



For Immediate Release

Contact: Charles Hodges
NC Go! Executive Director
(919) 609-6772
director@ncgo.org

**Statement by NC Go! Executive Director Charles Hodges
on the I-5 Bridge Collapse and the NCGA/NCDOT response to bridge conditions in North Carolina**

May 24, 2013 - We've gotten another wake-up call about bridge conditions in our country. The collapse of a bridge on Interstate-5 in Washington State sent cars and drivers plunging about 50 feet into the Skagit River. Thankfully, no lives were lost – a very different story from the I-35 bridge collapse in Minnesota almost six years ago that killed 13 people and injured another 145.

We are testing our luck at this point. According to the recent American Society for Civil Engineers (ASCE) Infrastructure Report Card, our nation's bridges get only a "C+." One in nine bridges in the U.S. are rated as structurally deficient, while the average age of the 607,380 bridges in the U.S is 42 years. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) estimates that we would need to invest \$20.5 billion annually to eliminate the nation's deficient bridge backlog by 2028, yet only \$12.8 billion is being spent currently.

[The story has been equally bleak in North Carolina.](#) According to NCDOT, 5,832 of our 18,866 bridges are deficient; that's 30 percent. 1,287 have structural deficiencies, while 2,991 are considered functionally obsolete; they aren't suited for capacity demands, their design is antiquated, or they might be an old wood timber bridge. And, another 1,554 bridges remain that are considered both structurally deficient *AND* functionally obsolete.

Despite the numbers, the story in our state is different thanks to aggressive and insightful action by the NC Legislature and NCDOT. After the I-35 catastrophe in Minnesota, legislators in North Carolina committed an additional \$450 million to address dire bridge needs. NCDOT met with the engineering and transportation construction community to determine how to best spend that money – to see the biggest and fastest impact.

The result is the [Express Design Build](#) process, which clusters bridge projects to maximize efficiency, and grants flexibility in timing to take advantage of fluctuations in the cost of materials. It also puts designers, engineers and the building partners together from the start, which reduces time and the cost of projects. And lastly, they've cut down the time and hurdles for selecting firms to complete bridge projects, which saves money and ultimately, lives.

The Express Design Build process is still relatively new, but is unique to our state – and a model likely to be adopted by other states. The budget again contains additional funds to address critical bridge needs, a move that will not only help improve safety but one that sustains construction jobs. We commend state legislators and NCDOT for rising to the challenge and finding a workable solution that's yielding positive results.

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