



1726 M Street, NW, #401 • Washington, DC 20036 • P: (202) 466-6706 • F: (202) 785-4722 • www.tripnet.org • trip@tripnet.org

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**Contact: Frank Moretti or Carolyn Bonifas**  
**TRIP Office 202-466-6706**  
**Tony Milo, Colorado Contractors Association 303-921-4650**  
**Stacey Stegman CDOT 303-757-9362**

**Report available at: [www.tripnet.org](http://www.tripnet.org)**

**COLORADO'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH COLORADO RESIDENT MORE THAN \$2,800 ANNUALLY IN SAFETY BENEFITS, SAVED TIME, REDUCED FUEL AND LOWER CONSUMER COSTS**

**BENEFITS OF INTERSTATE SYSTEM MAY ERODE IN THE FUTURE, AS COLORADO FACES \$69 BILLION SHORTFALL IN FUNDING FOR NEEDED INTERSTATE REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH 2030**

**Eds. Report contains list of most congested sections of Colorado Interstate, most heavily traveled structurally deficient bridges and needed Interstate widening projects.**

**Denver, Colorado - June 29, 2006** – For the last 50 years, Colorado's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving Colorado residents \$12.9 billion annually - \$2,804 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But some of the benefits of Colorado's Interstate Highway System may erode in the future, as the state faces a \$69 billion shortfall in funding for needed Interstate repairs and improvements through 2030, 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 Colorado's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 5,000 lives in Colorado since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each Colorado resident \$138 annually (\$633 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. Colorado's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$1,072 annually (\$4.9 billion statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$1,594 per resident (\$7.3 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

"Colorado'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, 33 percent of Colorado’s urban Interstates are considered congested because they carry traffic levels that result in significant delays during peak travel hours. Between 1990 and 2004, vehicle travel on Colorado’s Interstates increased by 56 percent, while lane miles on the system only increased by three percent. The TRIP report contains a list of the most congested sections of Interstate in Colorado.

“As we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Interstate system, Coloradoans find themselves at a crossroads. We can choose to re-invest in our economic engine or continue to neglect it,” said Tony Milo, executive director of the Colorado Contractors Association. “If we want to grow our economy and protect our quality of life, Colorado must take action now to adequately fund our transportation system.”

Overall, Interstate pavement conditions are below average, while Interstate bridge conditions are good. Seven percent of Colorado’s pavements are in poor condition, while 18 percent are in mediocre condition. Six percent of Colorado’s Interstate bridges are rated structurally deficient and 16 percent are rated functionally obsolete.

Colorado 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 Colorado’s Interstate highways is expected to increase by 48 percent by the year 2026. Traffic congestion is expected to worsen substantially on Colorado’s urban Interstate highways, unless additional lanes are added to these routes. By 2026, 73 percent of Colorado’s urban Interstates will be congested during peak periods unless urban Interstate capacity is increased. The Colorado Department of Transportation projects a \$69 billion shortfall in needed Interstate preservation and expansion funding through 2030.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Colorado’s Interstate system, which includes two percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 24 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each Colorado resident 67 hours of travel time annually - 307 million hours statewide. Colorado’s Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 147 million gallons.
- Since funding of the Interstate system was approved in 1956, vehicle miles of travel in Colorado has increased by 585 percent, the number of vehicles in Colorado has increased by 161 percent and the state’s population has jumped by 191 percent.