



LEGISLATIVE BRIEF: TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

Background: According to estimates from the Department of Transportation, the state is facing a \$65 billion funding gap for transportation needs over the next 25 years. Last summer, the General Assembly approved a bill (S1513) that allows counties to voluntarily participate in the financing of road building and maintenance. In addition, the General Assembly created the 21st Century Transportation Committee, which was charged with examining the state's transportation needs and the current financing system.

This committee met throughout the fall, winter and spring. Included on the committee were two county commissioners (Chuck McGrady of Henderson County and Richard Blackburn of Ashe County). During the deliberations, there was considerable discussion of assigning some portion of transportation funding to counties.

The committee finalized its recommendations for the 2008 Short Session on May 13. Highlights include ending the Highway Trust Fund transfer and using the proceeds to provide funding for a proposed transportation bond (\$800 million to \$1.8 billion) and gap funding for toll roads. The proposal to redirect approximately half of the secondary road construction funding (\$81 million) for debt service on the proposed transportation bond was removed from the final package – after lobbying by county commissioners from all corners of the state, who recognize that secondary road construction and enhancement is a state function that should not be abandoned by the General Assembly.

Status: It is unclear what the General Assembly will do on transportation finance during the current session. However, the House budget did begin to phase out the annual transfer from the Highway Trust Fund, reducing it by \$25 million.

Key players: **21st Century Transportation Committee legislative members**

Sen. David Hoyle (Gaston) – 300-A Legislative Office Building; (919) 733-5734
Sen. Clark Jenkins (Edgecombe) – 308 Legislative Office Building; (919) 715-3040
Sen. Richard Stevens (Wake) – 406 Legislative Office Building; (919) 733-5653
Rep. Becky Carney (Mecklenburg) – 1221 Legislative Building; (919) 733-5827
Rep. Lorene Coates (Rowan) – 633 Legislative Office Building; (919) 733-5784
Rep. Nelson Cole (Rockingham) – 1218 Legislative Building; (919) 733-5779
Rep. Phillip Frye (Mitchell) – 1019 Legislative Building; (919) 733-5661
Rep. Bill McGee (Forsyth) – 531 Legislative Office Building; (919) 733-5747
Rep. William Wainwright (Craven) – 301F Legislative Office Building; (919) 733-5995

Action needed: County officials should remind their legislators that funding the construction and maintenance of the state's secondary road network is the state's responsibility. Please thank the legislative members of the 21st Century Transportation Committee for removing the secondary road funding transfer from the final package.