



CHARLOTTE
REGIONAL BUSINESS
ALLIANCE®



**20
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LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



01

BUSINESS CLIMATE

A strong business climate has led to tremendous growth in the Charlotte Region. Businesses recognize the talented workforce, affordable utilities, access to health care, low cost of doing business, and high quality of life available in the region. For the past two years, North Carolina was named the top state in the nation to do business and tourism continues to be a leading industry from the mountains to the coast.

The **CHARLOTTE REGIONAL BUSINESS ALLIANCE®** is committed to nurturing and further improving the business climate in the Carolinas with the goal of creating the most vibrant, innovative, and healthy economy in the nation.

PRIORITY NO. 1:

CONTINUE TO BE THE BEST PLACE IN THE WORLD TO DO BUSINESS

- > Ensure that businesses can operate within the free market. Oppose unnecessary governmental engagement and regulations and legislation that increase cost, reduce consumer choice, hamper innovation, and limit technology advancement and availability.
- > Support engagement between government and business during the consideration of permitting and impact fees to quantify the financial impact of such decision-making on businesses and ensure there are no unintended consequences. Advocate for swift local review policies to avoid regulatory slowdowns.
- > Support innovative solutions to business issues, including enhancing the fintech and insurtech regulatory sandbox.
- > Support the continuation and expansion of existing economic development incentive programs and creation of programs to assist early-stage startups. Promote certainty in qualifying for incentives.
- > Promote policies that ensure job creators can stay competitive in attracting and retaining talent, while appropriately managing risk.
- > Pursue civil justice reform to enhance fairness in state courts.
- > Support policies that expand trade and investment opportunities for all businesses to encourage economic growth, jobs, and a fair playing field.
- > Protect retailers and consumers from organized retail theft that results in lost revenue and higher costs.
- > Support Right to Work laws for private and public employees and promote certainty in state labor laws.

KEY FACTS

PRIORITY NO. 1:

- > In 2022 and 2023, CNBC ranked North Carolina as the #1 state in the country for business.
- > In 2022, Area Development ranked South Carolina as the #3 state for doing business.
- > Since 2007 in North Carolina, more than \$3.8B in economic development project grants have led to the creation of 58,000 jobs, the retention of 217,000 jobs, and \$13.9B+ in private investment.
- > Since 2006, South Carolina has awarded 398 economic incentive grants totaling \$311M, leading to the creation of nearly 56,000 jobs and over \$21B in private investment.
- > In 2022, NC exported \$40.1B in goods, including pharmaceutical products (\$9.17B) and industrial machinery (\$5.71B).
- > SC had over \$31.5 billion in exports in 2022, up 6% over 2021. SC continues to remain the nation's top exporter of completed passenger motor vehicles and tires.
- > Nationally, the cost of tort liability is increasing annually, especially for small businesses. Businesses with less than \$1M in annual revenue can expect to incur \$44.80 in tort liability per thousand dollars of revenue generated.





PRIORITY NO. 2

LEAD THE COUNTRY ON REASONABLE TAX POLICY

The CLT Alliance supports tax policies that encourage business expansion and growth.

- > Support efforts that reduce and provide a path to eliminate the state franchise tax in North Carolina.
- > Support policies that overhaul and create a business-friendly tax code in the Carolinas.
- > Support the continued exemption of business inputs.
- > Maintain competitive and fair property tax rates.

KEY FACTS



PRIORITY NO. 2:

- > According to the Tax Foundation, South Carolina ranked 31st and North Carolina ranked 10th in their 2023 State Business Tax Climate Index.¹
 - South Carolina continues to make progress toward comprehensive tax reform with changes to individual income tax and property taxes.²
 - North Carolina had solid rankings across the board, including a top-five ranking for corporate income tax rate.
- > In 2022, South Carolina lowered the individual tax rate from 7.0% to 6.5%, with the rate eventually being reduced to 6.0% over time if revenue triggers are met.
- > The corporate tax rate in North Carolina will be phased out completely by 2030.

¹ <https://taxfoundation.org/2023-state-business-tax-climate-index/>

² South Carolina: A Road Map For Tax Reform | Tax Foundation

PRIORITY NO. 3:

MAINTAIN A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE CAROLINAS

- > Support policies that encourage the cultural arts, travel, professional sports, events, and other things that make the Charlotte Region attractive for economic development and tourism.
- > Support policies and regulations that curb violence in the workplace and protect employees and customers, promoting public safety in our communities.



KEY FACTS

PRIORITY NO. 3:

- > A healthy tourism sector raises the region's profile with visitors, showcases the community's southern hospitality, helps support broader economic development initiatives, and provides revenue to invest in our community.³ The benefits of a strong visitor economy reach across a community, including employment opportunities, local business support, visitor spending, and increased quality of life.
- > In 2022, Mecklenburg County led the state in visitor spending, receiving \$5.3B, an increase of 31% compared to 2021. Mecklenburg has the largest number of direct tourism employees with 33,627, an increase of 18% from 2021.
- > In 2022, South Carolina hit record highs for tourism spending with the hospitality industry raking in \$29 billion—of which \$6.6 billion was lodging revenue.
- > According to the Charlotte Sports Foundation, its 2022 events had an estimated economic impact of \$77.2M, which included \$41.9M in direct visitor spending and 80,773 hotel room night stays.
- > The Charlotte Hornets and the Spectrum Center provide a \$376M+ annual economic impact and provide 3,200 jobs.
- > After legalizing sports wagering, other Southeastern states have realized significant tax revenue:
 - Virginia: over \$64M from October 2022 through August 2023.
 - Tennessee: over \$75M from November 2022 through September 2023.

3 CRVA-FY2021-Annual-Report-FINAL.pdf (d2j8c2rj2f9b78.cloudfront.net)



02

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

The **CHARLOTTE REGIONAL BUSINESS ALLIANCE®** enthusiastically collaborates to promote and advance the Charlotte Region, creating opportunity, economic growth, and prosperity for all. The CLT Alliance influences and informs economic and social policies to ensure the highest quality of life in the region.

The Charlotte Region comprises 16 counties in two states, with businesses operating in urban, suburban, and rural environments. Ensuring economic opportunity is available to all businesses and residents in the region is a key driver for the CLT Alliance.



PRIORITY NO. 1:

PROVIDE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

- > Ensure affordable and workforce housing is available to accommodate population growth and community needs, such as aging in place, while supporting participation in rental assistance programs.
- > Support efforts to improve access to capital, especially for small businesses and entrepreneurs from diverse or marginalized communities.
- > Support policies that promote efficiency and modernization in the criminal justice system, including expanding staffing capacity to align with best practice standards.
- > Support policies that enable local municipalities to waive certain fees on affordable housing projects.
- > Support policies that advance digital inclusion, including availability in affordable and workforce housing.

PRIORITY NO. 1:

- > The City of Charlotte has invested significantly in affordable housing, including \$150M in the last three bond cycles (2018, 2020, and 2022).
- > A strong public safety network and criminal justice system is critical to maintain the viability of businesses and the region's strong record of business recruitment and tourism attraction.
- > A recent survey of small business owners found that 56% have been victims of shoplifting this year, 50% stated the issue has gotten worse, and 46% have been forced to increase their prices due to shoplifting.⁴
- > Compared to the top 30 U.S. metros, the NC Prosecutorial District 26 is woefully under-resourced, creating challenges in talent attraction and retention of prosecutors and significant delays in case management.
 - In Mecklenburg County, Assistant District Attorneys have a starting salary of \$52,000, with an average salary for all ADA's of \$78,600.
 - In Fulton County, GA (Atlanta), the starting salary for an ADA is \$85,000. In Davidson County, TN (Nashville), the starting salary is \$64,000.

KEY FACTS

⁴ <https://www.uschamber.com/small-business/retail-crime-hurts-small-businesses>

KEY FACTS

PRIORITY NO. 2:

SUPPORT ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

- > Support Medicaid expansion as a key policy needed to help close the health insurance coverage gap that includes provisions for operational flexibility and applicable funding for implementation.
- > Promote efforts to ensure health care accessibility and affordability for individuals and employers to improve the physical and mental health of our community and attract and retain a skilled workforce.
- > Facilitate telehealth coverage and licensure solutions that increase access to care for patients.
- > Support innovation and research and development investments in the region, including the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Health.

PRIORITY NO. 2:

- > With the implementation of Medicaid, 600,000 North Carolinians will gain access to coverage, driving \$2.9B in new business and health care activity, along with 37,200 new jobs statewide.
- > According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, if South Carolina expanded Medicaid eligibility, 188,000 uninsured nonelderly adults would become eligible for coverage.





03

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE

Attracting and retaining talented workers is critical to the Charlotte Region's continued growth. From leading colleges, universities, and community colleges to the region's K-12 schools, the business community is committed to supporting a world-class education system that prepares the workforce of tomorrow. Work has changed post-pandemic, and employers continue to adjust to the shifting demands of the labor market. Education institutions and employers must continue to collaborate to ensure that classroom learning is calibrated to workplace needs.

Appropriate investments must be made to ensure education institutions at all levels have the resources needed to achieve success for students and employers.

PRIORITY NO. 1:

INNOVATIVELY ADDRESS WORKFORCE SHORTAGES FOR EMPLOYERS IN THE CHARLOTTE REGION

- > Advocate for streamlined regulatory processes that allow easier entry into the workforce for the talent pipeline, including in health care, aviation and aerospace, transportation and logistics, and other in-demand fields.
- > Invest in targeted research innovations at UNC Charlotte, USC Lancaster, Johnson C. Smith, Winthrop, and all four-year colleges and universities and Community Colleges to focus on infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, energy, data analytics, life sciences, and other fields to assist industries in economic recovery and health-related discoveries.
- > Support second-chance hiring to advance equity and meet the workforce needs of employers.
- > The childcare ecosystem must be recalibrated to be responsive to the needs of the post-pandemic workforce. Support policies that address workforce and access shortages.
- > Increase program and degree capacity and workforce training opportunities for in-demand careers.
- > Support licensing reforms and joining state licensure compacts that allow health care providers to fill in-demand openings and to facilitate practice across state lines, leading to greater access to care for patients.
- > Promote policies that support military families in the Carolinas. This includes streamlined professional licensing, subject to relevant licensing regulations, for military spouses and veterans who are in good standing in other jurisdictions, in-state tuition for spouses and children of military families, and continued support for hiring of and expansion of job training opportunities for veterans and reservists.
- > Support immigration policy that contributes to talent pool growth in high-demand fields.
- > Support mental health coverage and funding for all populations, including members of the workforce in need of services that create stability and certainty in their work-life balance.



KEY FACTS

PRIORITY NO. 1:

> **CHILDCARE AS A WORKFORCE PRIORITY**

According to Leading on Opportunity, 200,000 North Carolina parents cite lack of childcare as the primary barrier to employment. According to a U.S. Chamber survey, women are participating in the labor force at the lowest rates since the 1970s. In the spring of 2020, 3.5 million mothers left their job, driving the labor force participation rate for working moms from around 70% to 55%.

> **ADDRESSING THE NATIONAL CDL SHORTAGE**

North Carolina and South Carolina participate in the “Even Exchange Program,” designed to address the national shortage of truck drivers. This program allows qualified military personnel with driving experience to be exempt from certain testing when obtaining a commercial driver’s license (CDL).

> **SECOND-CHANCE HIRING PROVIDES A PATHWAY TO WORK FOR MILLIONS**

The Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond and The Brookings Institution found that 45% of formerly incarcerated people remain unemployed one year after their release. Additionally, incarceration leads to lower lifetime income earnings, ranging from \$267,000 to \$1,000,000, and persistently lower employment rates later in life.

> **UPDATING IMMIGRATION POLICY**

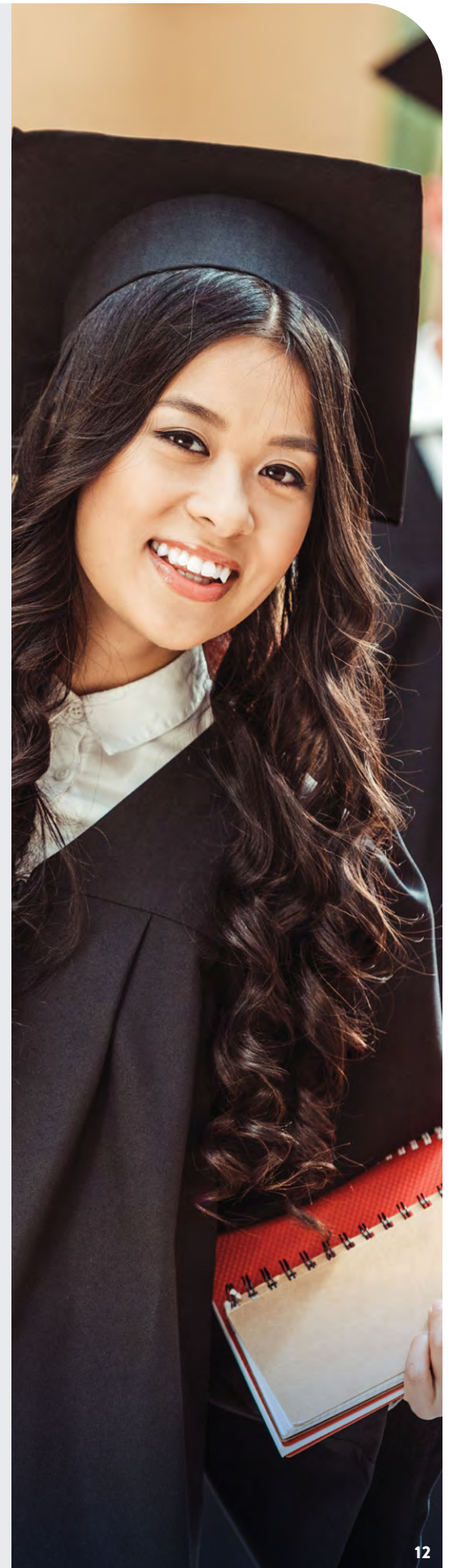
According to the U.S Chamber, for every six individuals seeking an H-1B visa to work in a highly skilled field, only one of them would succeed in obtaining a visa to work in the country.



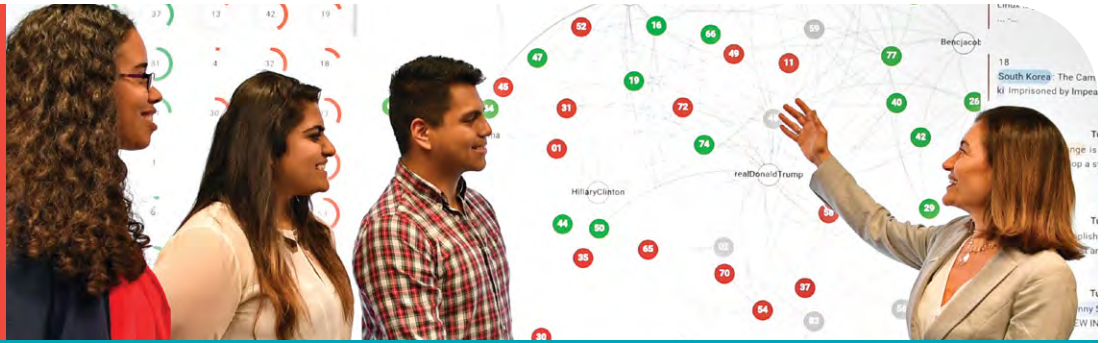
PRIORITY NO. 2:

SUPPORT THE MISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND K-12 SCHOOLS IN EDUCATING STUDENTS

- Support education and workforce development funding that meets the needs of students, workers, and employers, including skilled trades and apprenticeships.
- Support completion of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by all high school students.
- Support funding for the advancement of UNC Charlotte into a top-tier research institution. Research drives innovation, job creation, and investments and spurs economic development.
- Support funding for UNC Charlotte's growing enrollment.
- Support continued investment in compensation for education personnel from pre-K through higher education, including funding to address teacher shortages and equitable teacher funding supplements across all counties.
- Support efforts to reform K-12, community colleges and universities to allow for local flexibility in items such as: managing budget issues; recruiting, retaining, and promoting the best talent; and creating innovation for academic success.
- Support the continued funding of classroom enrollment growth in early childhood programs, pre-K, K-12, community colleges and public universities to meet the demand for talent in the Charlotte Region.
- Support policies that will expedite the completion of 2 million North Carolinians having a post-secondary degree or credential.
- Revise the school report card system to recognize achievement, growth and CTE credentialing so that businesses have a better understanding of the performance of their local schools. In particular, the report card system should recognize the unique challenges of remote and hybrid learning.



KEY FACTS



PRIORITY NO. 2:

THE REGION'S HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS LEAD THE WAY.

UNC CHARLOTTE has a \$2.1 billion+ economic impact on the Charlotte Region. The university enrolls over 30,000 students and is the third largest institution in the UNC system. 40% of the incoming class in 2023 are enrolled in STEM majors. UNC Charlotte received \$73.2 million in research awards in 2022-2023. With 70,000 graduates remaining in the Charlotte region upon graduation, UNC Charlotte is a leading contributor to the workforce. The university is taking steps to become a top-tier research institution, which will enhance economic development and industry growth in the region.

JOHNSON C. SMITH UNIVERSITY boasts 23 degree-seeking programs and serves over 1,000 students as the #1 private HBCU in North Carolina according to U.S. News and World Report. JCSU will receive \$80 million in funding as part of the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative. The funding will be used to transform JCSU into a top-tier, career-focused HBCU.

WINTHROP UNIVERSITY ranks 6th among Southern public universities according to U.S. News and is among the best southeast colleges for 15+ years according to the Princeton Review. The university has nearly 800 undergraduate students engaged in research. The nearly 4,000 undergraduate students can choose from among 46 majors.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN THE CHARLOTTE REGION, INCLUDING CENTRAL PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND YORK TECHNICAL COLLEGE PROVIDE IN-DEMAND TRAINING THAT EMPLOYERS NEED

CENTRAL PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE has provided educational opportunities for all and served as a primary workforce provider for more than 60 years. Today, with six campuses and two centers, Central Piedmont offers nearly 300 degree, diploma, and certificate programs, plus an array of non-credit offerings. Central Piedmont enrolls approximately 43,600 students annually in for-credit programs, continuing education, and basic skills courses, making it one of the largest colleges in the Carolinas. In addition to multiple transfer programs and direct tracks to four-year institutions, Central Piedmont offers more than 30 career and technical pathways designed to help students get a head start on a great career. These programs prioritize hands-on learning and relevant workplace skills to make students career ready. The college also makes a significant economic impact, contributing almost \$1 billion annually to the Mecklenburg County economy.

YORK TECHNICAL COLLEGE enrolls approximately 6,000 students and has an economic impact of \$192M.

BUSINESS NEEDS TALENT. TALENT NEEDS TEACHERS. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, South Carolina has the 11th lowest and North Carolina the 18th lowest average teacher salaries in the country. According to this study, the average teacher salary in 2022 in South Carolina was \$53,393 and \$53,644 in North Carolina.



04

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure is a leading factor impacting business growth in the Charlotte Region. To sustain the growth experienced in the region in recent years, the foundational building blocks of infrastructure—roads and bridges, water, sewer, electricity, gas, and broadband—must be delivered to businesses and consumers in an affordable and efficient way. Appropriate levels of funding must be maintained to ensure the continued usefulness of the region’s infrastructure. This includes supporting funding for diverse mobility options throughout the region and continued investment in critical infrastructure such as Charlotte Douglas International Airport, one of the region’s leading economic development assets. All investment should be made through an equitable lens, ensuring that all residents have mobility options to suit their needs.

PRIORITY NO. 1:

SUPPORT FUNDING OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE REGION

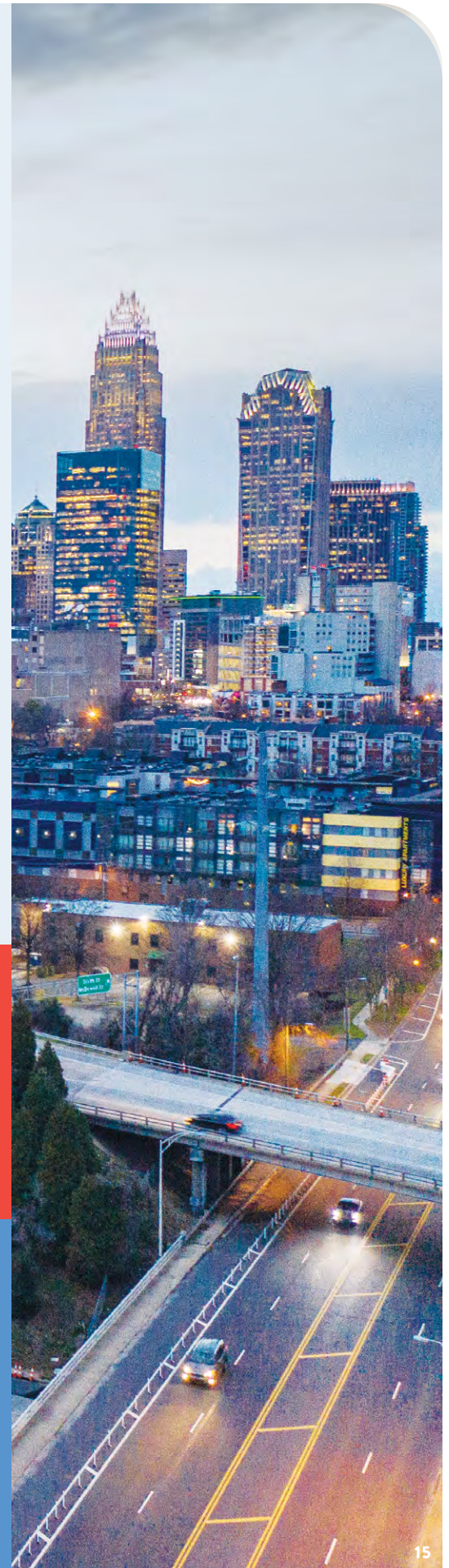
- > Be the voice of business in advocating for allocation of state and federal funding for significant projects in the Charlotte Region.
- > Advocate for a modernized transportation funding structure to improve our quality of life and meet the demands of a growing state in an increasingly competitive business environment.
- > Support the Strategic Transportation Investments Program for prioritization of transportation funding.
- > Support legislation that provides dedicated, stable, and permanent sources of revenues for State, regional, and local public transportation, roadway, bicycle, pedestrian, greenway, passenger rail, and safety projects, and allows for voter input when appropriate.
- > Support legislation around the weather radar gaps in the Charlotte region. The region's closest National Weather Service (NWS) radar station with the most current technology is nearly 100 miles away, meaning later detection of natural disasters that affect the region.

PRIORITY NO. 1:

THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE BILL PROVIDES BILLIONS IN SPENDING IN THE CAROLINAS

- > \$7.8B over five years in NC and \$4.9B over five years in SC for highways and bridges.
- > \$109M over five years in NC and \$70M over five years in SC to support the expansion of EV charging networks.
- > \$460M over five years in NC and \$161M over five years in SC for infrastructure development at airports.

KEY FACTS





PRIORITY NO. 2:

MODERNIZE THE CHARLOTTE REGION'S TRANSPORTATION NETWORK AND INFRASTRUCTURE-RELATED POLICIES

- > Increase alternative methods of delivering critical infrastructure, including transportation projects, by removing the statutory cap on public-private partnerships and expanding the utilization of reimbursement agreements.
- > Support smart policies and regulations for next generation personal and commercial mobility systems.
- > Support universities and private businesses partnering to find innovative solutions to meet the region's infrastructure needs.
- > Support policies to increase the region's ability to support electric vehicle and semiconductor supply chains and efforts to solidify the Carolinas as a leader in battery and semiconductor production.
- > Establish an inland port along the I-77 corridor in South Carolina and support existing facilities, including the Ports of Wilmington and Charleston to promote economic growth in the Carolinas.

KEY FACTS

PRIORITY NO. 2:

SC INLAND PORTS AS KEY ECONOMIC DRIVER

- > Ports in South Carolina had an \$86.7B economic impact, generating \$1.5B in state tax revenue in FY23. Inland Ports Dillon and Greer recorded strong growth, totaling 185,956 rail lifts in FY23.

KEY FACTS

PRIORITY NO. 3:

SUPPORT EXISTING FRAMEWORKS THAT DELIVER AFFORDABLE AND RELIABLE SERVICES

- > Support legislative action to reduce carbon emissions, modernize the grid, and keep energy prices as affordable as possible.
- > Support policies that promote private sector investment in next generation broadband and 5G technologies and infrastructure that promote digital inclusion.
- > Support cybersecurity improvements critical to accelerating our 21st century economy for the Charlotte Region.

PRIORITY NO. 3:

THE FUTURE OF INFRASTRUCTURE

- > Telecommunication providers are investing billions annually in wireless and wireline networks throughout the Carolinas. This investment includes hundreds of millions in the Charlotte Region to ensure residents and businesses stay connected.
- > Via executive order, (Gov. Cooper) North Carolina has set a goal of increasing the manufacture and use of zero-emission vehicles. Gov. McMaster issued an executive order to improve coordination of EV-related investment, workforce development, and infrastructure.
- > North Carolina has approximately 3,586 public electric vehicle charging ports, and South Carolina has approximately 1,183.
- > Utility providers in the Charlotte Region have charted ambitious carbon reduction goals and are taking steps to meet these goals in the coming years.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

- > According to the NC First Commission, in order to achieve a good infrastructure rating, the state must increase the level of investment by at least \$20 billion over the next 10 years.
- > I-77 Express, a public-private partnership, was completed in November 2019, and by September 2023, drivers have taken 45 million trips on the managed lanes.



Courtesy of Charlotte Douglas International Airport



Courtesy of Charlotte Douglas International Airport

PRIORITY NO. 4:

SUPPORT THE AVIATION INDUSTRY THROUGHOUT THE CHARLOTTE REGION

- > Promote modernization of technologies and procedures that advance efficiencies in the airspace and national aviation system, including air traffic control capabilities, airport infrastructure, and policies addressing commercial spaceflight and unmanned aircraft.
- > Support CLT's application for federal and state infrastructure funding.
- > Continue the low-cost, efficient business model that has helped make CLT into one of the most successful airports in the world.
- > Support the permanent extension of the jet fuel sales tax exemption in North Carolina.
- > Promote research, development, and production incentives to accelerate the use of sustainable aviation fuel.
- > Support the North Carolina Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding formula for capital improvements at the State's commercial service airports.

PRIORITY NO. 4:

CHARLOTTE DOUGLAS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT: A GLOBAL HUB WITH A SIGNIFICANT LOCAL IMPACT

- > CLT generated \$32B in economic impact and \$1.82B in tax revenue. The airport generates \$9.9B in personal income.
- > With approximately 48M passengers in 2022, CLT is ranked No. 7 in the U.S and world for air traffic.
- > Commercial aviation drives \$72B in economic activity, while supporting 330,000 jobs in North Carolina.
- > North Carolina is a leader nationally on tax and fee burdens on jet fuel—ranking as the 6th best state in the country. Without legislative action to continue the exemption, costs will increase for passengers and lead to reduced tourism and economic growth.
 - States around the southeast have competitive tax rates on jet fuel and North Carolina would be at a significant competitive disadvantage if the jet fuel sales tax exemption is not made permanent.
 - After labor, jet fuel is the airline industry's second largest cost center, constituting 20% of total operating expenses.

KEY FACTS



CHARLOTTE
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To learn more and to schedule a meeting,
please contact a member of our Advocacy Team.

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