



# A **Silent** ----- **CRISIS**



# **Foreword**

This document was put together by the Association of County Engineers of Alabama (ACEA) with the cooperation of the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) and 64 of the 67 counties. Data for Montgomery, Greene and Lawrence counties is estimated using the best available data from ALDOT reports. All other data was received directly from the respective counties. Survey data was collected in early 2010 with comparisons and calculations made in the fall of 2010.

This document is a summary of data collected. The entire data set is available on **[www.acea-online.org](http://www.acea-online.org)** for further review and analysis. Also included on the website is a detail of assumptions made for each item calculated.

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The Association of County Engineers of Alabama  
is an affiliate group of the  
Association of County Commissions of Alabama

# ***Our local roads and bridges***

**An investment from the past and the key to our future**

Alabama's network of county-maintained roads and bridges is in critical condition, and there is tremendous urgency to act now. Without action, the problem will only grow worse and more costly. Regular operating dollars certainly are not sufficient; citizens need a long-term plan for roads and bridges.

The state's counties have seen two major road and bridge construction programs. The first occurred with the "Farm to Market Act" of 1943. The goal of the program was to pave 100 miles of roads in every county in 10 years. The goal was reached when in 1955 a total of 6,801 miles of "Farm to Market" roads were paved and 114,388 linear feet of bridges were built statewide. This program continued until 1967 when the gasoline tax distribution formula was changed and the program was cancelled in 1970.

Then in 2000, voters of the State of Alabama approved "Amendment I," which invested money from the Alabama Trust Fund in a county bridge replacement program. This five-year program replaced nearly 600 structurally deficient county bridges.

Both programs moved the state forward at the time, but neither has kept up with ongoing, recurring needs.

A sustainable, new revenue source must be found to solve this problem. Without a solution, our state will not be able to sustain its economic development growth, and our quality of life will suffer.

Deteriorating infrastructure is not without its cost, even if nothing is done. Today, the traveling public is paying dearly for our crumbling system. Our decaying roads and bridges cost the average Alabamian an additional \$162 a year to operate a vehicle, according to estimates from TRIP, a national transportation research group. Add

to that the fact that approximately 33 percent of all fatal accidents occur on the county system at an estimated cost to society of \$5.8 million per lost life, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

Like the original farm to market program, a new initiative must have a goal. The farm to market program aimed to improve the transfer of goods to market. With deterioration of our local infrastructure threatening our way of life as Alabamians, this new initiative must focus on protecting the investments past generations have made in our current system by accelerating and sustaining a rehabilitation program unlike any this state has seen.

Current funding sources are woefully shy of keeping pace with the rapid deterioration and rising costs of our local road and bridge infrastructure. The mantra of cutting costs and doing business smarter will not solve this problem alone. The magnitude of the issue has been ignored for far too long. With the last state and federal gas taxes being enacted in the early 1990s, the problem is only compounded. A creative and collaborative solution must be found to address this issue, but it is paramount that the public and elected officials alike understand what ignoring this issue will mean to them.



# A Silent CRISIS

**A**labama's transportation network in great part is maintained by its 67 county governments, each operating independently and each operating with revenue woefully insufficient to address the simple maintenance of the existing transportation structure.

The 67 county governments maintain more than 59,000 miles of roads and 8,600 bridges. Each day the roads and bridges are stressed with the weight of log trucks, farm equipment, school buses and a growing level of private vehicle traffic. Maintenance of this system – most of which was constructed more

than 50 years ago – presents a massive challenge to the economic well-being of Alabama and to its continued prosperity in the Sun Belt.

Today, the decaying condition of Alabama's rural transportation system is evident to even the most uninformed driver. Crumbling pavement, sinking bridges and deteriorating shoulders are commonplace in every county. For decades the problems have existed and have worsened. County governments have cried for the resources to address the infrastructure needs, but these efforts have essentially fallen on deaf ears.

Now that these problems are visible to the motoring public, it is very difficult for county governments to employ preventative measures. The only real option, now that the problems have reached crisis conditions, is to take steps that are much more expensive, and less efficient, than maintenance programs which could have been employed decades ago. Counties collectively have a minimum annual need of \$502 million in today's dollars to keep pace with

the deterioration of the rural system. This annual need is in addition to the limited resources that are in place to perform basic maintenance functions.

Do we wait until another bridge fails or a roadway claims another life, or do we find solutions to the funding issue? So far, Alabama's only answer has been to delay a decision to another day, another year or another decade.



**T**he United States is saddled with a rapidly decaying and woefully underfunded transportation system that will undermine its status in the global economy unless Congress and the public embrace innovative reforms.

*-The Washington Post, Oct. 4, 2010*

**Table 1: Road data by county**

County	County Population	Paved County Road Total Miles	Cost to Resurface All Paved County Roads	Annual Cost To Resurface Paved County Roads on a 15-year Cycle
Autauga	51,318	379	\$69,797,008	\$4,653,134
Baldwin	179,878	1,255	\$173,780,407	\$11,585,360
Barbour	29,328	442	\$67,210,828	\$4,480,722
Bibb	20,826	385	\$60,287,855	\$4,019,190
Blount	58,345	931	\$120,738,937	\$8,049,262
Bullock	11,714	316	\$53,186,580	\$3,545,772
Butler	21,399	550	\$90,214,390	\$6,014,293
Calhoun	112,952	1,005	\$135,107,833	\$9,007,189
Chambers	36,583	437	\$74,685,622	\$4,979,041
Cherokee	24,545	812	\$110,597,819	\$7,373,188
Chilton	42,000	514	\$76,335,465	\$5,089,031
Choctaw	15,922	401	\$60,533,915	\$4,035,594
Clarke	27,867	296	\$49,155,581	\$3,277,039
Clay	14,254	424	\$63,303,430	\$4,220,229
Cleburne	14,123	394	\$57,275,515	\$3,818,368
Coffee	43,615	523	\$81,819,326	\$5,454,622
Colbert	57,441	662	\$99,882,808	\$6,658,854
Conecuh	14,089	416	\$70,654,101	\$4,710,273
Coosa	11,063	375	\$55,715,679	\$3,714,379
Covington	36,678	631	\$103,248,803	\$6,883,254
Crenshaw	13,665	280	\$50,026,523	\$3,335,102
Cullman	81,324	1,425	\$26,242,941	\$1,749,529
Dale	49,129	459	\$74,809,476	\$4,987,298
Dallas	46,365	392	\$59,944,569	\$3,996,305
Dekalb	64,452	1,014	\$135,606,852	\$9,040,457
Elmore	78,106	798	\$122,113,275	\$8,140,885
Escambia	38,440	550	\$81,343,961	\$5,422,931
Etowah	103,459	794	\$108,740,200	\$7,249,347
Fayette	18,495	419	\$62,700,646	\$4,180,043
Franklin	31,223	641	\$95,301,577	\$6,353,438
Geneva	25,882	399	\$68,311,104	\$4,554,074
Greene	9,760	360	\$68,311,104	\$4,554,074
Hale	17,185	384	\$56,437,140	\$3,762,476
Henry	16,310	511	\$80,775,738	\$5,385,049

**Table I continued: Road data by county**

County	County Population	Paved County Road Total Miles	Cost to Resurface All Paved County Roads	Annual Cost To Resurface Paved County Roads on a 15-year Cycle
Houston	100,085	794	\$134,324,404	\$8,954,960
Jackson	55,000	1,023	\$127,492,557	\$8,499,504
Jefferson	665,027	2,045	\$272,188,685	\$18,145,912
Lamar	14,295	356	\$55,552,652	\$3,703,510
Lauderdale	89,599	1,091	\$150,489,166	\$10,032,611
Lawrence	34,803	667	\$95,948,254	\$6,396,550
Lee	125,000	665	\$86,054,481	\$5,736,965
Limestone	78,572	1,006	\$138,796,992	\$9,253,133
Lowndes	13,473	269	\$43,275,081	\$2,885,005
Macon	24,105	347	\$60,689,955	\$4,045,997
Madison	328,000	1,400	\$204,713,343	\$13,647,556
Marengo	20,943	352	\$50,567,150	\$3,371,143
Marion	31,214	644	\$89,360,318	\$5,957,355
Marshall	82,000	1,050	\$143,251,770	\$9,550,118
Mobile	404,097	1,097	\$175,820,035	\$11,721,336
Monroe	24,324	347	\$55,037,790	\$3,669,186
Montgomery	224,119	582	\$83,467,554	\$5,564,504
Morgan	117,293	1,010	\$137,994,251	\$9,199,617
Perry	11,861	313	\$46,786,133	\$3,119,076
Pickens	20,949	398	\$63,768,274	\$4,251,218
Pike	29,605	412	\$77,887,483	\$5,192,499
Randolph	22,673	432	\$73,780,784	\$4,918,719
Russell	50,504	367	\$62,738,165	\$4,182,544
Shelby	183,014	914	\$143,782,415	\$9,585,494
St Clair	81,895	624	\$95,911,141	\$6,394,076
Sumter	12,853	338	\$53,711,949	\$3,580,797
Talladega	80,279	950	\$126,687,146	\$8,445,810
Tallapoosa	41,802	734	\$99,970,497	\$6,664,700
Tuscaloosa	179,468	1,151	\$160,771,485	\$10,718,099
Walker	68,970	1,144	\$147,828,380	\$9,855,225
Washington	18,097	386	\$59,988,946	\$3,999,263
Wilcox	13,783	218	\$36,632,654	\$2,442,177
Winston	24,843	583	\$84,431,885	\$5,628,792
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>4,690,280</b>	<b>43,284</b>	<b>\$6,203,898,781</b>	<b>\$413,593,252</b>





## Bridges suffer too

Alabama's bridges present another challenge for county governments. Bridges need to be repaired or rebuilt at regular intervals, and, as traffic continues to grow, others need to be widened to safely meet demands.

Alabama's 67 counties maintain 8,650 bridges, and thousands of these are overdue for rehabilitation or rebuilding. Bridges typically need rehabilitation or rebuilding every 50 years, and counties maintain 2,675 bridges that are more than 50 years old. Replacing all these bridges at one time would cost an estimated \$1.3 billion statewide. The cost of simply addressing the backlog of decaying bridges represents more than four years of road and bridge fund-

ing that is now received by all 67 counties combined.

Deficient bridges fall into several categories. Some 15 percent of all county bridges are rated as structurally deficient and need to be replaced. Others (13 percent) are not wide enough to handle the current traffic flow, making them functionally obsolete. There are more than a thousand\* bridges too weak to safely carry a school bus.

For counties to keep pace with the deterioration of the bridge network and increasing traffic, it is estimated that county governments in Alabama should be investing \$88 million annually in bridges.

\*Not all of these bridges are on school bus routes in the 2010-11 school year.

**Table 2: Bridge data by county**

	County Bridges	Structurally Deficient Co. Bridges	School Bus Posted Co. Bridges	Annual Cost to Replace County Bridges on a 50-year Cycle
Autauga	69	0	0	\$ 830,305
Baldwin	139	12	5	\$ 1,683,469
Barbour	145	24	22	\$ 1,554,497
Bibb	60	1	0	\$ 837,463
Blount	114	29	29	\$ 1,235,672
Bullock	80	4	4	\$ 798,133
Butler	103	9	2	\$ 1,068,727
Calhoun	154	29	17	\$ 1,549,856
Chambers	146	19	13	\$ 1,145,900
Cherokee	120	29	22	\$ 1,076,534
Chilton	107	61	26	\$ 1,126,347
Choctaw	102	23	20	\$ 885,003
Clarke	95	1	2	\$ 995,209
Clay	88	17	19	\$ 604,190
Cleburne	97	34	28	\$ 832,655
Coffee	153	1	1	\$ 1,457,631
Colbert	99	22	17	\$ 916,598
Conecuh	163	27	34	\$ 1,473,077
Coosa	93	36	15	\$ 795,277
Covington	288	52	87	\$ 2,804,943
Crenshaw	136	27	25	\$ 1,127,049
Cullman	162	66	18	\$ 1,561,399
Dale	104	0	0	\$ 1,369,357
Dallas	104	8	35	\$ 1,191,785
DeKalb	172	24	20	\$ 1,131,809
Elmore	121	2	1	\$ 1,465,723
Escambia	99	15	15	\$ 1,346,009
Etowah	90	22	19	\$ 845,459
Fayette	136	20	23	\$ 1,375,830
Franklin	118	28	23	\$ 1,176,672
Geneva	168	12	19	\$ 1,547,119
Greene	102	12	12	\$ 1,278,953
Hale	131	16	11	\$ 1,057,779
Henry	95	0	0	\$ 1,042,428
Houston	83	1	2	\$ 1,230,139
Jackson	188	17	5	\$ 1,165,010
Jefferson	315	47	5	\$ 3,982,966
Lamar	113	8	7	\$ 1,298,528

**Table 2 continued: Bridge data by county**

	County Bridges	Structurally Deficient Co. Bridges	School Bus Posted Co. Bridges	Annual Cost to Replace County Bridges on a 50-year Cycle
Lauderdale	189	60	42	\$ 1,608,880
Lawrence	142	14	7	\$ 1,019,378
Lee	112	16	12	\$ 1,047,545
Limestone	166	29	24	\$ 1,628,396
Lowndes	94	0	0	\$ 796,610
Macon	101	24	23	\$ 1,407,699
Madison	252	43	26	\$ 2,832,200
Marengo	103	15	17	\$ 923,964
Marion	111	8	8	\$ 1,018,428
Marshall	116	43	25	\$ 870,414
Mobile	161	2	2	\$ 1,603,263
Monroe	103	6	4	\$ 916,133
Montgomery	208	1	1	\$ 2,798,809
Morgan	117	13	8	\$ 1,294,958
Perry	119	13	41	\$ 1,089,564
Pickens	158	10	16	\$ 1,540,419
Pike	169	27	12	\$ 1,867,360
Randolph	120	21	35	\$ 1,222,725
Russell	107	14	5	\$ 1,189,143
Shelby	186	13	7	\$ 1,362,931
St. Clair	59	1	1	\$ 763,385
Sumter	118	27	26	\$ 1,177,121
Talladega	120	15	17	\$ 1,534,553
Tallapoosa	84	21	28	\$ 827,437
Tuscaloosa	222	24	22	\$ 2,101,124
Walker	98	15	8	\$ 1,410,150
Washington	126	38	40	\$ 1,645,174
Wilcox	80	29	24	\$ 743,667
Winston	57	5	3	\$ 941,088
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,650</b>	<b>1,302</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>\$ 88,048,013</b>

# \$2,516,580

Annual cost of Alabama school buses  
detouring around weight-restricted bridges

# 199

Bridges that school buses must detour  
around because of weight restrictions

# 1,722

Miles that school buses detour each day

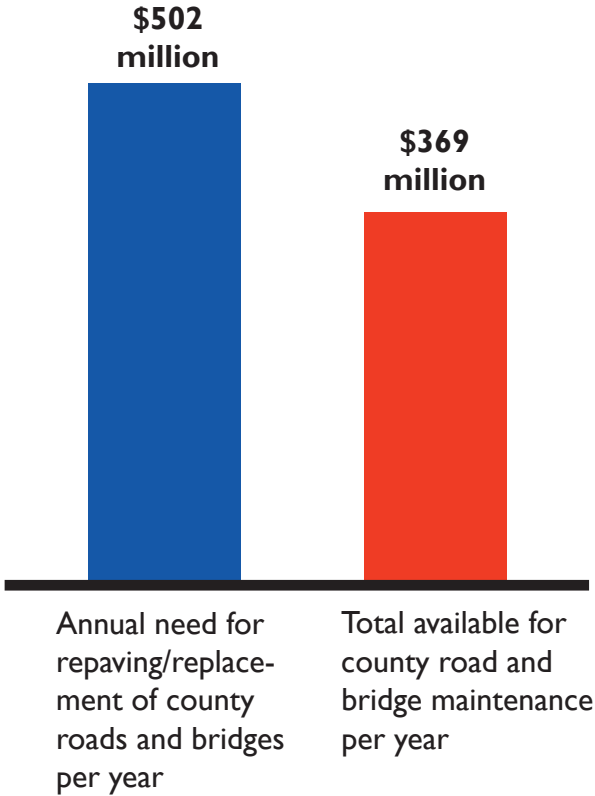
# *Where does the money come from?*

In Alabama, counties receive an annual allocation of federal highway monies through the Alabama Department of Transportation, which was \$339,000 for each county in 2010. Additionally, counties receive 55 percent of a 7-cent gasoline tax and a 4-cent tax on gasoline, motor fuel, and lubricating oil. However, 10 percent of these monies must be distributed to municipalities within the county. Counties also receive 55 percent of two-fifths of a separate 5-cent gasoline tax and must distribute 10 percent of these funds to municipalities as well. In addition to these funds, counties also receive a small portion of petroleum inspection fees and motor vehicle reg-

istration fees levied under state law. All of these monies are earmarked by state law for maintenance and supervision of county roads and bridges, and some of the funds have further restrictions on how the monies can be spent. Counties receive no revenue from taxes on diesel fuel.

In addition to the federal and state revenues described above, counties receive a small portion of interest income from the state's oil and gas royalties and in some areas, severance tax monies which can be utilized for county road and bridge projects. In addition, some counties do have local revenue sources to supplement these revenues.

# *The Silent Crisis in dollars and cents*



Additional data available at **[www.acea-online.org](http://www.acea-online.org)** for further review and analysis. Also included on the website is a detail of assumptions made for each item calculated.

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The Association of County Commissions of Alabama is a statewide organization representing county government in Alabama. The organization promotes improved county government services in Alabama, offers educational programs for county officials and their staff members, administers insurance programs for county governments and employees, offers legal advice and represents the interest of county government before state and federal organizations and agencies. The activities of the Association are governed by a board of directors composed of three officers, past presidents and representatives elected from 12 Alabama districts.