

Title: **Mostly empty school buses during evacuation cost state \$1 million**
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Associated Press

COLUMBIA

South Carolina spent nearly \$1 million sending 300 school buses to Charleston County on the coast during Hurricane Matthew to evacuate residents, but only 24 of the buses were used, state education records show.

And the only people who rode the buses to inland shelters were residents of a nursing home, according to information from the state Education Department obtained by The Greenville News.

Fuel for the buses, meals and hotels for the drivers and bus aides, the cost of a team from the state Forestry Commission and other expenses totaled \$954,779. State officials said they think federal disaster money should repay much of that cost.

Some residents did go to North Charleston to get on the buses, but were directed to local shelters instead because of a rule that stated the buses couldn't be used until nearby shelters were at least half full.

Gov. Nikki Haley touted the buses for a few days after ordering evacuations along the coast as the



MIC SMITH AP

In this file photo, Jay McAbee, a bus driver with the Greenville school district, waits by his bus at the North Charleston Coliseum for word when to start evacuating people.

HURRICANE MATTHEW

Mostly empty school buses during evacuation cost state \$1 million

hurricane threatened. Her spokeswoman, Chaney Adams, said she was relying on county information and the program will now be reviewed.

"When local requests for assistance come in, as the state prepares for a storm, we listen to the needs of local officials," Adams said. "In the aftermath of a storm, state officials always consider what worked and what

didn't, and that informs what can be handled better during the next state of emergency."

Hurricane Matthew killed five people in South Carolina, all connected to inland flooding from heavy rains. The storm killed 42 people in the U.S., over half of them in North Carolina, and more than 500 people in Haiti.

Hurricane Matthew was a Category 4 storm when

the governor ordered evacuations, and officials had to take into account the possibility of a direct hit without any weakening, Education Department spokesman Ryan Brown said.

"It would have been a much worse situation had we been hit with a massive hurricane and not had enough buses there," Brown said.

Title: **Company moving from N.C., creating 83 jobs**
 Author: BY DAVIDTHACKHAM dthackham@heraldonline.com
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ROCK HILL

Company moving from N.C., creating 83 jobs

BY DAVID THACKHAM
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ROCK HILL

One of the nation's largest manufacturers of curb adapters is slated to invest \$4.8 million and create up to 83 jobs by building a 50,000-square-foot distribution center in Rock Hill.

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JOBS

2017; hiring is expected to begin later next year.

"From the start, South Carolina, York County and the City of Rock Hill all welcomed us and worked hard to make this project a reality," Gerold said in a statement.

"Beacon Partners and their contractors have been fantastic on facility planning, design and project management. Our employees are counting down the days until they move into the new facility.

Crystal Distribution Inc. will relocate its existing positions from its operations in Charlotte. The new center will be built in the SouthCross Corporate Center, near the intersection of North Cherry and Celanese roads in Rock Hill. John Gerold, chief financial officer for Crystal Distribution, or CDI, said in a statement the new facility will increase the company's manufacturing space by 40 percent. CDI's center will be a

build-to-suit light manufacturing and distribution facility.

Construction is expected to be finished in early

SEE JOBS, 6A

... (It will) allow us to better serve our customers in the eastern U.S. and Canada."

Curb adapters allow broken or inefficient heating and cooling units to be upgraded on commercial building rooftops.

The Coordinating Council for Economic Development has approved a Set Aside grant of \$300,000 to York County to assist with building costs.

Gov. Nikki Haley and S.C. Secretary of Commerce Bobby Hitt both said in a statement they were looking forward to seeing the company grow in York County.

CDI also has locations in Dallas, Minneapolis and Seattle.

Rock Hill Mayor Doug Echols said the new facility will "bring valuable manufacturing jobs to the area."

CDI boasts custom manufacturing options,

including same- and next-day build, with a 98 percent on-time delivery rate.

"I'm confident that CDI will be able to build on their tremendous record of success here in Rock Hill."

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Crystal Distribution Inc. website

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Title: **K-12 EDUCATION: FIX POOR, RURAL SCHOOLS**
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K-12 EDUCATION: FIX POOR, RURAL SCHOOLS

After winning a lawsuit they filed in the early 1990s, poor, rural schools are due more state support.

Some ways to make that happen:

- Change the way the state pays for public schools, allowing poor districts to benefit from

SEE PROBLEMS, 6A

FROM PAGE 5A

PROBLEMS

tax dollars paid by major corporations. More radically, South Carolina could look to equalize school funding statewide.

- Ensure that all students – especially those in poor, rural districts – have access to technology and courses to help them prepare for college or careers. Some students in rural districts now take standardized tests using pencil and paper because their schools lack computers and internet access.

- Help poor school districts pay for new buildings with technology, so they do not have to depend on weak local tax bases to raise that money. Gov. Haley has proposed the state borrow \$200 million a year to help poor districts pay for school facilities.

- Pay teachers salaries that compete with neighboring states, and help poor, rural school districts pay salaries that are competitive with wealthier S.C. districts. It would cost roughly \$45 million to raise the state's average teacher salary up to the Southeastern average.

- The state could create – at a cost of \$547 million in new spending – a pot of money distributed to districts based on the students they teach. The money would mostly go to

pay teachers.

- Provide more support to school districts where student achievement suffers. Also, hold local school boards accountable for chronically poor student achievement by encouraging or forcing collaboration and consolidation between districts.

The cost? At least \$747 million.

ROADS: INCREASE THE GAS TAX

The state's crumbling road and bridge infrastructure could put a screeching halt to Gov. Haley's success at attracting new jobs to South Carolina.

Thus far, Haley has insisted she would approve higher taxes to repair roads only if passed with offsetting tax cuts that would defund large swaths of state government, including education.

But, as legislators prepare to return to Columbia, the political winds are shifting.

Haley is a second-term, lame-duck governor, and the legislators who return to Columbia will have won election or re-election in November, meaning they will not have to face voters – including the GOP's no-new-taxes, tea party wing – again for two years.

The House already has

shown it will pass a higher gas tax, having done so last year.

The options are:

- Increase the state's gas tax by 20 cents a gallon. Even with the increase, South Carolina's gas tax would remain lower than those of neighboring states. The increase could be phased in a 4-cent hike every two years for a decade.

- Increase other driver fees, including the cost of a driver's license. Doubling the driver's license fee, increasing the cost of a 10-year license from \$25 to \$50, would raise an added \$15 million a year. Legislators also could target out-of-state tourists by levying a specific hotel fee, a move Georgia has made.

- Shed state responsibility for about 20,000 miles of local roads, including neighborhood roads, and give the maintenance of those roads – and more of the added gas tax money – to counties. The devolution of roads should be optional, advocates say. Poorer counties do not have the road repair resources needed.

- Require county transportation committees to spend the money they get from the state – normally about \$75 million a year –

on a priority basis, ensuring roads are repaired based on their importance, not local politics. Unable to pass a statewide road repair plan, lawmakers have sent almost \$300 million more to county committees in the past two years.

- Remove the State Transportation Infrastructure Bank from the process of picking road projects and let the Transportation Department decide which projects are financed, based on need.

- Make the Transportation Department a cabinet agency that reports directly to the governor, and require its director to have a background in transportation.

The cost? An added \$943 million a year is needed. When fully phased in, a 20-cent-a-gallon increase in the state's gas tax would yield an added \$740 million a year. Higher driver's license fees could add another \$15 million. An out-of-state hotel-motel fee could add millions more.

LEADERSHIP: DO THEY HAVE THE WILL

South Carolina, effectively, is a one-party state – Republican.

The GOP has controlled the S.C. House since 1994,

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the state Senate since 2001 and the Governor's Mansion since 2003.

The GOP's clarion call has been for lower taxes and smaller government. Today, South Carolina's state government is smaller than it was a decade ago, and its income taxes and

property taxes are among the nation's lowest.

(Among the 43 states with a personal income, South Carolina ranks 35th. Its business tax ranks 45th. Its property tax ranks 46th, all according to a 2015 study by the conservative Tax Foundation.)

The question is: Can the

GOP do more than say no?

Or, can S.C. Democrats – largely powerless bystanders – convince enough

South Carolinians that they deserve a chance to lead again by promising, in the words of former Democratic U.S. Sen. Fritz Hollings, "government that works."

"If people in this state are satisfied with driving on bad roads, with having poorly educated children, it will never change," state Rep. Gilda Cobb-Hunter, D-Orangeburg, said earlier this year. "What the public has to understand is that they have to hold us accountable..."



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A broken dam sits over Cary Lake. A special dam safety committee is meeting this fall to discuss tightening state regulations of dams, though legislators and DHEC have varying opinions on the issue.