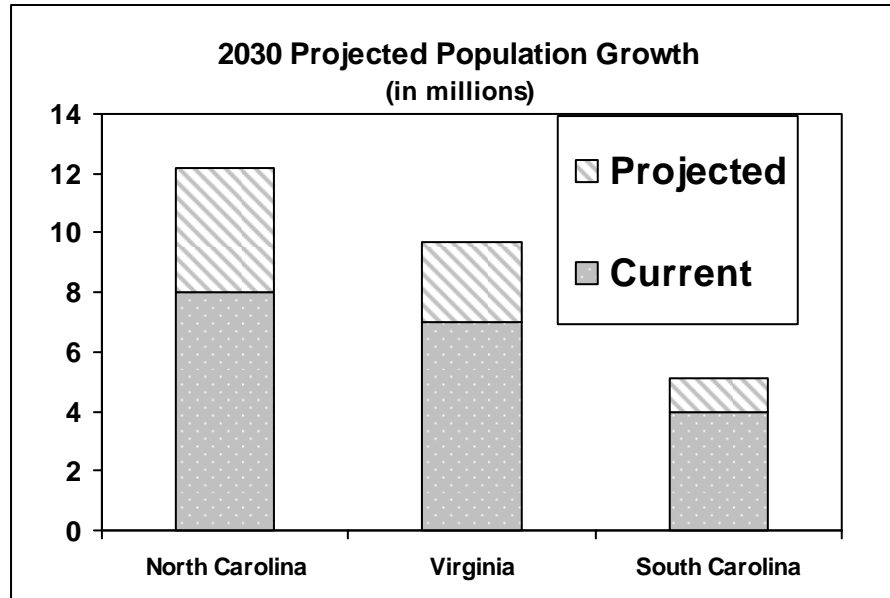
The factors at play in this *Perfect Storm* are:

- North Carolina's population will increase by 50 percent by 2030, jumping from 8 million residents to more than 12 million.
- Every day more drivers are taking to the roads in our state, **and** each of us are driving more miles and further distances.
- Funding has remained flat in recent years, growing only incrementally. Extra capacity can not be provided on our roads or through public transportation to meet needs without adequate revenue.
- While funding for highway construction has crept up at only about 3 percent, the cost of construction has rapidly increased at more than 15 percent per year – a total increase of 80% between 2002 and 2006.

As you review the following graphics, please consider how, as a leader in this state, you can be a part of the solution. There is no easy fix, but inaction is not the answer.

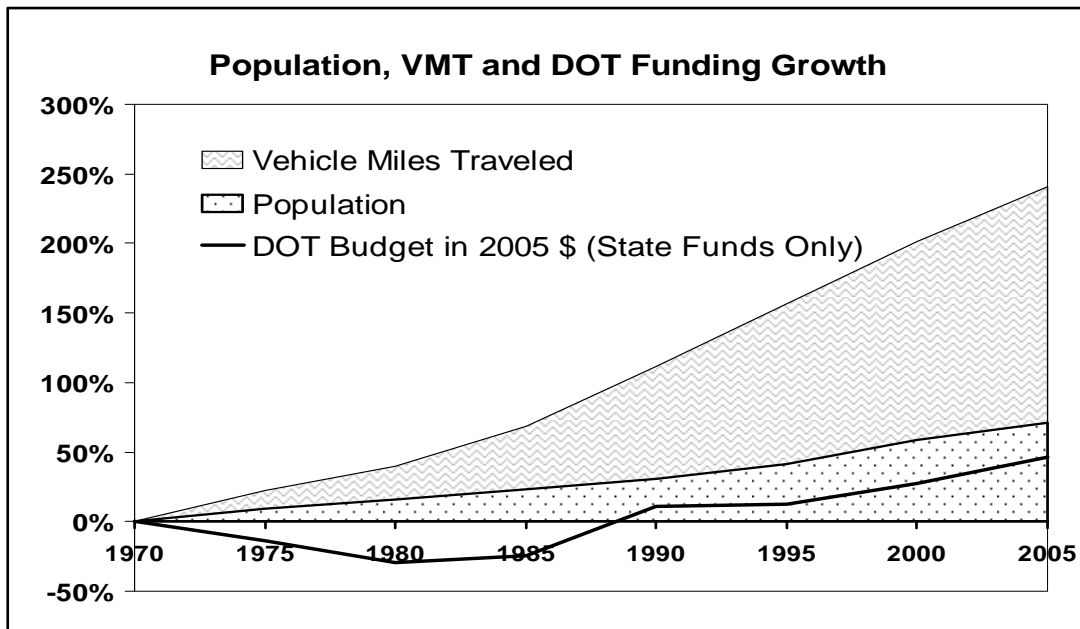
***NC Go!* urges you to support a transportation study commission and a special session for transportation as soon as possible. We believe that transportation should be a priority for our state legislature.**

Our population will increase by 50 percent by 2030. Adding four million new residents will be like adding the entire current population of South Carolina. Not only will that mean more drivers on the roads, but those new residents will require additional goods and services, hence more businesses using our roads and the entire transportation system more.



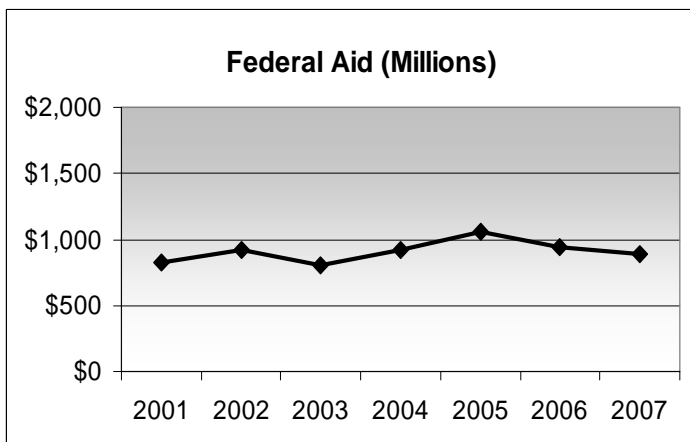
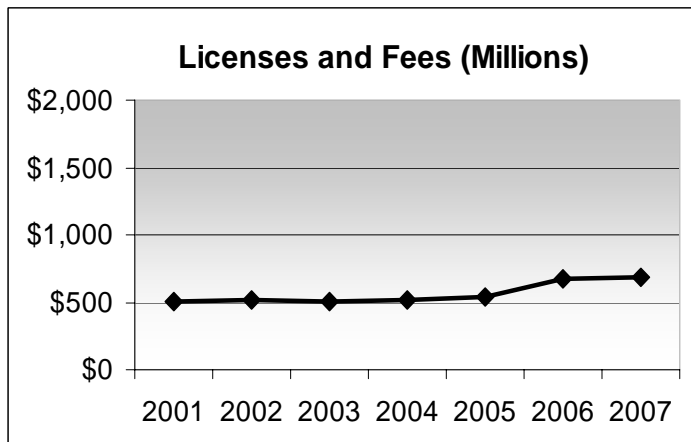
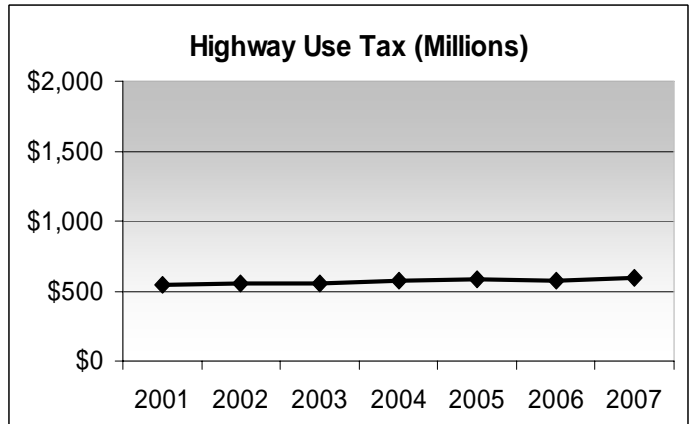
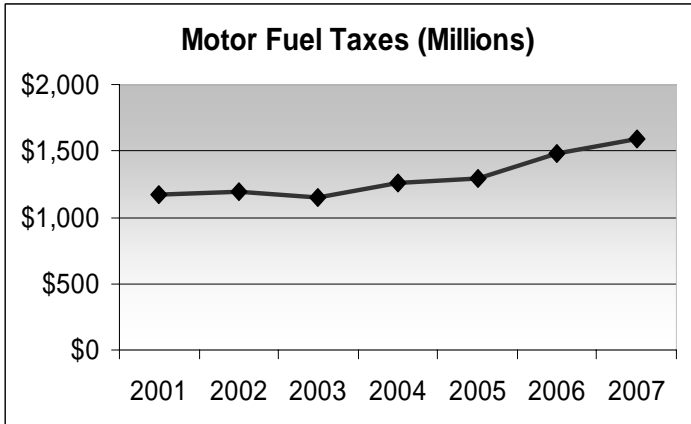
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Projections Branch
 Created: April 21, 2005 - Last Revised: May 31, 2007 at 08:58:22 AM

Additional vehicles driving more miles result in overuse of the existing transportation system. As demand increases traffic congestion worsens and safety becomes an issue when needs exceed capacity and highways and bridges begin to crumble.



Source: NCDOT

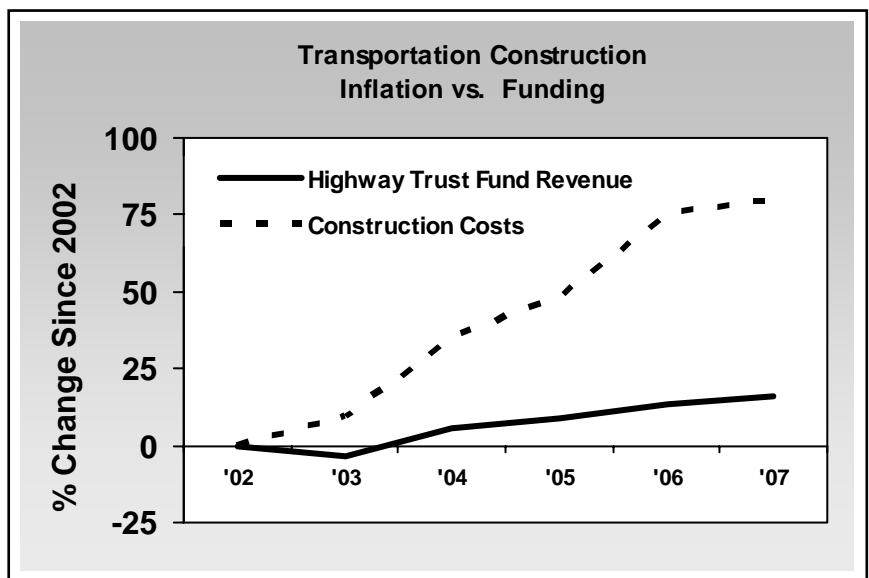
Revenue is simply not keeping pace with transportation demand in our state. Despite rapid growth now and well into the future, existing revenue sources have remained relatively flat. Fuel efficient vehicles mean less state fuel tax and federal funding is lagging.



Source: NC General Assembly, Fiscal Research Division

It is impossible to run a business when costs far exceed revenue, year after year. But, costs for transportation construction have skyrocketed in recent years. The prices of steel, concrete and asphalt have jumped because of overseas demand and fuel prices. Fuel costs also impacts projects because it costs so much more to operate trucks and machinery.

Since 2002, funding for new construction has grown by 15.7 percent but costs are now 80 percent higher.



The following memo was sent to every member of the NC General Assembly

DATE: October 10, 2007

TO: Members of the NC General Assembly
16 West Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-1096

FROM: NC Go! Executive Committee

RE: Transportation funding and safety

North Carolina has long been regarded as the Good Roads state – a nickname earned because of the long-standing commitment to transportation in our state and the quality of our transportation system.

That reputation is at risk. Failure to keep up with rapidly increasing transportation construction costs are resulting in needs far outpacing available or projected revenue. Our roads lack sufficient capacity in urban areas and in many rural areas economic growth is hampered by the lack of adequate transportation options.

Congested, overused roads cause delays, frustration and loss of productivity, but the wear and tear on those roads impact more than economics, though. Every year lives are lost - drivers, passengers and pedestrians are at risk because our transportation system simply cannot keep pace with demands.

The safety of North Carolina's citizens is always a top concern of leaders in this state. But a failure to invest in transportation means we cannot adequately invest in safety measures many of us take for granted: shoulder and median barriers are not replaced; clear signage is missing; potholes are not repaired; and lighting is missing. These items play a role in safety and unless properly maintained, contribute to the danger of accidents.

We are including NC DOT data on traffic accidents for the county or counties you represent. While the condition of road and safety measures are not the only factors involved in accidents, we know that, along with relieving congestion and bottlenecks, safety features can save lives. Unfortunately the growing strain on our overall transportation system and the need for increased investments hampers our ability to maintain a safe transportation system – investments in safety must be improved.

As you review the following data, please consider how, as a leader in this state, you can be a part of the solution. There is no easy fix, but inaction is not the answer.

NC Go! urges you to support a transportation study commission and a possible special session for transportation as soon as possible. We believe that transportation should be a priority for our state legislature.

Safety data was distributed to each General Assembly member, based on counties represented:

Sample:

Brunswick

**Listing of Routes Averaging 1 Fatal Crash per Year in Last Five Years
(05/01/2002 - 04/30/2007)**

County	Route	Total Crashes	Fatal Crashes	Fatal Injuries	Injury Crashes	Injuries
BRUNSWICK	US 17	1,884	22	25	36	47
BRUNSWICK	NC 211	832	8	9	8	14
BRUNSWICK	NC 130	639	7	11	10	16
BRUNSWICK	SR 1300	128	6	8	5	8
BRUNSWICK	SR 1426	198	5	5	4	4
BRUNSWICK	US 74	285	5	7	3	5

**Listing of Intersection Combinations with 50 or More Crashes
(05/01/2002 - 04/30/2007)**

County	Municipality	Road A	Road B	Total Crashes	Fatal Injuries	Total Injuries
BRUNSWICK	RURAL	NC 87	NC 133	56	3	43
BRUNSWICK	RURAL	US 17	SR 1184	56	0	39
BRUNSWICK	RURAL	US 17	NC 211	56	0	44
BRUNSWICK	RURAL	US 17	NC 904	61	0	57
BRUNSWICK	RURAL	US 17	US 17B	104	1	105
BRUNSWICK	RURAL	US 17	NC 87	115	0	71
BRUNSWICK	RURAL	NC 133	NC 211	126	0	67