



South Carolina
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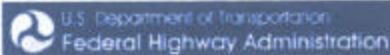
Assessment of Public Opinion of the South Carolina Department of Transportation

The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) has become increasingly aware that South Carolina's population is confused about SCDOT's responsibilities. SCDOT wants to assess the level of confusion as well as the public's perception of how well SCDOT is "doing its job" and whether the South Carolina region of residence has an impact on opinions.



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The Division of Research of The Darla Moore School of Business, University of South Carolina, studied these issues. Conducted from November 2000 through May 2001, focus group interviews and 2,265 telephone surveys composed the research, which considered five South Carolina regions (see map). An abbreviated summary of the research findings is presented herein.



SUMMARY REPORT

Report Number FHWA-SC-01-06
May 2001

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Though primarily a survey design device, the focus group interviews confirmed that South Carolina's public is confused about SCDOT's responsibilities and frustrated with the roadways in terms of paving, roughness, scheduling of work, design, and litter. Focus group members were pleased in general with the SHEP program and roadway enhancements, but thought both should be extended to other areas (or statewide).

TELEPHONE SURVEY

The typical respondent, age 35 to 64 years, identifies his/her community as rural and is employed full time. On average, respondents travel 200 miles per week and have lived in South Carolina 33 years. The typical respondent household has 2 adults and 0.8 children and household income between \$30,000 and \$45,000.

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SCDOT Responsibilities Knowledge

Concerning responsibilities of SCDOT, the apparent source of confusion is responsibilities of the South Carolina Department of

Public Safety. Half or more of respondents incorrectly assign responsibility to SCDOT for motor vehicle registration, drivers' license issuance, and speeding tickets as SCDOT's responsibility, while no more than 60 percent correctly assign responsibility to SCDOT for highway safety campaigns, driveway entrance repair, mass transit, and litter control.

Without prompting, respondents were asked to identify sources of funds for SCDOT. The table below shows the mean percentage of SCDOT's total operating revenue that respondents believe the stated source provides.

Funding Source	mean %
Driver's licenses	3.1
Gasoline taxes	18.7
State government	18.8
Property taxes on cars	18.2
Vehicle registration	2.5
Federal government	9.7
Property taxes on homes	12.2
Taxes on trucks	4.5

The Lowcountry, Midlands, and Pee Dee regions attribute the greatest percentage to gasoline taxes, while respondents in the Upstate and Pee Dee regions attribute greater-than-the-mean percentages to property taxes on homes.

Grading SCDOT's Work

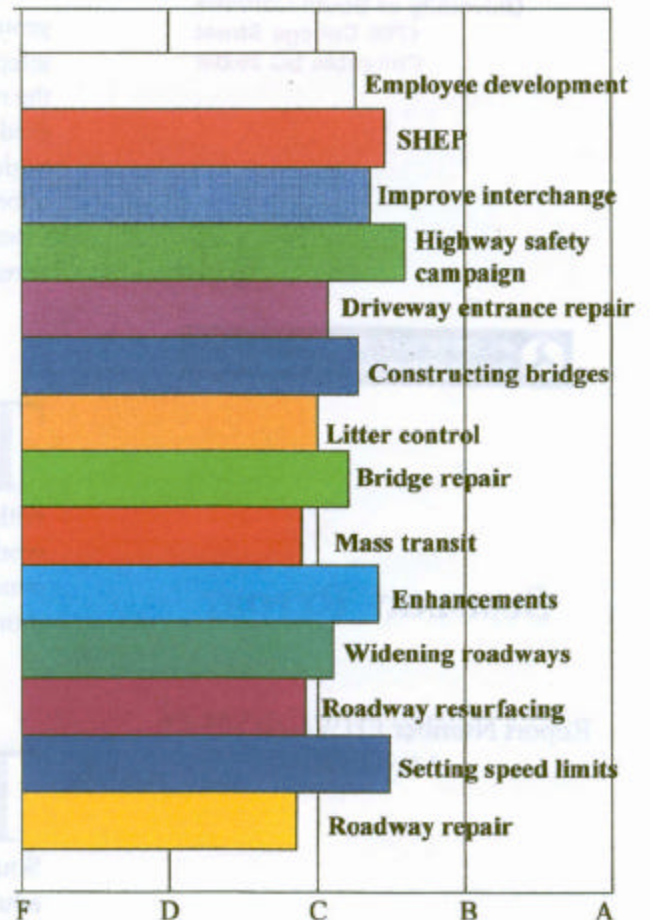
The median overall rating is "about average" for SCDOT's "doing its job" (62% of respondents). More than half of respondents believe South Carolina's Department of Transportation is about the same as departments of transportation in other states. The lowest overall evaluation is given by the Lowcountry, while the highest is given by the Augusta-Aiken region.

As seen in the figure, respondents assign a "C" to all activities listed. Highway safety campaigns, setting speed limits, SHEP, and enhancements receive the highest "C"; resurfacing and repairing roadways and mass transit receive the lowest "C". Typical comments about low ratings include "SCDOT takes too long";

"SCDOT doesn't get the job done"; materials of questionable quality are being used; and designs are flawed.

The Upstate grades roadway repair, resurfacing roadways, litter control, constructing bridges, and employee development programs higher than the statewide mean. Augusta-Aiken grades all activities higher than the statewide mean except SHEP, which received a lower-than-the-mean grade. The Lowcountry grades all activities lower than the statewide mean. The Pee Dee grades setting the speed limit, mass transit, bridge repairing, litter control, constructing bridges, highway safety campaign, and interchange improvement higher than the mean for all respondents. For all activities except employee development programs, the Midlands assigns a grade higher than the statewide mean.

Grade for Activities*



*Rest area maintenance was inadvertently omitted from the grade assignment section of the survey instrument.

The research was conducted at The University of South Carolina by the Division of Research of The Darla Moore School of Business (Principal Investigator: Sandra J. Teel, 803-777-2510; steel@darla.badm.sc.edu). For further information, contact Terry Swygert at SCDOT (803-737-6652; swygerttl@dot.state.sc.us).