



**CHARLOTTE**  
REGIONAL BUSINESS  
**ALLIANCE®**



**20**  
**25**

**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, and low cost of doing business in the region. A high quality of life that includes access to cultural assets and safe neighborhoods and communities is critical to a thriving economic environment. North Carolina has been named a 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**<sup>®</sup> 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

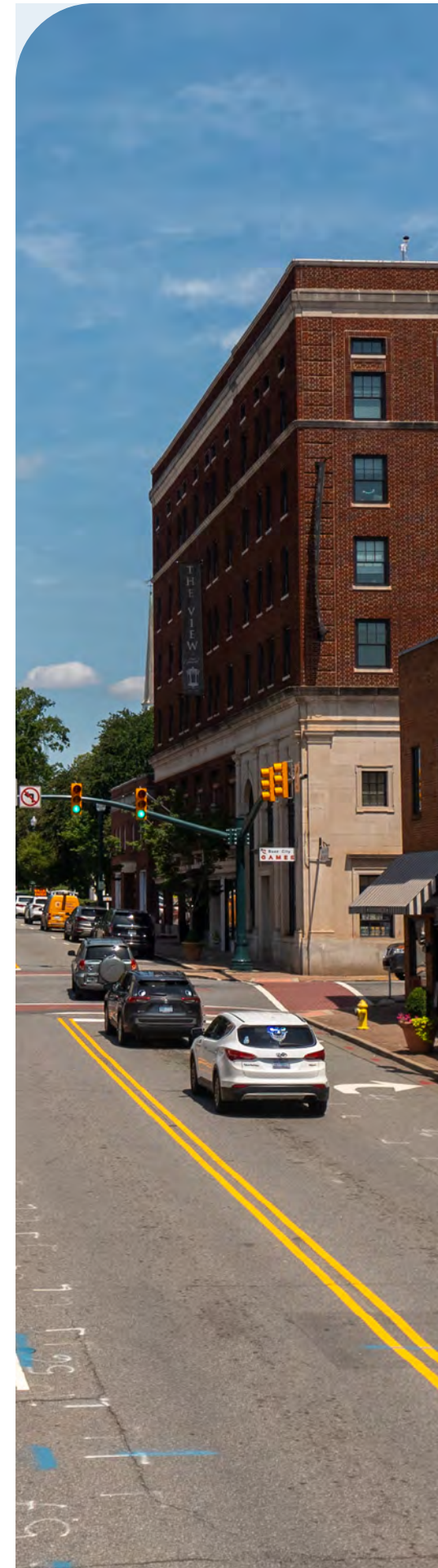
- > Ensure that businesses can operate within the free market. Oppose unnecessary governmental engagement and regulations and legislation that increase cost, reduce consumer choice, hamper innovation, and limit technology advancement and availability.
- > Support AI and consumer data privacy and protection policies that contribute to seamless state and federal regulatory regimes, based upon consistency, recognition of existing oversight, and risk-based, industry-specific, and tailored approaches that contemplate ongoing technological advances.
- > 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:

- > CNBC has consistently ranked North Carolina as a top state in the country for business, including No. 1 in 2022 and 2023.
- > In 2024, Area Development ranked South Carolina and North Carolina in its top five states for doing business.
- > Since 2007 in North Carolina, more than \$4.7B in economic development project grants have led to the creation of 71,000 jobs, the retention of 286,000 jobs, and \$17.3B+ in private investment.
- > In 2023, South Carolina announced \$9.22B in total capital investment, representing 81 projects and 14,120 announced jobs.
- > According to the U.S. Chamber, the nation's tort system cost Americans \$529B in 2022. North Carolina accounted for \$10.7B and South Carolina \$7.5B.



## 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 competitive, business-friendly tax code in the Carolinas.
- > Support the continued exemption of business inputs.
- > Maintain competitive and fair property tax rates.
- > Advocate for the immediate expensing of research and development (R&D) costs.

## KEY FACTS

### PRIORITY NO. 2:

- > According to the Tax Foundation, North Carolina ranked 12, and South Carolina ranked 33 in their 2025 State Business Tax Climate Index. Both North Carolina and South Carolina have competitive corporate tax rates but other states continue to modify their tax codes to further attract businesses.





**PRIORITY NO. 3:**

**MAINTAIN A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE  
IN THE CAROLINAS**

- > Support policies that encourage the cultural assets, travel, professional sports, events, and other things that make the Charlotte Region attractive for economic development and tourism.
- > Support policies that promote efficiency and modernization in the criminal justice system, including expanding staffing capacity to align with best practice standards.
- > Advocate for increased pay for District Attorneys and police officers to provide greater resources intended to improve public safety.
- > Support policies and regulations that curb violence in the workplace and protect employees and customers, promoting public safety in our communities.



**PRIORITY NO. 3:**

- > A healthy tourism sector raises the region’s profile with visitors, helps support broader economic development initiatives, and provides revenue to invest in our community. In 2023, Mecklenburg County received \$5.8B, up 9.6%, in traveler expenditures to lead all counties. Mecklenburg has the largest number of direct tourism employees with (36,310) an increase of 8% from 2022.
- > The tourism sector is a major economic driver in South Carolina, with an estimated annual impact of over \$29B, according to data from the South Carolina Parks, Recreation, and Tourism agency. The state’s tourism industry also helps ease the tax burden, reducing annual taxes for each resident by nearly \$1,000 through tourism-related tax collections.
- > According to the Charlotte Sports Foundation, its 2023 events had an economic impact of \$79.7M, generating \$42.9M in direct spending, \$2.5M in taxes with 70,500 hotel rooms booked.
- > The Charlotte Hornets and the Spectrum Center provide a \$376M+ annual economic impact and provide 3,200 jobs.
- > The CLT Alliance successfully advocated for the passage of sports wagering in 2023, with wagering beginning in March of 2024. Since then, the state has realized approximately \$85M in tax revenue.

**KEY FACTS**



**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. Through our convenings and programs, we seek to make social capital available to small business owners and entrepreneurs. The CLT Alliance influences and informs economic and social policies to ensure the highest quality of life in the region.

The Charlotte Region comprises 14 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 enable local municipalities to waive certain fees on affordable housing projects.
- > Support policies that advance digital inclusion, including availability in affordable and workforce housing.
- > Support adaptive re-use of buildings to help meet housing demand.
- > Advocate for policies that address child care funding gaps and ensure access to safe, reliable child care services for families in the workforce.

**PRIORITY NO. 1:**

- > The City of Charlotte has invested significantly in affordable housing, including \$250M in the last four bond cycles (2018, 2020, 2022, 2024).
- > 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. In 2024, the CLT Alliance successfully advocated for the reinstatement of six city ordinances to address safety concerns in Uptown Charlotte.
- > Retail crime remains an issue among business owners, particularly small businesses. According to Forbes, a recent survey of small business owners found that 85% of small business retailers experience theft at least once a year and 75% of small businesses experience theft at least monthly. 64% have increased prices to make up for theft losses.
- > The North Carolina Prosecutorial District 26, covering Mecklenburg County, is 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 around \$60,000.

**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.
- > Advocate for streamlined regulatory processes that allow easier entry into the workforce for the talent pipeline, including in health care and other in-demand fields.
- > Support licensing reforms and joining state licensure compacts that allow healthcare providers to fill in-demand openings and to facilitate practice across state lines, leading to greater access to care for patients.



**KEY FACTS**

**PRIORITY NO. 2:**

- > The CLT Alliance championed Medicaid expansion which was enacted in December 2023. North Carolina has seen more than 569,000 residents sign up for coverage, and more than a million prescriptions covered.
- > According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, if South Carolina expanded Medicaid eligibility, 188,000 uninsured non-elderly adults would become eligible for coverage.



# 03

## TALENT & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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

- > 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.
- > Increase program and degree capacity and workforce training opportunities for in-demand careers.
- > 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 and regulatory processes that contribute to talent pool growth in high-demand fields.
- > Support policies that efficiently deploy skills development programs and better connect businesses, education and training partners, and job seekers.



## KEY FACTS

### PRIORITY NO. 1:

#### > **CHILDCARE AS A WORKFORCE PRIORITY**

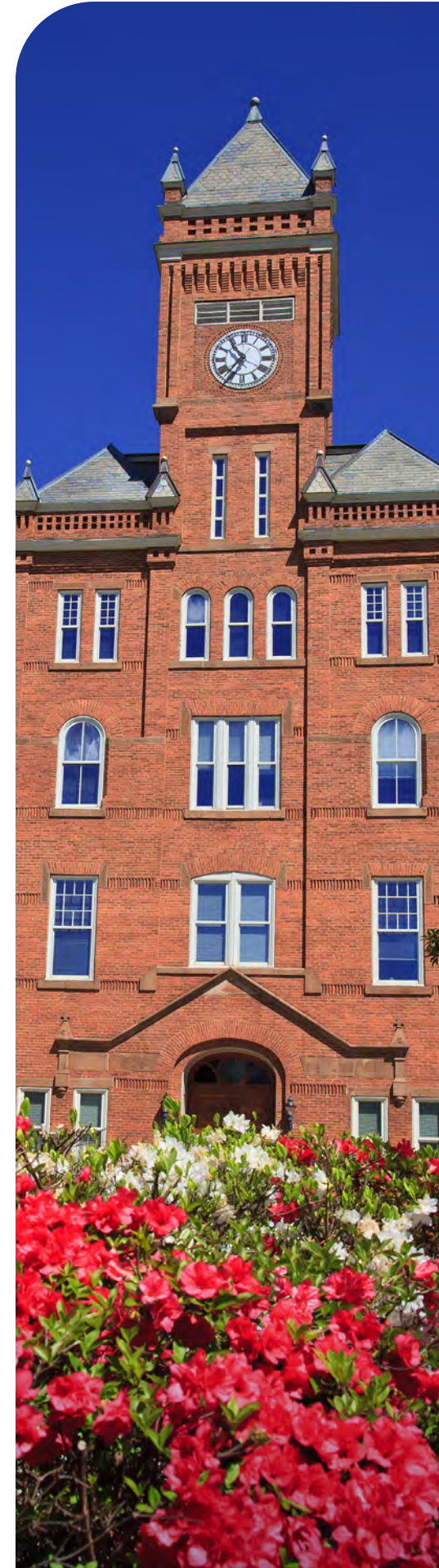
According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, childcare issues result in an estimated \$5.65B annual loss for North Carolina's economy, \$1.36B in missed tax revenue, and \$4.29B in losses due to childcare-related employee turnover and absenteeism.

#### > **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).

#### > **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 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.
- > 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.
- > Support policies that better connect businesses and job seekers and efficiently deploy skills development programs.

## KEY FACTS



### PRIORITY NO. 2:

#### THE REGION'S HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS LEAD THE WAY

**UNC CHARLOTTE** has a \$2.1B+ economic impact on the Charlotte Region and is the third largest institution in the UNC system. With 70,000 graduates remaining in the Charlotte region upon graduation, the university plays a key role in shaping the local workforce. Additionally, the university is advancing toward becoming a top-tier research institution, driving economic development and industry growth in the region. Enrollment continues to rise, with over 31,000 students for the Fall 2024 semester, setting a record for the university.

#### **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.

**QUEENS UNIVERSITY** ranks at #6 for the best undergraduate business program among regional universities in the South.

**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 ARE CRITICAL TO THE CHARLOTTE REGION'S ECONOMY, AND PROVIDE IN-DEMAND TRAINING THAT EMPLOYERS NEED.**

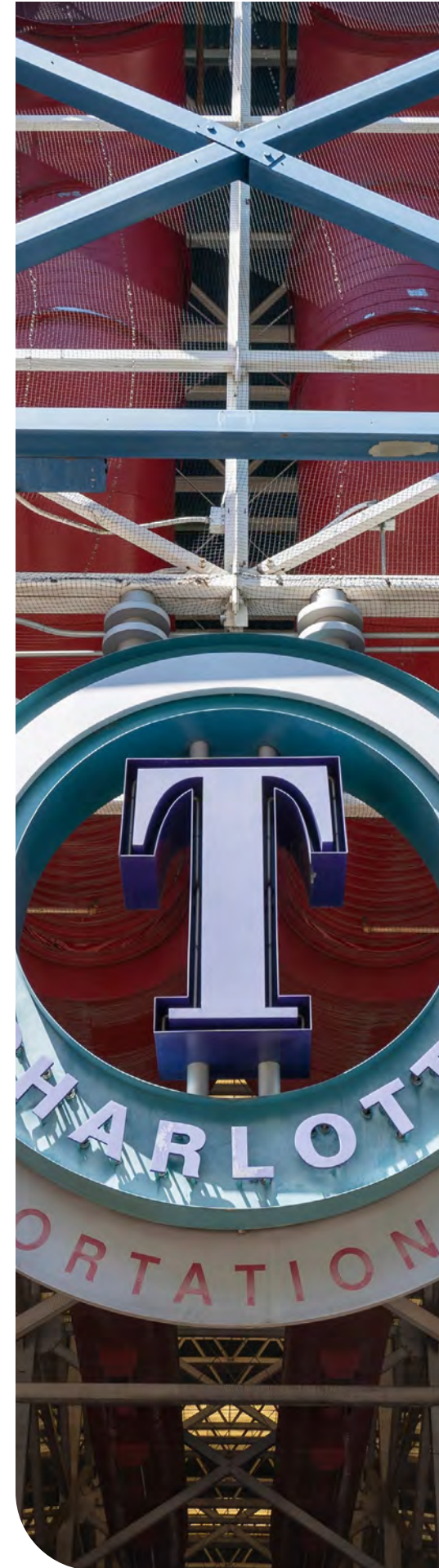
#### **CENTRAL PIEDMONT COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

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 over 7,000 students and has an economic impact of \$192 million.

#### **PLANNING FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION**

As of November 2024, 53.8% of high school seniors in North Carolina and 57.7% of seniors in South Carolina had completed a FAFSA.



## 04

### TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

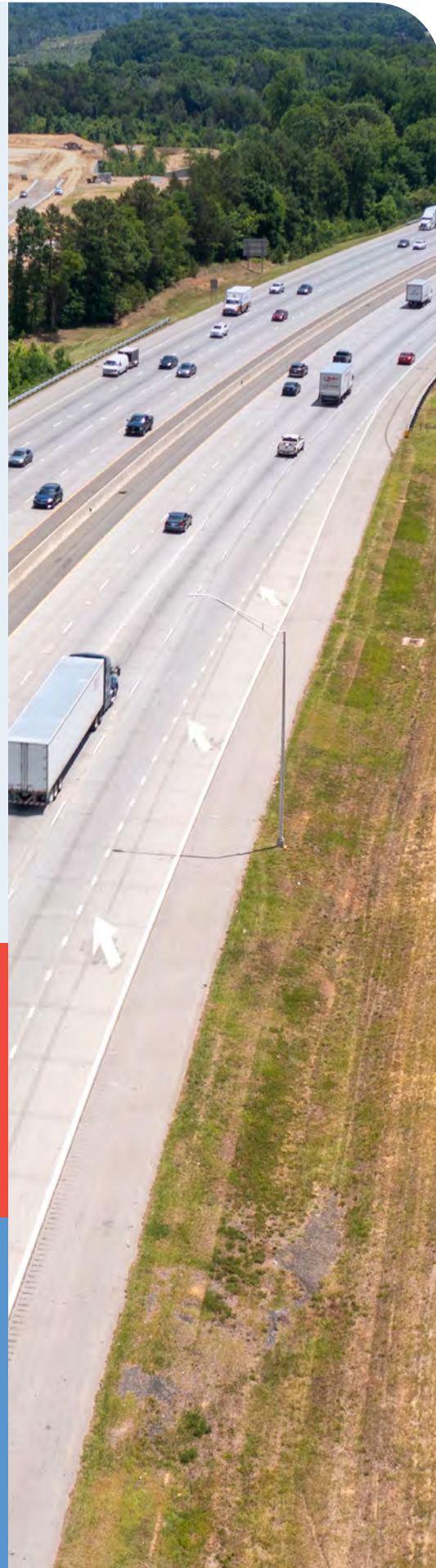
Infrastructure is a leading factor impacting business growth in the Charlotte Region. To sustain the growth experienced in the region in recent years, the foundational building blocks of infrastructure—roads and bridges, transit and bus rapid transit services, water, sewer, electricity, gas, and broadband—must 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 transportation network 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**

**KEY FACTS**

- > \$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.



**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.

**PRIORITY NO. 2:**

**SC INLAND PORTS AS KEY ECONOMIC DRIVER**

**KEY FACTS**

- > The growth at South Carolina's two rail-served inland ports has driven the percentage of containers moved inland by rail back up to pre-pandemic levels. In FY24, the state's inland ports had more than 230,000 total rail lifts. An ongoing \$31M expansion at Inland Port Greer will continue into 2025, resulting in increased reliability in supply chains.

## 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.
- > Utility providers in the Charlotte Region have charted ambitious carbon reduction goals and are taking steps to meet these goals in the coming years.
- > Both North and South Carolina are experiencing significant growth in the electric vehicle (EV) sector, which is crucial for their long-term sustainability and economic competitiveness.
  - North Carolina has 4,809 charging stations, of which 4,445 are public, supporting the state's growing fleet of 63,768 electric vehicles.
  - South Carolina has 1,640 charging stations, including 1,526 public stations.
  - South Carolina registered 19,224 electric vehicles in 2023.

#### PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS OFFER OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

I-77 Express, a public-private partnership, was completed in November 2019 and by June 2024, more than 53 million trips had been taken on the managed lanes.



### 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, noise compatibility updates, 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 while supporting 150,000 jobs.
- > CLT ranks as the 7th busiest airport in the world based on total operations and is 9th in North America for passenger traffic. In 2023, CLT handled over 53 million passengers.
- > CLT is a major cargo hub, processing more than 207,000 tons of cargo each year.
- > 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



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

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