

# PARTNERSHIP *for* North Carolina's Future

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 10, 2007

**Contact:**

Charles Hodges

(919) 882-1969

## **REPORT PAINTS DARK PICTURE OF STATE'S INFRASTRUCTURE; URGES LEGISLATURE TO FIND FUNDS TO PROTECT ECONOMY, QUALITY OF LIFE**

**RALEIGH** – Strain on North Carolina's infrastructure is threatening the state's future economy and quality of life, according to *Reality Check for North Carolina*, a report issued today by the Partnership for North Carolina's Future.

The General Assembly must face reality. North Carolina has fallen behind in making the necessary capital investments in schools, transportation, water and sewer systems, and basic housing, as well as protecting farms, forests and natural areas. That failure to invest in the future is having a profound negative impact on North Carolina businesses and families, the report says.

North Carolina can't build equity in homes, or expand and recruit business and jobs, with inadequate water and sewer services, poorly maintained roads, overcrowded schools and an unhealthy environment. However, according to the report, with proper investments, North Carolina can build a strong economy and maintain a good quality of life.

The report also casts doubts on the state's reputation for good roads. It focuses on growth restrictions in 114 communities because of inadequate water and sewer systems, loss of conservation lands, overcrowded schools and potential public health threats.

Visit <http://www.ncfuturenow.org/news/> to read the full report.

To address those concerns, the report outlines a "Plan for Progress" that includes:

- Relieving the counties of Medicaid costs to help free up county property tax revenues to meet local infrastructure needs.
- Giving local governments alternatives for additional new revenue sources, including the proposed land transfer tax or sales tax, subject to a vote by the people.
- Approving state bond referenda for transportation and school construction, water and sewer facilities, land and water conservation, and the Housing Trust Fund, with adequate revenues for debt service.

Rapid population growth is creating many of these capital needs. By 2030, North Carolina will be the seventh largest state with 12 million people, a 50 percent increase from 2000. Since the General Assembly convened, the state's population has grown by approximately 75,000 people, comparable to the current population of Asheville.

According to the report, "North Carolina is not ready for prime time. By 2030, North Carolina will be more crowded, but not better. In the place of opportunity will be a slowing economy and diminished quality of life for all but the few and privileged, unless the necessary investments are made."

– MORE –

### About the Partnership for North Carolina's Future

The Partnership for North Carolina's Future is a diverse coalition that includes advocates for public schools, land and water conservation, transportation, water and sewer, affordable housing, cities and counties. The Partnership's members' shared concern is that North Carolina is not making the necessary investments to keep pace with our growth and development. The Partnership is urging the General Assembly to seriously consider all sources of revenue that can help address these critical needs. For more information, visit [www.ncfuturenow.org](http://www.ncfuturenow.org).

Among the organizations in the Partnership are Land for Tomorrow, N.C. League of Municipalities, N.C. School Boards Association, N.C. School Administrators Association, N.C. Rural Economic Development Center, N.C. Housing Coalition, N.C. Association of County Commissioners, NC Go!, and N.C. Metropolitan Coalition.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- **Transportation** – North Carolina's reputation as the Good Roads State is no longer deserved. According to a recently released national study, the state's overall ranking is in the bottom half. North Carolina ranks near the top in urban and rural interstate congestion, rural primary roads in poor condition and percent of deficient bridges. Crowded roads with crumbling pavement and unsafe features are costing North Carolinians \$5.3 billion annually. Highway construction projects have dropped by nearly 50 percent since 2002 due to relatively flat revenues and a 75 percent increase in construction costs since 2002. A recent Department of Transportation study concluded that without additional sources of revenue there will be a \$65 billion funding gap by 2030.
- **Water and Sewer** – North Carolina has 114 communities under state restrictions or moratoria on connecting new businesses because of inadequate water and sewer facilities. A study by the General Assembly concluded there is an immediate need for \$500 million to help those communities and \$7 billion by 2010. Millions of rural North Carolinians face the environmental and health uncertainties associated with private wells and septic tanks.
- **Schools** – North Carolina needs to build an average of one new school every week for the next five years to meet student enrollment growth, and replace dilapidated and aging facilities. Total needs are \$9.8 billion in the next five years.
- **Farms, Forests and Rivers** – Since the General Assembly convened, approximately 50,000 acres of farms, forests and natural areas have been converted to other uses. More than 3,000 miles of streams and rivers don't meet state water quality standards. Costs for conservation lands, important to protecting our streams, rivers and drinking water supplies have risen nearly 300 percent in the last 10 years. An additional \$1 billion over the next five years would leverage \$3 billion in local, federal and private funds to protect more than 740,000 acres and meet the General Assembly's mandate to preserve one million acres by 2009.
- **Housing** – More than 2 million people live in substandard housing, which can cause health problems, or houses they can't afford. With an additional \$50 million per year, the Housing Trust Fund could help more than 6,000 lower income families annually.

###