

January 15, 2010

TRIP Report Documents Highway & Bridge Needs in New York State

New York state needs a major increase in funding to meet its widespread surface transportation infrastructure challenges, the nonprofit transportation research organization TRIP asserts in a report released Thursday.

"With an unemployment rate of 8.6 percent -- and with the state's population continuing to grow -- New York must improve its system of roads, highways, bridges, and public transit to foster economic growth, keep business in the state, and ensure the safe, reliable mobility needed to improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers," the report states.

The report, "Future Mobility in New York: Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," is the latest in a series of TRIP studies examining transportation funding needs in the states. The document cites a 20-year transportation system analysis that found New York state needs to spend \$175 billion between now and 2030 to adequately maintain its highways, bridges, and transit systems. The state faces a transportation funding shortfall of approximately \$87 billion based on current levels.

Addressing this projected shortfall will be compounded by the growing debt repayments for money largely borrowed during the 1980s to finance highway and bridge repairs throughout the state, according to the report. Presently 49 percent of the revenue going into the New York State Highway and Bridge Dedicated Trust Fund is being used to pay off debt. Debt service is expected to eat up 72 percent of that trust fund's incoming revenues by 2013.

Vehicle travel on the New York's major highways increased 25 percent from 1990 to 2008, the report notes. That number is projected to increase another 20 percent by 2025, reaching about 160 billion vehicle miles traveled annually.

Traffic congestion is an ongoing challenge examined in the report. In 2007, for example, 45 percent of New York's urban highways were congested. Traffic delays throughout the state are estimated to cost New York drivers \$6 billion in lost time and wasted fuel.

The report addresses the importance of transportation on New York's business climate. About \$319 billion in goods are shipped annually from New York and another \$372 billion in goods are hauled into the state each year. Most of those shipments are handled by trucks on the state's highways. The report estimates commercial trucking in New York state is projected to grow 25 percent by 2020.

TRIP included individualized analyses for New York City, Albany, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse in the report to emphasize how the state's transportation needs are spread across numerous metropolitan regions.

The 22-page report and related documents are available at tinyurl.com/TRIP-NY.