

For immediate release
Thursday, June 29, 2006
Report available at: www.tripnet.org

Contact: Frank Moretti or Carolyn Bonifas
TRIP Office: 202-466-6706

GEORGIA'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH GEORGIA RESIDENT NEARLY \$3,000 ANNUALLY IN SAFETY BENEFITS, SAVED TIME, REDUCED FUEL AND LOWER CONSUMER COSTS

BENEFITS OF INTERSTATE SYSTEM MAY ERODE, AS STATE FACES \$12 BILLION FUNDING SHORTFALL OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS FOR NEEDED INTERSTATE REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

EDS.: REPORT CONTAINS LISTS OF GEORGIA'S MOST CONGESTED SECTIONS OF INTERSTATE

Atlanta, June 29, 2006 – For the last 50 years, Georgia's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving Georgia residents \$26 billion annually - \$2,995 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But, as the state faces a \$12 billion shortfall over the next 20 years in needed Interstate funding, some of the benefits of the Interstate Highway System may erode, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group.

The TRIP report, entitled "Saving Lives, Time and Money: A report on the condition, impact, use and future needs of Georgia's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 7,600 lives in Georgia since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each Georgian \$109 annually (\$962 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. Georgia's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$1,703 annually (\$15 billion statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$1,143 per resident (\$10.1 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

"Georgia's Interstate's have provided tremendous safety, time and economic benefits over the last 50 years. But without an additional investment in maintaining and expanding the system, the state may see some of those benefits slip away," said William M. Wilkins, TRIP's executive director.

According to the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), the state faces a \$12 billion shortfall over the next 20 years in funding needed expansion of the Interstate system to

relieve congestion and sustain economic growth in the state. This shortfall poses a significant challenge in rebuilding the state's aging Interstate highways and bridges and providing additional lane capacity to meet growing travel demands.

"The interstate system has been the driving force behind the economic development of the United States during the last 50 years. It is strong evidence that transportation infrastructure has a very high economic return. In order to maintain and sustain our economic competitiveness, we must make transportation investment priority one," said Mike Kenn, President of Georgians for Better Transportation.

According to the Georgia Department of Transportation, by 2026, 36 percent- a total of 457 lane miles - of the state's Interstate highway system will be in need of significant rehabilitation or reconstruction to provide a smooth pavement surface. In addition, 26 percent of the bridges on Georgia's Interstate highway system will need significant repairs or reconstruction by the year 2026. The Georgia Department of Transportation has also determined that it will need to add additional lanes along 365 miles of its existing Interstate system by the year 2026 in order to relieve growing traffic congestion. If additional capacity is not added to Georgia's Interstate system, 82 percent of urban Interstate's will be congested by 2035 and 40 percent of rural Interstate's will be congested by 2035.

Thirty-five percent of Georgia's urban Interstates are considered congested because they carry traffic levels that result in significant delays during peak travel hours. In fact, between 1990 and 2004, vehicle miles of travel on Georgia's Interstates increased by 65 percent, while lanes on the system increased by only seven percent. The TRIP report contains a list of the most congested sections of Interstate in Georgia.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Georgia's Interstate system, which includes three percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 27 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Since Interstate construction began in 1956, total vehicle miles of travel in Georgia have increased by 652 percent, the number of vehicles in the state has increased by 519 percent and the state's population has increased by 136 percent.
- Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each Georgia resident 106 hours of travel time annually - 937 million hours statewide. Georgia's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 447 million gallons.