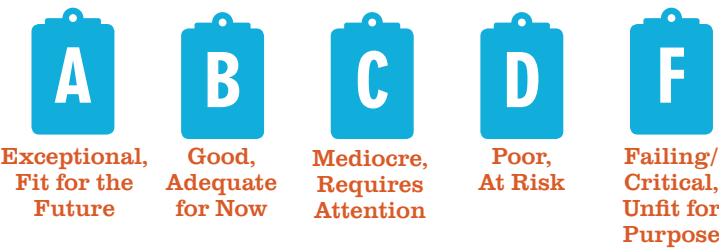


South Carolina Grades



About the Grades

The 2026 Report Card for South Carolina’s Infrastructure was written by a committee of civil engineers across South Carolina who volunteered their time to collect and analyze data, prepare and review their findings and present their conclusions. The committee worked with staff from ASCE National and ASCE’s Committee on America’s Infrastructure to provide a snapshot of our state’s infrastructure, as it relates to us locally and on a national level. The Report Card Sections are graded based on the following eight criteria: capacity, condition, funding, future need, operation and maintenance, public safety, resilience and innovation. ASCE defines these grades as follows:



Solutions to Raise the Grade

- 1 SUSTAIN AND GROW STATE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT.** The IJA has demonstrated what dedicated investment can achieve. South Carolina must develop long-term funding strategies — including dependable revenue streams — to sustain infrastructure investment as uncertainty remains for future federal funding.
- 2 PRIORITIZE DRINKING WATER AND WASTEWATER AS PUBLIC HEALTH IMPERATIVES.** With 317 drinking water violations in 2024 (up 70% year-over-year) and sanitary sewer overflows increasing 346% since 2022, these are emerging public health crises. The state should accelerate investment in water system rehabilitation, with particular attention to smaller and underserved systems.
- 3 ENACT A COMPREHENSIVE DAM SAFETY FUNDING PROGRAM.** South Carolina’s dam inventory continues to age while downstream development continues. The current \$3 million Dam Repair Assistance Grant Program is a start, but over 1,800 high-hazard dams — many privately owned — require a sustained, substantially larger investment program complemented by robust inspection and enforcement capacity.
- 4 ADDRESS BRIDGE DETERIORATION BEFORE IT ACCELERATES.** With only 34.5% of bridges in good condition (below the national average of 44%) and 3,000 bridges over 60 years old, the state must increase bridge investment now to prevent further deterioration and avoid the far greater cost of emergency replacements.
- 5 EXPAND PUBLIC TRANSIT TO SERVE A GROWING STATE.** The state’s Mass Transit Fund should be doubled from \$6 million to \$12 million annually as a first step, supporting local transit systems in developing capital plans to meet projected demand.
- 6 BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE WORKFORCE OF THE FUTURE.** South Carolina should invest in workforce development at every level — from vocational training for operators to university programs producing the next generation of civil engineers.
- 7 PLAN FOR RESILIENCE — NOT JUST RECOVERY.** Eleven federal disaster declarations in four years is a warning. South Carolina should adopt resilience standards for new infrastructure, require resilience analyses for major capital projects, and develop pre-disaster mitigation strategies.

About ASCE-South Carolina

The South Carolina Section of ASCE has been serving the profession and the community since 1934. The section currently serves the entire state of South Carolina as well as Richmond, Columbia and Lincoln counties in Georgia through six branches, several younger member groups and three active student chapters (Clemson, University of South Carolina and The Citadel).

The section, branches, younger member groups and student chapters provide professional development to members, assist members throughout their career and help them to serve the community.

With our commitment to serve and protect the public in mind, the Report Card released by the ASCE South Carolina Section is a public, voluntary service to citizens and policymakers to inform them of infrastructure needs in their communities.

How You Can Get Involved

Get the full story behind this Report Card at www.infrastructurereportcard.org/SouthCarolina.

Ask your elected leaders what they’re doing to keep up with your neighborhood’s infrastructure. Use your zip code to get your list of elected officials’ at www.infrastructurereportcard.org/take-action.

INFRASTRUCTURE MATTERS

Infrastructure is the backbone of South Carolina’s economy, public health, and quality of life. When infrastructure fails to keep pace, the costs fall on residents and communities across the state — slowing growth and undermining safety.

South Carolina’s overall infrastructure GPA improved from D+ in 2021 to C- in 2026 — a step forward driven by state and federal investment. However, a C- still means infrastructure is in mediocre condition, requiring continued attention. Seven of eight categories remain within a D or C range, and two categories — Drinking Water and Bridges — declined since 2021.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) delivered significant federal funding, including more than \$182 million to drinking water systems, a historic \$80 million state investment in aviation, and a highway program that grew from \$1 billion in 2009 to \$6.2 billion in 2024. Charleston Harbor was deepened to 52 feet, making it the deepest port on the East Coast. Safety improved alongside investment: traffic fatality rates fell from 2.1 to 1.7 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, dam safety staffing quadrupled, and aviation NextGen technologies improved aircraft sequencing.

The passage of the SCDOT Modernization Act (S.831) in 2026, enacted after the data collection period for this Report Card closed and therefore not reflected in the grades, signals South Carolina’s commitment to a successor strategy. By elevating transportation leadership to a cabinet-level position, streamlining environmental permitting, expanding public-private partnership tools, and mandating faster repair turnarounds, the legislation positions the state to deliver infrastructure improvements more efficiently and unlock new investment.

But these gains are uneven. IIJA funding is finite and future funding is uncertain. South Carolina still ranks among the top three states for traffic fatalities per 100,000 vehicle miles traveled. Roads, Drinking Water, and Wastewater face annual funding gaps measured in hundreds of millions of dollars. Without a sustained state-level successor strategy, progress risks stalling or reversing.

South Carolina is at a crossroads. The Palmetto State’s population of 5.6 million is projected to surpass 6.2 million by 2035, placing growing demands on infrastructure.

Climate vulnerability compounds these challenges. Sea levels along South Carolina’s coast have risen approximately 10 inches since 1950, and the rate is accelerating. Seventy-six critical infrastructure assets face regular tidal flooding by mid-century. Hurricane Helene exposed resilience gaps in drinking water systems statewide, while eleven federal disaster declarations between 2022 and 2025 signal growing pressures from extreme weather.

Workforce and innovation gaps are emerging threats. Wastewater and drinking water utilities struggle to attract and retain trained operators, particularly in smaller communities. New initiatives, like the SC Office of Resilience and the state’s first Bus Rapid Transit project, are meaningful steps, but must be matched with sustained workforce investment and proactive, data-driven infrastructure management.

South Carolina’s C- is progress — but a floor, not a ceiling. Closing the gap requires sustained investment, dedicated funding, and long-term commitment. The choices made now will determine whether this momentum continues — or the hard-won progress of the past five years begins to slip away.

2026

REPORT CARD FOR SOUTH CAROLINA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

ASCE
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS

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The 2026 Report Card on South Carolina’s Infrastructure

gave the state an overall GPA of C-. South Carolina’s civil engineers studied eight infrastructure categories. Of those eight, one infrastructure category is in good condition, two are in mediocre condition, and five categories are in poor condition.

The good news is there are solutions to all these challenges, and we can raise the grades of South Carolina’s infrastructure. By learning more today about the conditions of the infrastructure you use every day, you too can help raise the grade.

Aviation C-

South Carolina’s aviation system, anchored by six commercial airports and a statewide general aviation network, generates billions in annual economic impact and provides critical connectivity for residents, visitors, businesses, and military operations. Passenger traffic continues to grow at all commercial airports, with Charleston (CHS), Myrtle Beach (MYR), and Greenville-Spartanburg (GSP) accounting for nearly 90% of activity. GSP is the state’s leading air cargo hub, followed by Columbia Metropolitan (CAE) with both supporting manufacturing and global logistics. Recent progress has been made due to the influx of state funding, capital improvements, and strengthened safety tools. However, challenges remain: The state’s airports face aging infrastructure, congestion, resilience challenges, rising construction costs, outdated air traffic control technology, workforce shortages, and public safety demands. Meeting future needs will require additional investment in airport infrastructure, modernized Passenger Facility Charges, improved landside access, resilience initiatives, cargo and terminal expansion, workforce development, and technology upgrades.

Bridges C-

South Carolina’s bridges are critical to mobility, commerce, and public safety. As of 2025, the state has 9,504 public bridges, most of which are owned and maintained by the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT). While the system remains functional, it faces increasing challenges from aging infrastructure and long-term funding needs. Since 2021, the percentage of bridges in “good” condition has decreased from 42.2% to 34.5%, while bridges in poor condition have risen from 5.5% to 7.7%. However, inspection data indicate that most bridge components remain in good condition, reflecting the impact of preservation-focused investment. SCDOT maintains the system through regular inspection, preventive maintenance, and asset management practices. Continued innovation and sustained investment will be necessary to manage future demands, reduce backlogs, and maintain system performance. Overall, while targeted investments and preservation strategies have helped maintain system functionality, declining bridge-level conditions and insufficient long-term funding support a slightly lower grade compared to 2021.

Dams D+

South Carolina made measurable progress in dam safety during the 2021–2026 reporting period, shifting toward a more proactive, risk-based approach. As of February 2026, the National Inventory of Dams lists 2,440 dams in the state, up from 2,409 in 2022. South Carolina’s dams average 68 years old, underscoring the need for continued inspection, maintenance, and rehabilitation. Approximately 90% are state-regulated and 4% federally regulated. State and federal investments enabled the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) to expand inspection capacity, staffing, data management, and risk-informed decision-making. However, severe flooding in 2024 caused multiple dam failures, highlighting the vulnerability of aging dams to extreme rainfall and changing climate conditions. Despite this progress, substantial rehabilitation and remediation needs remain. Continued investment is needed to address deficient dams, strengthen emergency preparedness, modernize safety standards, improve downstream land-use planning, and strategically remove dams that no longer serve a necessary purpose.



Drinking Water D

Drinking water in South Carolina is typically managed and provided by local public water systems. At the state-level, the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (SCDES) administers and enforces drinking water quality standards and regulations at these public systems. The number of violations for drinking water utilities increased from 2023 to 2024. The EPA Assessment on anticipated funding needs to update drinking water infrastructure over the next 20 years for the state of South Carolina has also increased from \$6.1 billion in 2018 to \$8 billion as of 2023. The greatest portion of this gap (\$5.5 billion) comes from the need to update distribution and transmission pipelines as many are reaching the end of their life cycle. Urban areas are seen to be making necessary improvements. However, some of the smaller utilities are contributing to the number of water quality violations, and due to a lack of publicly available data, it is unclear how well they are keeping up with system maintenance.

Ports B+

South Carolina’s port system connects businesses to global markets and plays a vital role in key industries such as automotive, aerospace, and advanced manufacturing. Container volumes grew from approximately 1.5 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in FY 2013 to roughly 2.6 million TEUs in FY 2024, an increase of more than 70% over the past decade. To accommodate this growth, the South Carolina Ports Authority completed more than \$2 billion in capital investments between 2013 and 2023, including terminal expansions, harbor deepening, and intermodal facilities. These investments have enhanced the competitiveness of the state’s ports and supported continued economic growth. Despite these advancements, ongoing investment will be necessary to address increasing freight demand, aging infrastructure, and emerging climate-related risks. The long-term performance of South Carolina’s port system will depend not only on the condition and capacity of port facilities, but also on the reliability and resilience of the broader freight transportation network that connects them to markets throughout the state, nation, and world.

Roads D+

South Carolina operates the fourth largest state-owned roadway system in the nation, maintaining more than 90,000 lane-miles and carrying approximately 57.1 billion vehicle miles traveled (VMT) annually. Infrastructure for non-motorized modes such as walking and biking remains limited, particularly outside urban areas, contributing to safety and accessibility challenges. Between 2016 and September of 2024, the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) paved 8,800 miles, improving pavement quality on higher-priority routes. However, approximately 45% of major roads remain in fair or poor condition, costing motorists an estimated \$3 billion annually (\$731 per driver) in vehicle operating expenses. Rapid population growth continues to increase travel demand, congestion, and system strain. South Carolina also ranks among the highest states nationally for traffic fatality rates. Despite recent state and federal investments, transportation needs still exceed available funding by nearly \$1 billion annually, making sustained investment essential to preserve mobility, safety, resilience, and economic competitiveness statewide.



Transit D+

Public transportation in South Carolina provides essential mobility across 41 of the state’s 46 counties, connecting residents to employment, health care, education, and community services, particularly for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and rural populations. In 2024, transit providers delivered approximately 11.7 million passenger trips. Despite this role, transit remains underutilized statewide. Fewer than 1% of workers commute by transit, while approximately 80% rely on single-occupancy vehicles. Although approximately 95% of transit facilities remain in a state of good repair, growing deferred maintenance needs, combined with limited service frequency and geographic coverage constrains the overall performance of South Carolina’s transit system. Funding remains a central challenge. Farebox revenues cover only about 12% of operating costs, and statewide transit funding would need to double from approximately \$6 million to \$12 million annually to meet projected needs through 2050. Major investments signal progress, but sustained state funding, expanded high-frequency service, and resilient infrastructure will be essential to improving mobility and strengthening South Carolina’s transit system.

Wastewater D

South Carolina has seen rapid, concentrated population growth over the past decade, putting strain on wastewater systems along the coast, midlands, and upstate. Many systems, particularly smaller ones, are trying to keep rates affordable while maintaining aging infrastructure. Although reportable sanitary sewer overflows have increased, South Carolina Department of Environmental Services (DES) enforcement actions have fallen. In 2022 and 2023, \$575 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds were distributed directly to wastewater projects throughout the state, helping rehabilitate, expand, and modernize systems. Continued funding is needed to address wastewater infrastructure needs, including increasingly intense weather events and per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) regulations. Workforce trends are concerning, with a declining workforce and high demand for operators and engineers. To raise the grade, South Carolina must continue investing in wastewater infrastructure, resilience, long-term funding, and workforce development. Population growth will continue to strain wastewater systems and regulatory oversight statewide.