

The South Carolina Department of Transportation is facing a severe financial crisis. Its 20 year plan reflects \$57 billion in priorities with only \$11 million to pay for them. At the same time, the federal highway bill misidentified several projects as “high priority” for the state and earmarked millions in federal money to pay for them. Worse, the state matching funds that are required for these projects further drains the state’s budget and neglect the priority projects the state has identified.

With poor justifications and dire environmental consequences, four projects “earmarked” by Congress for SC DOT to move forward with are particularly wasteful. These four projects alone, which will cost \$1 billion to build, received a total of \$29.4 million in federal earmarks and will require \$7.4 million in state matching funds over the next five years. These projects divert much needed road money from real transportation priorities such as:

- ❖ **I-73** “The most important new proposed construction project in the state” according to SC DOT, this project, running from Marlboro County to Myrtle Beach, is expected to be a vehicle for economic development and tourism. Even with current projected funding levels from state and federal sources, it will take a decade or more to secure full funding for the project. *If the \$1 billion for the four unnecessary projects below was devoted to I-73, it would assure the State’s top transportation priority could be completed on a timely basis.*
- ❖ **Improved Highway Safety** South Carolina currently has the 8th highest highway fatality rate in the nation with many roads in mediocre or poor condition. In addition, over 2,000 South Carolina bridges are obsolete and need to be replaced. But projects to improve highway safety rely on state coffers. *The required state matching funds for the four unnecessary projects below drains desperately needed state funds and makes highway safety projects take a back seat.*
- ❖ **Improving air quality and quality of life in the Upstate and Columbia** Mass transit and bicycle/pedestrian projects have been identified as important transportation needs by SC DOT and would help improve air quality in the state’s two major population centers that are in current violation of the federal smog standard. *The four unnecessary projects below will not serve these regions and instead, divert much-needed state funds from the state’s two largest metro areas.*

Pet Projects

Briggs-DeLaine-Pearson Connector

Total Cost: \$83 million

Also called the James Clyburn Connector, this South Carolina version of the infamous Alaska bridge boondoggle would provide no benefit to economic development or a meaningful decrease in travel times. Even SC DOT has admitted, “...if we had no earmark for that bridge, that bridge would not be a project that the DOT would select.” **2005-09 commitment: \$16 million in federal funds, \$4 million in state matching funds.**

Mark Clark Expressway Extension

Total Cost: \$420 million

The proposed extension of the loop around Charleston would worsen congestion on area roads and increase delays for commuters and tourists. It would also have substantial environmental impacts on both James and Johns Islands. **2005-09 commitment: \$3 million in federal funds, \$750,000 in state matching funds.**

Southern Conway Bypass (701 Connector)

Total Cost: \$330-410 million

The bypass would only divert a tiny fraction of traffic from Highway 17 and wouldn’t relieve congestion in the Waccamaw Neck area. It would also not serve as a useful hurricane evacuation route and would promote development in a nationally significant conservation zone. **2005-09 commitment: \$4 million federal funds, \$1 million state matching funds.**

Phase III of Berlin Myers Parkway

Total Cost: \$50 million

Construction of the 3.25 mile segment of new highway would do nothing to relieve congestion in Summerville, as promised. The proposed road also intrudes on Summerville’s only greenway, destroys wetlands, and increases stormwater runoff into local waters, prompting a local citizens committee to rank it last among “Higher Cost Major Road Type Projects.” **2005-09 commitment: \$6.4 million in federal funds, \$1.6 million in state matching funds.**