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Contact: Terah Boyd, Southern Environmental Law Center: 678-234-7990, tboyd@selcga.org

ALDOT plan dumps millions into failed Northern Beltline project
Days left to comment on latest ALDOT proposal

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.-- While infrastructure around the state crumbles, the Alabama Department of Transportation continues to dump money into the failed Northern Beltline project—a proposed 52-mile bypass north of Birmingham.

ALDOT has proposed spending more than \$460 million on the Northern Beltline in the 2024 [Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan](#). The four-year plan uses federal money on projects across the state. Alabamians have until June 27 to [comment](#) on the proposals and the final round of in person meetings are scheduled for this evening in [Birmingham, Montgomery, and Fayette](#).

For more than a decade, the Southern Environmental Law Center, on behalf of the Black Warrior Riverkeeper, has fought to stop this unnecessary project. This week, SELC submitted a [letter](#) to ALDOT outlining why the project is a waste of taxpayer money and environmentally reckless.

The Northern Beltline is projected to cost the people of Alabama more than \$5 billion, or \$96.3 million per mile—one of the most expensive per mile ever built in the nation. ALDOT's own transportation plans indicate the entire Beltline would take approximately 60-75 years to complete. Although this project was proposed in the 1960s, only the draining and grading of a 1.34-mile section is completed. If completed, the road would only relieve 1-3% of traffic on I-20/59 through downtown Birmingham.

“The people of Alabama need real transportation solutions and safe roads—not taxpayer money wasted on this farce of a project,” said Sarah Stokes, Senior Attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center. “This outdated, unnecessary highway lacks mandatory environmental review and permitting, is relying on an environmental study that is 26 years old, and as a whole does not represent metro Birmingham’s current day needs.”

The Northern Beltline would cross tributaries of the Black Warrior and Cahaba Rivers in 90 places, the primary source of drinking water for Birmingham and surrounding communities. The current proposed route is the most environmentally destructive of the seven routes initially considered by ALDOT.

“Not only is the Northern Beltline a bottomless money pit, it’s a reckless threat to our water resources,” said Black Warrior Riverkeeper Nelson Brooke. “This project is designed to pad the pockets of wealthy landowners and developers while more pressing statewide transportation needs and safety upgrades that would actually benefit Alabamians are left behind.”

The proposed highway has served as [a posterchild for years on failed approaches to transportation infrastructure](#), and was absent from [a 2016 map of Alabama’s 50 most-pressing road needs](#).

Northern Beltline project fact sheet

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The Southern Environmental Law Center is one of the nation's most powerful defenders of the environment, rooted in the South. With a long track record, SELC takes on the toughest environmental challenges in court, in government, and in our communities to protect our region's air, water, climate, wildlife, lands, and people. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the organization has a staff of 200, including more than 100 attorneys, and is headquartered in Charlottesville, Va., with offices in Asheville, Atlanta, Birmingham, Chapel Hill, Charleston, Nashville, Richmond, and Washington, D.C.

southernenvironment.org

Black Warrior Riverkeeper's mission is to protect and restore the Black Warrior River and its tributaries. The citizen-based nonprofit organization promotes clean water for the sake of public health, recreation and wildlife habitat throughout the Black Warrior River watershed.

blackwarriorriver.org/