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Significant Gap in Funding For Transportation Plan Threatens to Stifle Economic Recovery in Kansas

Kansas requires a significant increase in funding in order to maintain and improve transportation infrastructure across the state.

According to a report released last week, Kansas faces a significant transportation funding gap over the next 10 years, which will not only impede efforts to improve roads and other infrastructure, but will also limit the potential for economic recovery. A comprehensive state transportation program funds all modes of transportation, improvements to roads, bridges, and traffic safety. It also offers significant state revenue increases, job creation and other revenue that is vital to the economic recovery in the state.

The Transportation-Leveraging Investments in Kansas (T-LINK) task force, which included business, government and industry leaders, concluded in January 2009 that over the next 10 years, Kansas will have an annual shortfall in surface transportation funding of \$640 million, based on the investment level recommended by T-LINK, projected that Kansas faces a \$6.4 billion transportation funding gap over the next ten years, which could hamper the state's economic competitiveness, hasten road and bridge deterioration, result in increased traffic congestion and impede efforts to improve traffic safety in Kansas.

The state relies on a combination of state and federal funding for transportation-related projects, but a significant number of projects do not have adequate funding according to the new report released today by TRIP, a DC-based non-profit transportation organization. The report, entitled "Moving Kansas Forward: The Condition and Funding of Kansas" Roads, Highways & Bridges," outlines projects needed in Kansas that

improve safety and infrastructure including the I-35/I-435/K-10 interchange in Kansas City and the I-235/Kellogg/Central interchange complex in Wichita. A comprehensive list of projects that cannot be completed is contained within the report. Also included in the report is information about "mega projects" such as US-69 from Pittsburg to I-44 at the Oklahoma state line, the Northwest Wichita bypass from K-96 to US-54, US-69 in Kansas City from 119th St. to I-435 and I-235 in Wichita at the US-54 and Central Avenue interchanges.

Other findings from the report:

- Nine percent of the state's bridges are functionally obsolete.
- Driving on damaged roads cost each Kansas motorist \$318 annually.
- Motor vehicle accidents cost Kansas \$1.9 billion annually in lost productivity, travel delays, medical, workplace, insurance and legal costs.
- Kansas received \$4 billion in federal funding for road, highway and bridge improvements and \$278 million for public transit.
- The federal government provides 32 percent of the revenue used for road, highway and bridge construction and 36 percent of the revenue used for the operation of public transit systems.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provides approximately \$348 million in stimulus funding for highway and bridge improvements and \$31 million for public transit improvements in Kansas, which is not enough funding to complete all necessary transportation projects in the state. The current federal transportation program expires on Sept. 30, 2009, requiring Congress

to authorize a new federal surface transportation program or extend the current program to allow federal funds to continue to be provided to Kansas. "A fully-funded transportation program has the potential to revitalize the economy like no other program does. Each of the past two 10-year programs have generated \$1.5 billion in wages, over 100,000 jobs, and have produced a 3 to 1 return on investment. These programs were, essentially, the largest economic development mechanisms during that time period.

In order to begin to mend the economic damage done during the economic downturn, it is essential that we support programs like this that are a win-win for the states bottom line as well as for the citizens of the state of Kansas," said Patrick Hurley, executive director of Economic Lifelines. "Kansas has benefited tremendously from the federal surface transportation program," said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "While the state has put this combination of federal and state funds to good use in the past, in the coming years, many additional needed projects will remain stranded on the drawing board because of insufficient funding. It is critical that the state adequately fund its transportation system and that Congress produces a timely and adequately funded federal surface transportation program this year. Thousands of jobs and the state's economy are riding on it."

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