



NC Go! Update—Spring 2013

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Greetings from *NC Go!* and welcome to our Spring Newsletter. It's been a busy first few months of 2013, with more outreach than ever before to our members, advocates and legislators in the General Assembly. We've had a big direct-mail postcard education campaign to legislators, updates to advocates, big news from ASCE on the state of our roads and a new plan from Governor McCrory on how to fund transportation in North Carolina.

And given our growing population, declining revenues and a need to attract business and industry and grow jobs in our state, there's never been a more important time for transportation policy to be at the forefront.

We hope you find the update included useful and informative, and that you'll join us in advocating for an increased and sustainable investment in transportation.

If you haven't already, we ask businesses and organizations to renew or begin membership with *NC Go!* Help us with our mission to strengthen North Carolina's transportation system. On behalf of *NC Go!* and our executive committee, we wish you the best in 2013 and look forward to working together.

Charles Hodges, Executive Director, *NC Go!*

A Message from Our co-chairs

Three months into the 2013 legislative session, and it's unlikely we'll see the big idea for transportation our state so badly needs. We've been hopeful the same focus Governor McCrory placed on transportation in the Charlotte area would carry over to state concerns.

We have seen some positive movement on addressing our state's infrastructure needs. The new *Strategic Mobility Formula* is designed to improve efficiency and transparency, remove politics from project funding selection, and use data-based decisions to target **existing** money to projects which will have the biggest impact on jobs and the economy.

Alongside this plan and any tax reform, leaders must include a phasing out the transfer of transportation revenue to the General Fund. This would greatly improve public perception about how funds are raised and spent.

To the credit of the Governor and the General Assembly, we recognize our state still faces a difficult budget situation.

The economy is only slowly recovering, and there's a hesitancy to consider new funding solutions in uncertain times.

At the same time, there's too little awareness that **big infrastructure projects pay big dividends**. That investment creates jobs and results in vital projects that benefit the public. Plus, there's a ripple effect. For every construction firm building roads, bridges or transit projects, there are countless engineering companies, legal and accounting firms, and banks working to assist them. And workers' paychecks are spent on services and merchants in their communities.

Maybe it's time to stop saying we can't afford these projects and the investment, and realize it's an investment we can't afford to delay.

Berry Jenkins and Marc Finlayson

NC Go! co-chairs

McCrory Unveils New Transportation Funding Plan

In April, Governor Pat McCrory—alongside Transportation Secretary Tony Tata, legislative leaders and members of the NC Board of Transportation—unveiled the new *Strategic Mobility Formula* as a replacement to the 24-year-old Equity Formula.

McCrory's plan would take existing revenue for transportation and allocate 40 percent of funding over the next 10 years to the statewide level, with an additional 40 percent allocated to the regional level and the remaining 20 percent allocated to the division level.



The aim of the plan is to accelerate North Carolina's infrastructure investments and encourage greater economic growth. According to McCrory's statement, the new formula will allow the NCDOT "to use existing funds more efficiently, significantly increasing the number of projects to better connect economic regions and create more jobs."

While *NC Go!* applauds efforts to streamline efficiency, cut costs and direct funds to the most needed projects, the plan still lacks critical details and we're still awaiting a plan to

address the projected gap in needed transportation funding with some sort of increase in revenue. For years we've seen recalculated projections on how greatly our needs over the next three decades will outpace projected revenue, but there remains no plan to fill that gap.

Another concern expressed by *NC Go!* is the impact this plan will have on rural communities. While basing project funding and prioritization on data and growth projections will help us address needs in urban areas, we should not neglect the rural communities in our state.

It's not clear under this new plan how these areas will compete for vital funds. But, we know that a cut-and-dry approach that focuses almost solely on population will further exacerbate the struggles rural communities already face in attracting businesses and creating jobs.

As of May 9, after hearing widespread concern, a House-passed amended version alters the plan's allocations to 40 percent state, 30 percent regional and 30 percent divisional and the bill now heads to the Senate.

For now, we hope this is an opening salvo towards addressing our state's transportation needs, and that new money will follow. But that seems increasingly unlikely during this legislative session.

ASCE 2013 Report Card

Every four years, the American Society of Civil Engineers releases a Report Card for America's Infrastructure that depicts the condition and performance of the nation's infrastructure. Overall, U.S. infrastructure received a D+, with a D for our nation's roads and transit, a C for ports, and a C+ each for rail and bridges.

Individual state grades should follow this summer, but an overview for North Carolina follows.

Roads:

- Driving on roads in need of repair **costs North Carolina motorists \$1.555 billion** a year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs – **\$241 per motorist**.
- **45%** of North Carolina's roads are in poor or mediocre condition.
- North Carolina has **105,103** public road miles.
- North Carolina's highway vehicle-miles traveled in 2009 was approximately **10,709 per capita**, ranking it **17th** in the nation.



Source: ASCE 2013 Report Card

- North Carolina's gas tax of **37.8** cents per gallon has not been increased in **0** years.

Bridges:

- **2,192** of the **18,165 (12.1%)** bridges in North Carolina are considered **structurally deficient**.
- **3,296** of the **18,165 (18.1%)** bridges in North Carolina are considered **functionally obsolete**.

Ports: North Carolina's ports handled **10.7 million short tons** of cargo in 2009, ranking it **33rd** in the nation.

Rail: North Carolina has **22 freight railroads** covering **3,245 miles** across the state, ranking it **18th** by mileage.

Transit: North Carolina has **59,616** annual unlinked passenger trips via transit systems – motor bus, heavy rail, light rail, and commuter rail.

Direct Mail Postcard Campaign

In March and April, *NC Go!* undertook something our coalition had never tried before—a wide scale, multi-week direct mail campaign to educate members of the NC General Assembly on our issues.

With all the new faces and freshman legislators coming to Raleigh in the past few years, there's a steep learning curve about not just the state of our roads, bridges, transit and all the other forms of transportation—but also how the current lack of a long-term plan will impact our state.

So, for seven weeks *NC Go!* reached out to members of the NC General Assembly to updated on the condition of roads and bridges, misperceptions about the gas tax, benefits of tolling, hybrid vehicles, public transportation and more. The response was positive, with many of our executive committee members hearing the postcards were seen and read during visits with legislators and staff.

We anticipate using this cost-effective approach again in the future, and direct you to <http://www.ncgo.org/our-issues/ncga-postcard> if you'd like to view or download the entire set.

It's time to talk about real COSTS...

16 oz. Caffe Latte
\$29.20/Gallon

20 oz. Water
\$9.53/Gallon

Regular Gas
\$3.53/Gallon

We rely on gas every day, and it is actually more affordable than many of the conveniences we could skip. And the state gas tax only makes up about **10%** of the price of a gallon of gas.

NORTH CAROLINA go!

The future is here...

For years we've heard that electric cars are coming. Well, they are here now and our state has no plan for equitably assessing their drivers' use of the roads.

Gas mileage shouldn't determine what you pay to use roads, signage, safety measures and all the other things that go into building and maintain a road. A mile of road consumed is the same for everyone.

The gas tax is the primary way drivers contribute to maintaining and building new roads. Until there's a better system—we should preserve it AND consider fair fees for hybrid and electric vehicles.

Given the huge transportation shortfall North Carolina is facing—ranging from \$32-\$94 billion between now and 2040—we need a comprehensive plan to address future growth and transportation financing.

It's time to get moving, and make North Carolina *the Good Roads State* again.

NORTH CAROLINA go!

NC Go! PO Box 14147 Durham NC 27709 www.ncgo.org

Let's pay our fair share...

A mile of road. It's the same distance no matter what car you drive. When you "consume" that mile of road—by driving on it—every car uses the same signage, pavement, markings and safety measures like railings and barriers. So why do some cars get to pay less—and some nothing at all—to use our roads?

Murphy to Manteo: 545 miles

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| \$8.18 in NC gas tax | \$4.09 in NC gas tax | \$0.00 in NC gas tax |
| | | |
| V-6 Sedan 25 MPG (combined) Based on Toyota Camry | Hybrid 50 MPG (combined) Based on Toyota Prius | Electric 117 MPGe* (combined) Based on Nissan Leaf |

*MPGe is used solely to compare energy consumption of plug-in electric and other advanced technology vehicles with the fuel economy of conventional internal combustion vehicles expressed as miles per US gallon.

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Advocacy and Membership

You might already be a member of the *NC Go!* Advocacy Network, but what about your co-workers, peers or employees? Have you shared information or encouraged others to join? With more advocates, the stronger our voice is in Raleigh and Washington, DC. Joining the *NC Go!* advocacy network is simple and free, and advocates get all the tools needed to communicate with elected officials on important issues, as well as transportation news and updates.

Registering only takes a minute, and advocates will be part of a growing coalition working to improve transportation in

North Carolina. Share the link <http://www.ncgo.org/get-involved/> and ask others to help support transportation in North Carolina.

And, while you might be an advocate, is your business a dues-paying member, or do you know one that should be? Our members provide the financial support that allows *NC Go!* to communicate with the media and educate lawmakers and the public. To achieve our mission, we are dependent upon your support. For more information or to recommend another business for membership, email director@ncgo.org or visit <http://www.ncgo.org/get-involved/> and download an application.