

2021 State of SCDOT presented to Commission, State Senate Transportation Committee

'No slow downs or delays' from COVID-19

Agency tightened belts, balanced deficit to keep up road, bridge projects

By Bob Kudelka

South Carolina Secretary of Transportation **Christy A. Hall** delivered the 2021 "State of SCDOT" presentation to the SCDOT Commission on Thursday, March 18, 2021.

Hall's presentation included an update on accomplishments by SCDOT since the Roads Bill passed by the South Carolina General Assembly went into effect on July 1, 2017, and how SCDOT responded to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are well on our way to getting to a state of good repair," Hall said. "Paving conditions across the state have improved in every county across the state." She said traffic congestion remains a challenge, noting that South Carolina has the nation's 4th largest state highway system and the 6th fastest growing population.

SCDOT Commission Chairman J. Barnwell Fishburne said it's a historic time for both the agency and the Commission.

"We are overseeing the large infrastructure expansion since the interstate program was put in and it's being done in an excellent fashion," Fishburne said. "I commend all of you for that. I like to recognize excellence when I see it."

Hall also delivered the State of the SCDOT presentation to the State Senate Transportation Committee on March 17, 2021, where she also received positive feedback.

"What we need is to clone Secretary Hall," said Senator Harvey S. Peeler Jr. of Gaffney. "That's about the best compliment I can give you. Thank you for the job you're doing."

Looking back at the past year, SCDOT was able to maintain a robust highway construction program despite the COVID-19 pandemic causing a reduction in travel and gas tax revenues, Hall said.

"We tightened our belt and cut our inter-



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United Infrastructure Group Inc. CEO Jim Triplett and S.C. Secretary of Transportation Christy A. Hall discuss the last concrete pour work being done on the southbound I-77 bridge over the Catawba River in York County on May 17. (Read more about this project on page 13.)

nal operating costs by 12 percent to balance that deficit," Hall said. "We did not cut, slow down or delay any road or bridge project in South Carolina (due to COVID-19)."

SCDOT is in the fourth-year of a 10-Year Plan to rebuild South Carolina's roads after a 30-year backlog of deferred maintenance due to lack of funding. July 1, 2020, marked the start of year 4 of the phased in 12-cent gas tax increase.

The current state gas tax in South Carolina is 24.75 cents per gallon. In Georgia, the state gas tax is 32.20 cents per gallon and in

North Carolina, 36.35 cents per gallon.

Over the past several years, SCDOT has tripled its road work program with more than \$3 billion in construction contracts.

The new gas tax trust fund is invested in four key areas:

- Road Paving - SCDOT is using 50 percent of the new revenues to resurface the state's highways as 80 percent of the state's 42,000 miles need resurfacing or rebuilding. The 10-year goal is to bring half of those roads up to a "good" rating.
- Highway Safety - SCDOT is address-

ing the "worst-of-the worst" rural roads in terms of highway safety by improving 100 miles per year with a customized plan to make these roads safer in ten-mile segments.

- Structurally Deficient Bridges - Approximately half of SCDOT's 750 structurally deficient bridges are being replaced.

- Interstate Widening - SCDOT has begun an aggressive interstate widening plan targeting bottlenecks in urban areas and improving key rural sections of interstate needed for freight movement.