(6) The identity of any problems or programs of the entity to which, in the opinion of DOTD, the committees should give particular study.

Funding is the primary issue facing the Department and determining which responsibilities will be relinquished if funding is not available. The state highway system is in a downward spiral due to inadequate investment. Highway needs have increased from a total of $14.9 billion in 2019 to $18.8 billion in 2021. As required by RS 48:228, DOTD undertook a review and update of the Needs evaluation methodology and thresholds after the 2019 Needs report was submitted. The large increase is primarily due to the unprecedented construction inflation rate as well as changes to the evaluation methodology and engineering guidelines. Without additional funding sources being identified and secured, the State will not be able to draw all available federal highway funding due to not having the requisite state matching funds, nor will the State qualify for additional federal highway funds at the end of each federal fiscal year. If the State were to lose even a portion of federal funding, the direct result would be a reduction in the number and size of highway construction projects. The root cause of the funding problem is the lack of growth in the current revenue stream which is based almost exclusively on an excise tax on motor fuels. The growth in revenues does not keep pace with inflation nor the ever increasing fuel efficiency of motor vehicles. Alternative fueled vehicles have exacerbated the problem. Even without considering inflation, motorists today pay less in tax per mile driven than they did in 1990 due solely to increases in fuel efficiency.