

Infrastructure report card details

The American Society of Civil Engineers gave North Carolina a grade of C-minus for the quality of its roads, bridges and other public works -- and the state's ability to provide enough money to keep up with needed improvements.

Here are the individual grades and recommendations the group handed out in nine categories.

AIRPORTS: D+

Restore deteriorating conditions at the state's 63 public general aviation airports. There is little public spending now except in critical cases where runway pavement is failing.

FUNDS NEEDED: \$1.7 billion through 2030 for state plan to preserve, modernize and expand general aviation airports

BRIDGES: C-

Replace the 32 percent of the state's 17,803 highway bridges rated structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, which limits the weight they can safely carry. At the slow pace of bridge construction, it will take 77 years to replace all bridges now rated as deficient -- and bridges generally are

built to last only 75 years.

FUNDS NEEDED: \$8 billion to replace deficient bridges

DAMS: D

Improve safety of the state's 5,250 public and private dams, especially the 22 percent rated as high hazard (failure would cause loss of life and significant damage downstream). Only 195 of these 1,150 high-hazard dams have emergency action plans on file -- and none of the plans meet federal dam safety guidelines. The state's 15 dam inspectors need help.

FUNDS NEEDED: \$400 million to rehabilitate the most critically deficient dams

DRINKING WATER: C+

Shore up the public water systems that serve 5.5 million North Carolinians to address declining water quality, threats to water supply and other problems that jeopardize health and economic development.

FUNDS NEEDED: \$7 billion through 2030 to replace aging facilities, meet safe drinking water standards and boost economic development

RAIL: B-

Upgrade capacity to handle growing demand for passenger travel and for rail freight. State rails carried 15.5 million tons of goods originating in the state and 6.1 million tons terminating in the state in 2004.

FUNDS NEEDED: \$545 million freight investment and \$3.5 billion passenger service modernization through 2030

ROADS: D

Find a reliable funding source to close the gap between road needs and the state's ability to pay for them. Federal funds are declining as road costs and traffic levels increase. Only California and New Jersey have higher levels of overall congestion than North Carolina, according to one national study. The state should make

congestion a key factor in allocating road funds.

FUNDS NEEDED: \$29 billion was estimated in 2004 as the gap between road needs and likely revenue for the next 25 years. That number will grow when the estimate is updated this fall.

SCHOOLS: C-

Speed up public investment to renovate and replace old schools and build new ones to meet enrollment growth. More than 46 percent of the state's schools will need renovation and 190 schools will be considered obsolete in five years. About 13 percent of the state's students are in mobile classrooms.

FUNDS NEEDED: not specified

STORM WATER: C-

Find a permanent funding source to upgrade local storm-water systems -- 75 percent of them rated fair to poor -- to reduce flooding, erosion and water pollution.

FUNDS NEEDED: not specified

WASTEWATER: C-

The state needs a bigger state funding role to replace aging facilities in wastewater systems that serve 4.4 million North Carolinians, keep pace with growth, meet clean water regulations and avoid water quality problems that have produced fish kills and algae blooms in the past.

FUNDS NEEDED: \$7.4 billion through 2030

To see the full report, go online: http://sections.asce.org/n_carolina/ReportCard.html

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