

Press Release

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Map of Alabama's Top 50 Transportation Projects Highlights State's Imbalanced Approach to Infrastructure

Birmingham, AL—A map released today of Alabama's 50 most needed road improvements, the total cost of which could be completed for half a billion dollars less than the proposed Northern Beltline, highlights a critical need for accountability and transparency in the decision-making process around statewide transportation investments.

The Southern Environmental Law Center and Black Warrior Riverkeeper released the map, based on an independently published report by nonprofit transportation research group The Road Information Program (TRIP), to emphasize that statewide transportation needs will continue to go unmet as long as the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) gives funding priority to the Northern Beltline and other politically-motivated projects.

Titled "[The Top 50 Highway Projects to Support Economic Growth and Quality of Life in Alabama](#)," the report ranks the 50 statewide highway projects most needed to support Alabama's economic growth and quality of life. The report estimates that the combined cost of these 50 projects would be \$4.6 billion. The \$5.3 billion Northern Beltline is notably absent from the report.

While SELC and Black Warrior Riverkeeper neither endorse nor oppose the projects included in the report, the groups view the list as an eye-opening illustration of how the Northern Beltline siphons funding from critical transportation needs.

"Even as lawmakers acknowledge that our crumbling infrastructure is failing people across Alabama, this map shows that statewide repercussions will continue as long as wasteful, unnecessary projects like the Northern Beltline are given lopsided priority," said Sarah Stokes of the Southern Environmental Law Center. "Working toward a sustainable solution to our infrastructure problems must involve holding ALDOT to specific accountability terms, including an objective prioritization process to rank and select projects."

SELC and Black Warrior Riverkeeper maintain that limited transportation funding should address safety, maintenance and congestion issues through cost-effective projects that create jobs and cause far fewer aquatic impacts than the Northern Beltline.

Although ALDOT has the flexibility to use money for the Northern Beltline on other projects, the agency continues to forge ahead with the most expensive road in Alabama history to the detriment of taxpayers, water resources and more pressing infrastructure needs.

ALDOT has begun work on 1.86 miles of the proposed 52 mile highway but has not secured funding for construction on the rest of the road. Transportation and infrastructure woes were front and center in the 2016 legislative session, as lawmakers tried and failed to pass various bills attempting to carve out funding for roads and bridges.

“We continue to be gravely concerned about the Northern Beltline’s negative ramifications for the region’s aquatic resources,” said Nelson Brooke from Black Warrior Riverkeeper. “The Northern Beltline is a poor investment which will continue to drain funds from priority transportation projects across Alabama.”

[Click here for the map of Alabama’s 50 most needed road improvements.](#)

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About Southern Environmental Law Center:

The Southern Environmental Law Center is a regional nonprofit using the power of the law to protect the health and environment of the Southeast (Virginia, Tennessee, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama). Founded in 1986, SELC’s team of nearly 60 legal and policy experts represent more than 100 partner groups on issues of climate change and energy, air and water quality, forests, the coast and wetlands, transportation, and land use.

www.SouthernEnvironment.org

About Black Warrior Riverkeeper:

Black Warrior Riverkeeper is a citizen-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect and restore the Black Warrior River and its tributaries. We are advocates for clean water, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities throughout the Black Warrior River watershed. To learn about the river and threats to it, visit BlackWarriorRiver.org