

Excelerate

MISSISSIPPI



MEC's

Blueprint

MISSISSIPPI

Pathway to Progress

The Need...the Original Vision...and What's Ahead

Mississippi is a state with many needs...many challenges and many opportunities, but with limited resources.

The key to success is balancing our resources to meet our needs and challenges while maintaining a competitive business climate for boosting economic development opportunities.



Transportation has been a much-discussed issue during the last decade, and in recent years has accelerated to a high-priority focus because failing bridges and crumbling roads are setting back our economic development success.

Nearly 30 years ago, a group of local, state, civic and business leaders came together to chart a

program to bring a four-lane highway within 30 miles of every Mississippian. The idea was to connect small-town Mississippi to the world and open avenues to boost economic development through greater highway accessibility.

Since 1987 – Mississippi's economy has grown more than 300% -- 2 times faster than inflation. As a result, miles traveled has increased 90% on Mississippi roads.

The AHEAD (Advocating Highways for Economic Advancement and Development) program has achieved what seemed in 1987 to only be a vision...and some thought a pipe dream: 1,077 miles of four-lane highway to be constructed at a cost of \$3.38 billion over 26 years.

The dream became a reality and transformed the economic future of Mississippi.

It didn't come easily. It took an ongoing financial investment by the people of Mississippi...it took a commitment by governmental leaders to stay the course and not squander resources on other projects that arose over time and it took the horsepower of business and community leaders all over the state to get behind the plan and make it happen.

Mississippi moved AHEAD.



Traffic, Crumbling Roads & Bridges Put MS Behind

The AHEAD construction program was a commitment to building roads. Sadly, because we have not allocated resources to maintaining this magnificent infrastructure, Mississippi is falling behind at an alarming rate. Mississippi highway revenues have been standing still – while the costs and needs have been increasing dramatically.



While miles traveled is up 90% thanks to the success of AHEAD, inflation is up over 100% and construction costs are up over 200%. Meanwhile, gas consumption (the key ingredient for providing road funds) has been essentially flat, growing by only 1.6% since 1987.

As of June 2015, 936 state bridges and 24,591 state lane miles currently are in need of repair – and the number rises exponentially when local bridges and roads are added to the equation – a total of 2,989 local bridges and 13,192 local road miles. The total estimated cost to fully fund today's transportation need is \$6.6 billion.

As the Blueprint Mississippi Transportation Task Force studied this need, it became clear from the beginning that full-funding was not an option. Instead, research told us it would be better to explore methods allowing Mississippi to catch-up on bridge and road surface repair on major state thoroughfares which connect our communities through the four-lane highway system while at the same time providing a significant boost to local communities to leverage local resources to improve failing infrastructure.



Accelerate Mississippi Provides Needed Boost

This is why the Blueprint Mississippi Task Force has outlined a long-range, ongoing program with sustainable income year after year, with a call for funding to be indexed to increase with inflation, and with an intense effort in the first 10 years to target the greatest needs.



Through this approach, Mississippi can continue to excel in economic development, while accelerating our approach to deal with the worst bridges and roads.

Accelerate Mississippi addresses both the most-pressing immediate and long-term needs in an affordable and practical approach to continuing to move Mississippi forward.

In developing the program, it was important to note:

- All bridges and road miles are not created equal:

In general, it costs more to repair or replace a state bridge and mile of roadway than it costs to repair or replace a local bridge and mile of roadway, because of differences in construction materials used, capacity and weight limits. For example, it would cost \$2.63 billion to repair or replace all 936 state bridges that are deficient and only \$1.14 billion to repair or

replace all 2,989 local bridges that are deficient.

Preventative maintenance on a state-owned road cost about \$61,000 for a single lane mile, while major rehabilitation costs about \$247,000 per lane mile. By contrast, \$45,500 is the average cost to replace a 2-lane, 22-foot-wide mile of local road. Local road projects have greater flexibilities in type and thickness of pavement materials because of differences in use, capacity and weight, which all factor into reduced costs.

- While in a perfect world every bridge and road surface should be at the highest quality, we simply cannot afford to fully fund this effort. Therefore, we must target our resources to the greatest needs.

The Department of Transportation has credible data and a detailed long-range plan to support where the needs are on state roadways. They largely mirror results determined independently by Blueprint researchers.

Local governments are best suited to determine where the greatest needs are and should have the flexibility to determine where these dollars are allocated for roads and bridges – even though some of those needs may relate more to community access than to capacity or weight.



Key *Excelerate Mississippi* Recommendations

Excelerate Mississippi calls for:

- Additional annual funding to be allocated to highways and transportation:

An additional \$375 million a year targeted for the most critical bridges and roads – with \$300 million focused for state roads and bridges and \$75 million or 20% for local needs. This would provide \$3.75 billion over the first 10 years of the program, and continue to provide funding going forward.

- 138 state “posted” bridges (those that cannot carry the weight or function for which they were constructed) and all timber bridges be replaced within 10 years.
- An additional 424 of the total state deficient bridges to be fixed in that time frame.
- The Mississippi State Department of Transportation to rehabilitate, repair and maintain road surfaces that no longer meet the standards for which they were constructed. Ongoing funding will also close much of the gap on needed preventive maintenance.
- Continued resources to be allocated to new road and bridge construction in accordance with MDOT’s long-range plan for new road and bridge construction to address increasing capacity in every region of the state.
- Increasing funding by at least \$75 million annually – adding to the \$52 million currently provided by the State Aid Program and \$20 million from the Local System Bridge program - for local governments to ramp-up their bridge and road improvement efforts.
- A menu of funding options for consideration by the Legislature that can be combined with each other and/or with other approaches others may develop – to address the short and long-term needs.
- Indexing of funding sources over time, adjusting to an agreed-upon inflationary factor to assure that our state and local governments have sufficient revenues to keep pace with bridge and highway repair in the years beyond, while keeping such increases affordable to maintain Mississippi’s competitive position with other states.
- Our ports, airports and railroads be valued as key resources in Mississippi’s overall transportation efforts – with a continued need for assessing their competitive position and deploying resources over time to maximize the value for both passenger and freight movement. There are existing programs and initiatives that address these transportation resources, which must be maintained and expanded as opportunities are presented, to boost Mississippi’s competitive position.

To be sure, it will take additional financial resources to ‘excelerate’ Mississippi’s most pressing highway transportation needs – but at the end of the day, no matter which combination of funding options is assembled to raise the additional \$375 million per year, in general the cost to Mississippians would be about 37 cents per day. This investment over ten years would lead to savings from today’s vehicle operating costs of about \$1.45 per day in fewer miles traveled, less time lost to detours and traffic slow-downs and reduced wear and tear.

By investing today, Mississippi can “excelerate” our economic development successes, while assuring safer roads and bridges and lower daily operating costs for our people.

Some Notes about Blueprint Research

- The Blueprint Mississippi Transportation Task force began with a clean sheet of paper – and used independent researchers from the University of Southern Mississippi, Mississippi State University and the Stennis Institute of Government – as well as the private consulting resources of Cambridge Systematics Inc. to determine the needs, costs and approaches for dealing with Mississippi’s highway and transportation needs.
- While the Mississippi Department of Transportation cooperated and provided data when needed, Blueprint researchers developed their own assessment of needs and costs using different methodology than that used by MDOT. However, at the end of the day, the results were comparable.
- For the first time, through an elaborate survey process and the cooperation of the Mississippi Municipal League and the Mississippi Association of Supervisors,



Blueprint researchers conducted an extensive survey of local bridge and pavement needs to determine a clear definition of the need and cost.

- As a result of truly independent research, Blueprint Mississippi has put a stake in the ground in defining both the cost and need of addressing Mississippi’s highway transportation problem, which have been in past years moving targets of mostly anecdotal references.
- Blueprint researchers did not address the operations of our Mississippi Department of Transportation. However it is important to note that since 2008 MDOT’s administrative costs have fallen about 1.5%, while building and equipment costs have been reduced by almost 3%, according to Cambridge Systematics. Also, the most recent Reason Foundation report on the Performance of State Highway Systems ranks Mississippi 8th nationally for its efficient use of resources.



Accelerate Mississippi – Moving Mississippi Forward

Maps showing the state’s deficient roads and bridges demonstrate clearly that Mississippi’s crumbling transportation infrastructure needs are not limited to a single part of the state – they are truly statewide...and can be addressed.



MEC’s unique network of 11,000 leaders statewide is already engaging leaders in local communities across Mississippi to demonstrate how Accelerate Mississippi can continue to keep Mississippi in the place of greatest opportunity.

We encourage other stakeholders – local Chambers of Commerce, trade and professional associations and community and local governmental leaders – to become involved and help Accelerate Mississippi.

To get involved go to:

On the web: www.acceleratems.com

Facebook: Accelerate MS

Twitter: @AccelerateMS

Or call Christi Kilroy, Mississippi Economic Council: 601-969-4408.



10 Reasons for Excelerate Mississippi

1. Since 1987 when Mississippi seized the day on building over 1,000 miles of new four-lane miles to connect our state to the world – Mississippi’s economy has grown 2 times faster than inflation. The AHEAD program made all the difference.
2. The AHEAD program did what it promised – more people are driving on Mississippi roads since 1987 – miles traveled are up 90%...so is the need.
3. Mississippi is now at risk of losing economic ground.
4. 936 state bridges and 24,591 lane miles of state roads, the primary routes that connect our communities to the nation and world, aren’t able to hold up to the traffic and weights for which they were designed and for what is needed to serve the economic development needs of our state. Local road and bridge issues drive the numbers higher. Our safety and economy are at risk.
5. Mississippi is falling far behind by standing still. Inflation is up over 100%. Construction costs are up over 200%. Dollars received from the gas tax are essentially the same – because fuel consumption is flat as more efficient vehicles drive more miles for the same cost.
6. Highway accessibility is listed as #2 for economic development site selection by Area Development Magazine. Ignoring our problem will close off economic development opportunities.
7. Taking action now will create about 4,000 new direct and indirect jobs in the construction industry.
8. 7,600 more Mississippians will get jobs every year as existing businesses expand and new ones are attracted to Mississippi, just as they came after the 1987 AHEAD four-lane program.
9. Mississippi can’t afford to be left at the side of the road – because 23 other states have fixed their problems and even more are working on plans...right now.
10. There is a direct return on investment. For an investment of about 37 cents a day – Mississippians over time, as the program is completed, will receive a return of about \$1.45 a day in reduced driving costs.



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