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TRIP Report Documents Infrastructure Needs in New Hampshire

New Hampshire presently lacks adequate funding to make needed improvements to its surface transportation system, the nonprofit transportation research organization TRIP concluded in a report released Monday.

"With the state's population continuing to grow, New Hampshire must maintain and improve its system of roads, highways, bridges, and public transit in order to foster economic growth, keep business in the state, and ensure safe, reliable mobility -- all of which improve the quality of life expected by state residents and visitors," according to the report.

TRIP's analysis, "Moving New Hampshire Forward: The Condition & Funding of New Hampshire's Roads, Bridges, & Transit Systems," notes that 12% of the Granite State's major roads were in poor condition and an additional 21% rated mediocre in 2008. Overall, roads in need of repair cost each New Hampshire motorist \$259 per year in extra vehicle maintenance costs -- \$267 million total.

"Transportation is the backbone of the American and New Hampshire economies, and deferring addressing these urgent needs will result in significantly higher expenses for the next generation," said George Campbell, commissioner of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. "At NHDOT, we call on Congress to act and reauthorize the federal transportation legislation."

Of the state's bridges, 16% were rated structurally deficient and another 16% deemed functionally obsolete as of 2008. More than half of the state's urban highways were found to be congested during peak travel times that year.

The report also addresses traffic safety issues in New Hampshire. Between 2004 and 2008, a total of 732 people -- an annual average of 146 -- were killed in crashes on that state's roads.

"Improving geometric deficiencies on New Hampshire's roads and highways would likely result in a decrease in traffic fatalities in the state," the report contends.

The American Recovery & Reinvestment Act of 2009 has provided New Hampshire with about \$129 million in extra federal funding for highways and bridges, plus \$13 million for mass transit. While that money has been helpful, additional funds remain needed to improve and maintain the state's surface transportation system, TRIP asserts.

"Our report finds that the needs of New Hampshire's transportation system far outpace the amount of funding that's available," said Carolyn Bonifas, TRIP's associate director of research and communication. "As a result, many needed transportation projects will remain stranded on the drawing board because of insufficient funding."

Those projects include improvements to several sections of Interstates 93 and 89, as well as New Hampshire 12 and 16.

The 32-page report is available at tinyurl.com/TRIP-New-Hampshire.