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SCDOT

South Carolina Department of Transportation

annual report

1996

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SCDOT

South Carolina Department of Transportation

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H.B. "Buck" Limehouse of Charleston
TERM: Serves at the pleasure of the Governor

FIRST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Arnold S. Goodstein of Summerville
TERM EXPIRES: Feb. 15, 2000

SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
S. Lyman Whitehead of Irmo
TERM EXPIRES: Feb. 15, 1998

THIRD CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
W.M. "Mat" Self of Greenwood
TERM EXPIRES: Feb. 15, 2000

FOURTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Jack E. Mullinax of Greenville
TERM EXPIRES: Feb. 15, 1998

FIFTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Bobby T. Jones of Camden
TERM EXPIRES: Feb. 15, 2000

SIXTH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
Joseph H. Jefferson of Pineville
TERM EXPIRES: Feb. 15, 1998

ELIZABETH S. MABRY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

South Carolina Department of Transportation
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Columbia, South Carolina 29202-0191
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about the agency

The South Carolina Department of Transportation was established July 1, 1993, by the South Carolina General Assembly as an administrative agency of state government, comprised of a Division of Mass Transit; a Division of Construction, Engineering and Planning; and a Division of Finance and Administration.

The agency is responsible for planning, construction, maintenance, and operation of the state highway system and the development of a statewide mass transit system.

The Department of Transportation is governed by the South Carolina Transportation Commission, which is comprised of seven members, six of whom are elected by the Legislative Delegations of each of the state's Congressional Districts. The Governor appoints the Chairman.

▲ *SCDOT's Wildflower plantings along Interstates have received national recognition.*

◀ *A State Highway Emergency Patrol (SHEP) program is operating on Columbia and Spartanburg area Interstates to monitor roadways during peak travel periods for incidents including accidents and disabled vehicles and to provide assistance to motorists and emergency response agencies. Planning has begun for a program to be implemented in Charleston during mid 1997.*

SCDOT is recognized as the most efficient transportation organization in the nation. The agency and its partners have been recognized for excellence in several areas.

The Piney Grove Road/I-26 interchange project broke new ground for highway construction in South Carolina. It was SCDOT's first official "Partnering Project," and it earned for Rea Construction Company the prestigious Sheldon G. Hayes Quality Paving Award, given by the National Asphalt Paving Association (NAPA).

SCDOT maintains the nation's fifth largest system of roads and bridges.

The South Carolina State University's Summer Transportation Institute, which is in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, SCDOT, SCDPS and the Greenville chapter of the National Urban League, earned recognition for SCSU as the transportation leader among Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The 1996 Minority Institution of Highway Education Achievement Award was presented to SCSU at the FHWA National Civil Rights Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona.

SCDOT headquarters employees received a Special Safety Achievement Award from the SC Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, recognizing 1,256,050 work hours from May 22, 1995, to March 12, 1996, without a lost work day due to a work-related injury or illness. And the S.C. Occupational Safety Council presented a safety achievement certificate to Fairfield Maintenance for having the best injury record of all organizations in the street and highway construction classification for two years in a row.

During fiscal year 1995-96, the agency received the prestigious Silver Wing Award from the South Carolina chapter of the Public Relations Society of America, recognizing its employee newspaper, ***The Connector***, as "best internal newsletter."

This rest area along I-85 near Anderson has been nationally recognized for excellence in design.

Another Silver Wing Award was presented to SCDOT's Public Affairs office for excellence in graphic design. This award was earned for materials designed for a regional transportation conference.

The Carolinas Associations of Business Communicators also gave a first place Communicator award to SCDOT for the agency's 1995 Adopt-A-Highway conference in the Special Events category.

SCDOT also received the "Watchdog for the Taxpayers" award from the State Treasurer's office for the Adopt-A-Highway program. More than 38,000 Adopt-A-Highway volunteers saved taxpayers more than $2 million during the year in litter pick-up work. Additionally, SCDOT Commission Chairman H. B. Limehouse was named "Friend of the Taxpayers" by the SC Association of Taxpayers.

the future of SCDOT

The South Carolina Department of Transportation faces enormous challenges over the next ten years. The agency maintains the fifth largest state-maintained highway system in the United States. The nearly 42,000-mile system includes more than 8,100 state-owned bridges, nearly 830 miles of Interstates, more than 9,400 miles of Primary (US/SC) roads and more than 31,000 miles of Secondary roads.

The needs are many, diversified and at times overwhelming. And while cost estimates for statewide needs vary depending on which federal or state formulas are used, one thing is certain - if South Carolina is going to continue to progress as a state of wealth and economic development, transportation infrastructure must be addressed and funded at a higher than present level. There are funding inequities at the state and federal level.

Many highway and bridge deficiencies already exist which need to be addressed. And the future is dim with little hope of bounteous revenues on the horizon. Future transportation needs are expected to grow at a faster rate than sources of funding needed for the improvements. South Carolina is faced with deteriorating bridges, degenerating pavement and roads too narrow to handle projected traffic volumes.

As SCDOT works to create innovative solutions to some of these challenges, the agency is working closely with local planning organizations to set priorities and outline specific needs for their communities. System upgrade projects (widening, resurfacing and other transportation improvements) present the largest pool of needs over the next decade, into the next millennium. With SCDOT's assistance, the state's ten Metropolitan Planning Organizations have identified region-specific transportation needs. Rural area needs have also been identified by SCDOT planners.

SCDOT has also identified critical transportation projects of statewide significance which will need to be funded in the near future to meet projected economic development and traffic growth rates.

South Carolina's bridge needs over the next ten years are also overwhelming. Of the more than 8,100 state-owned bridges on inventory, more than ten percent are structurally deficient, meaning that a problem exists with the bridge, which if not corrected, may require the bridge to be posted for weight limits or closed in the future. The School Bus Bridge Bond Program has helped, but bridges are entering the deficient category faster than funds become available to repair or replace them.

Regardless of these overwhelming needs, the leadership and staff of the S.C. Department of Transportation are poised and ready to meet the challenges. SCDOT will look to the S.C. General Assembly and Congress for increased financial support. In the meantime, SCDOT will continue to operate efficiently and effectively with available funds. Unique and innovative partnerships will continue to be formed to turn problems into opportunities and transportation necessities into realities to provide the best possible transportation systems and services for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods while protecting the state's environment and natural beauty.

MASS TRANSIT FIVE YEAR PLAN

During the next five years, the Division of Mass Transit's major plans are to develop the following activities:

Determine which abandoned passenger rail corridors require preserving for future revitalization when it becomes necessary for resumption of intercity passenger rail service.

Develop a statewide coordinated transit system among transportation providers.

Develop a statewide transit training program for employees of transit systems.

Implement an electronic grant-making system for use by grantees in concert with Federal Transit Administration guidelines.

Improve automation capabilities of transit system operators statewide for cost- effective operations.

SCDOT Cited as Most Efficient in the Nation

SCDOT was named the most cost-effective manager of highway systems in the entire United States for the second year in a row, in an independent report issued by the University of North Carolina - Charlotte. The study commends SCDOT for its improving pavement condition, accident rate and administrative costs. It also points out that SCDOT's per-mile expenditures and agency staffing of .13 employees per mile of state-maintained roads were the lowest in the nation. The study indicates that SCDOT maintains the nation's fifth largest highway system while spending less than 20 percent of what the average state devotes to roads.

SCDOT Establishes Sandy Island Mitigation Bank

SCDOT preserved 17,600 acres of pristine wetlands along the South Carolina coast through a partnership establishing the Sandy Island Mitigation Bank. The bank allows SCDOT to offset the impact to wetlands of future transportation projects. It will also allow SCDOT to save time and money on future projects. The project is unique, in that it involves partners from the public and private sectors who drafted a plan that would benefit the entire state through preservation. The land will be managed by the S.C. Department of Natural Resources and The Nature Conservancy, an international conservation organization that owns the largest private system of nature sanctuaries in the world. The Sandy Island project has been called the most significant conservation project in the history of the state by leading environmental conservationists. As a result of this project, SCDOT Commission Chairman H. B. Limehouse was named Conservationist of the Year by the SC Wildlife Federation.

Innovative-Creative Projects

SCDOT has initiated more than a dozen innovative-creative project teams comprised of members from SCDOT, federal and other state agencies, and private organizations. The teams have been given specific tasks and were charged with finding new and creative ways to meet traditionally challenging transportation problems. Two of those teams were successful in researching, advertising, selecting firms and negotiating contracts for two public-private partnerships, the Southern Connector in Greenville and the continuation of the Mark Clark Expressway in Charleston. These projects offer a great positive impact to the transportation flow in and around surrounding communities. Local residents and officials have been invited to share their input as the projects are developed. Another team was charged with finding a quick solution to replacing two bridges in the Upstate washed away by Tropical Storm Jerry in 1996. It was successful in accomplishing the first design-build bridge replacement project for SCDOT. The design-build method cuts the amount of design time for certain types of bridges and will enable SCDOT to build future bridges, which meet certain criteria, at a much reduced cost.

State Infrastructure Banks

South Carolina was one of eight states initially chosen by the Federal Highway Administration for a pilot program to use federal-aid highway funds to establish state infrastructure banks. The funds can be used as seed money for loans to public and private sector organizations preparing to build transportation projects. In telling SCDOT about the award, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena said, "President Clinton challenged us to identify and leverage every available dollar for transportation investment. That's why we're moving beyond the traditional means of funding and turning to innovative approaches such as this."

School Bus Bridge Bond Program

SCDOT began a three-year program in August 1995, to replace deficient bridges located on school bus routes. Since the beginning of the School Bus Bridge Bond Program, SCDOT has awarded contracts for the replacement of more than 100 deficient bridges.

Urban Summer Youth Corps Program

SCDOT implemented the third annual Summer Urban Youth Corps Program in 1996 through participation agreements with eight cities and towns. The SCDOT-sponsored program employed more than 100 young people, ages 16-21, to work on a variety of local community landscaping and beautification projects. The program also provides life-skills, education and training to all participants.

Summer Transportation Institute Program

SCDOT continued its partnership with the Federal Highway Administration, S.C. State University and Benedict College to conduct the 1996 Summer Transportation Institutes for South Carolina high school ninth and tenth graders. The Institute is designed to provide high school students a chance to live on a college campus for four weeks while creating an awareness of opportunities in transportation jobs.

Privatization of Logo Signs

Interstate logo signs for fuel, food and lodging businesses have been turned over to a private company to maintain. Revenues in the first year of the privatized program were more than $91,000.

Environmental Awareness

SCDOT revised its Outdoor Advertising Vegetation Maintenance program to allow owners of Interstate signs to remove vegetation within a particular distance from the sign. The revision requires an annual fee of $200 per sign, which goes towards funding the agency's wildflower program.

SCDOT Develops Transportation Management System

SCDOT is developing a transportation management system for Midlands area Interstates. The system will include surveillance cameras, variable message signs, vehicle detectors and highway advisory radios which will transmit data to a traffic operation center. The system will allow the operator to provide better information to emergency response agencies in the event of accidents.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Studied

SCDOT has begun a study to provide intersection improvements using congestion mitigation and air quality funding. To date, nearly 200 locations have been ranked and more than 30 have been programmed for improvements. Contracts for eight projects have been let for construction.

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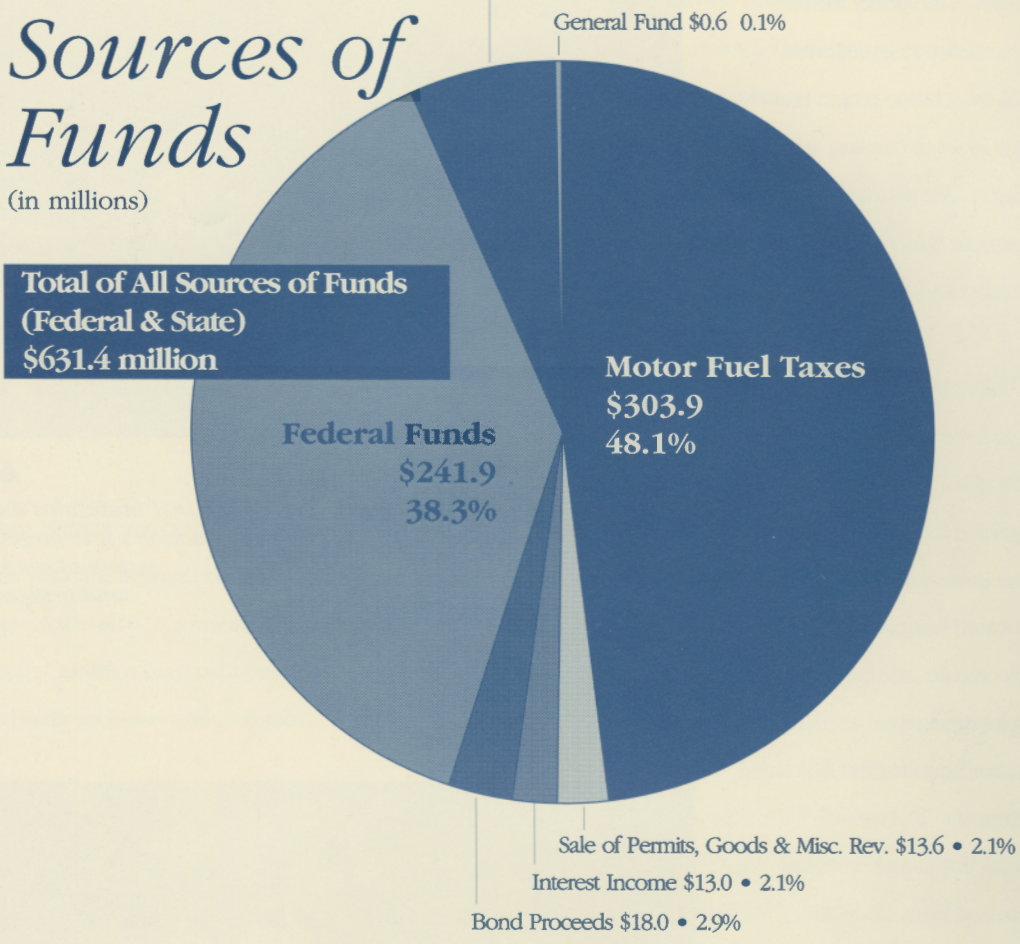
South Carolina Department of Transportation
Operations ▼ Fiscal Year 1995-96

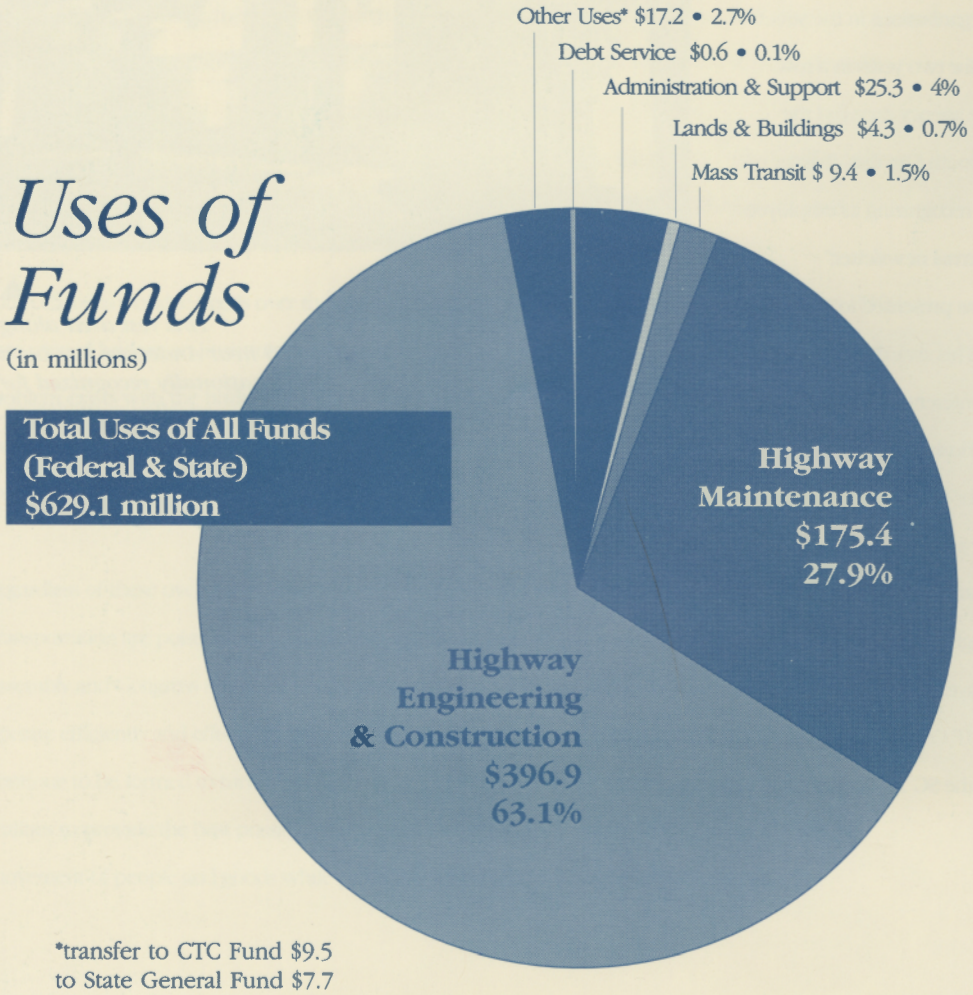
Sources of Funds

(in millions)



Uses of Funds

(in millions)



*transfer to CTC Fund $9.5
to State General Fund $7.7

South Carolina is a "donor state." It has sent over $1 billion of federal gas taxes to other states since 1957. For 1996, South Carolina only gets back about 52 cents for every dollar it sends to Washington D.C. in federal gas taxes.

Total motor fuel tax levied by the state is 16 cents per gallon. This includes 2.66 cents earmarked for the "County Transportation Committee Fund" and one cent deposited to the credit of the General Fund of the state.

The federal motor fuel tax from which the Highway Trust Fund is mainly derived, is now 18.4 cents per gallon gasoline and 22.4 cents per gallon on diesel fuel. The state's federal aid funds come from this source.

During fiscal year 1995-96, SCDOT received $631 million in revenues and other receipts including $303 million in motor fuel taxes and $242 million in federal receipts.

The Department expended $612 million and transferred $17 million to other funds. Engineering and construction expenditures amounted to $397 million and maintenance expenditures were $175 million.