

## NORTH CAROLINA SECTION



**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE**  
September 18, 2006 10a.m.

**Contact: Brian McKean**  
(c): 704-622-6746  
[BMckean@smeinc.com](mailto:BMckean@smeinc.com)

### **DO NORTH CAROLINA'S ROADS AND SCHOOLS MAKE THE GRADE?** *Local Engineers' Assess Condition of State's Public Infrastructure*

**Charlotte, N.C.**—A report released today by the North Carolina Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) at simultaneous press conferences in Charlotte and Raleigh, shows the state barely earning a passing grade in eight of the nine infrastructure categories assessed. The state's airports, dams and roads were given grades of D or lower, while bridges, drinking water, schools storm water and wastewater all earned grades of C or lower. Only the state's rail system managed a grade above C, scoring a B-.

The local assessment comes as a follow up to the *2005 Report Card for America's Infrastructure*, which was released nationally by ASCE in March 2005. That report gave the nation's infrastructure a cumulative grade of D for fifteen infrastructure areas. Although North Carolina did slightly better, with a cumulative grade of C-, as the state grows to the eighth largest in the nation over the next few years, the study shows that North Carolina's public infrastructure can not support its increasing population.

The *Report Card's* two lowest grades, both D's, were given to the state's roads and dams. The report estimates that poor road conditions cost motorists \$1.7 billion a year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs—\$282 per motorist—and that the funding gap of \$29 billion over the next 25 years will lead to even higher costs and increased injuries due to deteriorating road conditions.

Dams earned a low grade due to the fact that 22 percent of the 5,250 dams in North Carolina are classified as high hazard, and only 20 percent of those have an Emergency Action Plan on record—none of which meet federal guidelines. The *Report*

*Card* estimates that rehabilitating only the most critically deficient dams in the state will cost approximately \$400 million.

Fairing slightly better, though still well below average, North Carolina airports—which bring an estimated \$11.3 billion into the state’s economy every year—received a D+. According to the state’s General Aviation Plan for 2007-2011, an estimated investment of \$588 million is needed to bring all airports in the program up to good or excellent ratings in all categories. At current levels, funding will cover only the most critical situations (i.e, where runway pavement is either failing or in very poor condition).

“Crumbling infrastructure cannot support a healthy economy,” said Mr. Ron Geiger, P.E., chairman of the *Report Card* committee. “We hope this report will help North Carolina residents, as well as state and local officials and policy makers, recognize how the condition of our state’s infrastructure impacts our quality of life, and realize how the deteriorating condition of those systems compromises their ability to support the state’s economy and protect the natural environment that makes North Carolina so attractive.”

The state’s schools, storm water, wastewater and bridges all earned a grade of C-, while drinking water fared slightly better with a C+. The report notes that 46 percent of public schools in North Carolina will need renovation in the next five years, and one-third of those renovations will be required in less than two years. By the end of that same timeframe, 190 schools across the state will be considered obsolete. Further supporting the low grade is the fact that 13 percent of all North Carolina public school children are educated in mobile classrooms.

The *Report Card* warns that between \$2.5 billion and \$3.4 billion will need to be invested in the state’s drinking and wastewater infrastructure over the next five years, with an additional \$4 – 4.5 billion needed through 2030 to replace aging facilities and comply with the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act. Similarly, storm water earned a grade of C- based, in part, on the fact that 75 percent of North Carolina’s towns reported their storm water systems were in fair or poor conditions. Most of those same towns also have no dedicated source of storm water funding, even though inadequate storm water systems can result in flooding and erosion—jeopardizing public health and safety.

Even the state's rail system, which was assessed at a slightly above average B-, faces some significant challenges if it is to maintain, or even improve upon the current level of service. The *Report Card* notes that the state's rail system, ranked nineteenth in the nation with 3,200 miles of track, will require a \$545 million freight rail investment and a \$2.9 billion passenger rail investment over the next 25 years to simply maintain the system at its current service level.

“Sound infrastructure is critical to a sound economy. Obviously, this report says that we have some real challenges facing us in the future. I look forward to continue working with other officials and leaders in the private sector so we can make a real investment in North Carolina's infrastructure and economy. North Carolina has a growing economy and we will work to keep our momentum going,” said Congressman Robin Hayes, a member of the House Infrastructure and Transportation Committee.

*Report Card* grades were assigned on the basis of condition and capacity, as well as funding versus need—generally following a traditional grading scale (e.g., if only 77 percent of roads were identified as being in good condition, that category would received a grade of “C”). In some cases, grades were adjusted if the expectations for a particular performance criterion did not meet the traditional grading scale, or if the data was incomplete. In other cases, due to the many factors that can impact infrastructure's overall performance, individual grades were given in multiple areas of assessment then averaged to create an overall grade.

**For more information on the 2006 North Carolina Infrastructure Report Card, including statistical information on the condition of the state's infrastructure, please visit [http://sections.asce.org/n\\_carolina/](http://sections.asce.org/n_carolina/)**

*The North Carolina Section, a local affiliate of the American Society of Civil Engineers, represents 2,600 engineers statewide. Founded in 1852, ASCE national represents more than 139,000 civil engineers worldwide and is America's oldest national engineering society.*

###