# Executive Summary

Maintenance and improvement of Georgia's infrastructure is vital to our economy, safety, environment and quality of life. Our goal is that broadened awareness and discussion of the issues raised in this report will increase understanding of the current and future infrastructure needs of Georgia, prompting decision makers in our communities and the state Legislature to formulate policies and provide the necessary funding to address Georgia's infrastructure needs.

With new grades for the first time since 2003, Georgia's infrastructure has shown very little improvement and once again received a cumulative grade of C. The Georgia Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) assessed the same 11 infrastructure categories as 2003: wastewater, stormwater, drinking water, energy, dams, school facilities, transit, bridges, airports and solid waste. One new category was added this year, Parks. Some areas have seen important improvements, including wastewater, school facilities, airports and solid waste. In wastewater, the city of Atlanta alone has invested more than one billion dollars since 2003 in improving its sewers. Progress has also been made in the regional and state-wide planning of water, wastewater and stormwater with the development of the Georgia Comprehensive State-wide Water Management Plan. However, continued state funding will be critical for the successful implementation of the plan which includes the development of regional water conservation and development plans.

Funding for transit, roads and bridges is still woefully inadequate while our population and vehicle congestion continues to grow at record pace. Georgia has also significantly underfunded the Safe Dams Program. The large number of deficient high-hazard dams and lack of staff to perform dam failure analyses puts life and property at risk.

Considerable efforts have been made since 2003, but Georgia's infrastructure still has a long way to go. A strong, sustainable infrastructure is key to an economically prosperous Georgia. Some infrastructure, such as bridges and buildings, is observable, while much of our infrastructure, such as water and wastewater pipe systems, is underground and not easily assessed or maintained. Infrastructure failure would significantly affect quality of life. Georgia residents and policy makers must unite to address the problems and issues posed by the current and future state of our infrastructure and respond with dedication and measurable results. If we choose to ignore our infrastructure, we face significant degradation of basic public services, our quality of life and Georgia's ability to remain competitive in attracting new businesses.

The 2009 Georgia Infrastructure Report Card is not intended to be a commentary on, nor an evaluation of, the performance of any particular government department, agency or individuals of these groups. In fact, our research found that most agencies have made remarkable progress in fulfilling their ever-expanding responsibilities despite being understaffed and underfunded.

A challenge in producing the Georgia Infrastructure Report Card was to maintain focus on statewide issues and avoid being overly influenced by local needs, especially in the metro Atlanta area. Although in many categories more data were available for the metro Atlanta area, significant efforts were made to make a statewide analysis.

The Georgia Section of ASCE represents more than 3,000 civil engineering professionals who live and work in Georgia. On behalf of engineers dedicated to problem solving and creating a healthy environment and better quality of life for their community, the Georgia Section presents this document to the residents and policymakers of Georgia. At the end of the day, we must ask ourselves if the grade is acceptable. We believe Georgia should aspire to be "Hope Scholars" with a B average.

If we delay action and fail to address the state's infrastructure problem, we are going to experience a significant degradation of our quality of life.

## *Grading Process Overview*

The 2009 Georgia Infrastructure Report Card was modeled after the national ASCE Report Card for America's Infrastructure. A committee of more than 25 volunteer practicing civil engineers was assembled to collect, review and evaluate data, and develop grades and recommendations. Twelve major areas of infrastructure were chosen for evaluation. Eleven of these areas were evaluated in the 2003 Report Card on Georgia's Infrastructure. In most cases, existing data from federal, state and local agencies and organizations was compiled by the fact sheet authors. In some cases, new data was collected from phone conversations with experts in the field.

The 2009 grading criteria differs slightly from that used in 2003. In 2003, the infrastructure was rated on the basis of condition and performance, capacity versus need and funding versus need. Since that time, the grading methodology used by ASCE National has been refined. The fundamental components evaluated this year were condition, capacity, operation and maintenance, funding, future need, public safety and, where possible, resilience. Resilience is the ability to prevent or protect against significant multi-hazard threats and incidents and the ability to quickly recover critical services.

For each infrastructure category, each of the grading criteria were assigned a weighting factor. In most categories, more weight was placed on condition, capacity, funding and future needs because these are core criteria and better data were usually available for evaluation in these areas. The data were evaluated against objective grading criteria and a grade was assigned. Grades were assigned as follows:

**A = 90-100%**

**B = 80-89%**

**C = 70-79%**

**D = 51-69%**

**F = 50% or lower**

The fact sheet for each infrastructure category was peer reviewed by a group of technical experts not involved with their initial preparation. They were also reviewed externally by other organizations with experts in the field, other ASCE Sections and ASCE National.