

No Big Gains Over the Summer in Fixing SC's Bad Roads

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By Rick Brundrett - The Nerve

With the heat, the pace of fixing South Carolina's pothole-riddled roads should have increased over the hot summer months.

The reality, however, was different.

The Nerve's review of newly released S.C. Department of Transportation records found that through September, the total dollar value of completed "pavements" projects statewide was less than half of the collective estimated cost of all such projects.

The completion rate was about the same compared to the months of June, July and August. As of Sept. 30, 29 of the state's 46 counties, including the larger counties of Greenville, Horry, Lexington and Richland, didn't break the 50% mark, The Nerve's latest review found.

At the same time, DOT continues to continue sit on huge reserves from revenues collected since the gas-tax-hike law took effect July 1, 2017. As of Sept. 30, the cash balance in a special fund created with the law was \$626.5 million, which was more than 43% of the \$1.44 billion in collected revenues, according to DOT and state comptroller general records.

Last month, The Nerve [revealed](#) that the 10 highest-paid road contractors with gas-tax-hike revenues through August each received millions more from DOT over roughly the same period, raising questions about whether those contractors are tied up on other projects not funded with gas-tax-hike money.

In passing the gas-tax-hike law, which raised the state gas tax 12 cents per gallon over six years and increased other vehicle taxes and fees, lawmakers promised the funds would be used to fix the state's crumbling roads and bridges.

DOT has said 80% of the state's approximately 42,000 miles of roads statewide needs resurfacing or rebuilding, and identified 465 out of 750 "structurally deficient" bridges to be replaced.

But as of Sept. 30, DOT had identified 3,773 miles of "pavements" projects in the state's 46 counties, which represented only 11% of the total number of miles of state-maintained roads that the agency said needs to be resurfaced or rebuilt.

And of the \$1.5 billion in total project "commitments" statewide identified by DOT through Sept. 30, the agency earmarked about \$258.6 million, or 17%, for interstate widenings – not repairing bad roads and bridges.

Last year, longtime state Sen. Hugh Leatherman, R-Florence, who sits on the State Transportation Infrastructure Bank (STIB) board, created a special Senate panel to study accelerating interstate expansion. The STIB over the years funneled several billion dollars to large construction projects in

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The South Carolina Policy Council, the parent organization of The Nerve, has contended the gas-tax-hike law was written in a way to allow DOT to [divert revenues](#) to the STIB to pay off bond debts.

The Nerve's latest review found that the total dollar value of completed "pavements" projects statewide as of Sept. 30 was \$485.8 million, or 45%, of the overall \$1.07 billion estimated cost of all such projects.,

Following is a list of counties in which the total dollar amount of completed "pavements" projects was less than 50% of the collective estimated cost of all such projects as of Sept. 30, according to DOT records:

- McCormick: \$3.3 million (49.8%);
- Clarendon: \$7.4 million (47.1%);
- Fairfield: \$7.8 million (47%);
- Marion: \$7.6 million (46.1%);
- Spartanburg: \$20.7 million (46.1%);
- Williamsburg: \$9 million (45.5%);
- Greenville: \$21.7 million (44.7%);
- Dillon: \$6.1 million (43.7%);
- Richland: \$15.7 million (43.6%);
- Florence: \$13.7 million (43.5%);
- Beaufort: \$8.6 million (43.4%);
- Lexington: \$15.6 million (42.6%);
- Calhoun: \$4.9 million (42.5%);
- Bamberg: \$4.1 million (42.1%);
- Union: \$5.9 million (41.9%);
- Saluda: \$6.6 million (41%);
- Barnwell: \$4.9 million (39.7%);
- Hampton: \$3.9 million (38.9%);
- Allendale: \$3 million (37.1%);
- Marlboro: \$4.5 million (36.5%);
- Horry: \$25.7 million (35.3%);
- Oconee: \$8 million (32.3%);
- Aiken: \$8.6 million (32.2%);
- Abbeville: \$5.5 million (30.1%);
- Darlington: \$4.7 million (27.2%);
- Anderson: \$14 million (25.3%);
- Pickens: \$5.5 million (21.4%);
- Newberry: \$4.2 million (20.9%);
- Georgetown: \$2.7 million (9.7%)

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