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For immediate release
Thursday, June 29, 2006

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ALABAMA'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH ALABAMA RESIDENT MORE THAN \$2,300 ANNUALLY IN SAFETY BENEFITS, SAVED TIME, REDUCED FUEL AND LOWER CONSUMER COSTS

BENEFITS OF INTERSTATE SYSTEM MAY ERODE IN THE FUTURE UNLESS STATE CAN FUND NEEDED INTERSTATE REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Montgomery, Alabama - June 29, 2006 – For the last 50 years, Alabama's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving Alabama residents \$10.5 billion annually - \$2,318 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But some of the benefits of Alabama's Interstate Highway System may erode unless the state can secure additional funds for needed maintenance and widening projects, 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 Alabama's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 5,500 lives in Alabama since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each Alabama resident \$154 annually (\$696 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. Alabama's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$1,159 annually (\$5.3 billion statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$1,005 per resident (\$4.6 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

"Alabama'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 TRIP report, 34 percent of Alabama's urban Interstates are considered congested because they carry traffic levels that result in significant delays during peak travel hours. Additionally, 20 percent of the state's rural Interstates are congested during peak travel times.

Between 1990 and 2004, vehicle travel on Alabama's Interstates increased by 62 percent, while lane miles on the system only increased by three percent.

"Interstates are possibly the most significant transportation investment in the lives of Alabama citizens in the past 50 years," said Transportation Director Joe McInnes. "Every state will face future challenges with Interstate maintenance and new construction, but during the past three years we have made significant strides in Interstate maintenance, safety and new construction starts to address congestion. These efforts will continue, and hopefully funding will increase in the future so we can accelerate efforts to address our most pressing needs."

Alabama ranks fourth in the nation in the percentage of Interstate pavements in poor condition. Fifteen percent of Alabama's Interstate pavements are in poor condition. Nine percent are in mediocre condition, 12 percent are in fair condition and the remaining 64 percent are rated in good condition. Two percent of Alabama's Interstate bridges are rated structurally deficient and 18 percent are rated functionally obsolete.

Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each Alabama resident 72 hours of travel time annually - 327 million hours statewide. Alabama's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 156 million gallons.

Alabama faces a significant challenge in maintaining and rebuilding its aging Interstate Highway System and providing additional lane capacity to meet growing travel demand. Travel on Alabama's Interstate highways is expected to increase by sixty percent by the year 2026. Traffic congestion is expected to worsen substantially on Alabama's urban Interstate highways, unless additional lanes are added to these routes. By 2026, if additional capacity is not added to Alabama's Interstate system, 74 percent of urban Interstates will be congested at peak travel times and 62 percent of rural Interstates will be congested at peak travel times.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Alabama's Interstate system, which includes two percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 22 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Travel on Alabama's Interstate system is approximately twice as safe as travel on all other roadways. The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel on Alabama's Interstate system in 2004 was 1.08, while it was 2.20 on non-Interstate routes in 2004 in Alabama.
- Since funding of the Interstate system was approved in 1956, vehicle miles of travel in Alabama has increased by 454 percent, the number of vehicles in Alabama has increased by 311 percent and the state's population has jumped by 42 percent.