

**For immediate release**  
**Tuesday, April 11, 2006**  
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**CONNECTICUT'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING 3,000 LIVES SINCE 1956, SAVING DRIVERS 90 HOURS PER YEAR AND PROVIDING ECONOMIC BENEFITS**

**BENEFITS OF INTERSTATE SYSTEM MAY ERODE, AS STATE FACES \$1.6 BILLION FUNDING SHORTFALL FOR NEEDED INTERSTATE REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS TO ADDRESS GROWING TRAFFIC CONGESTION**

*Eds.: Lists containing Connecticut's most congested sections of Interstate, most deficient heavily traveled bridges, and needed Interstate maintenance and widening projects are included in the report.*

**HARTFORD, April 11, 2006** – For the last 50 years, Connecticut's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation system, saving lives, saving driver's time and enhancing economic productivity. But, as Connecticut faces a \$1.6 billion shortfall over the next 10 years in needed transportation funding, some of the benefits of the Interstate Highway System may erode in the future, 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 Connecticut's Interstate Highway System," finds that while Connecticut's Interstate's account for only four percent of lane miles in the state, they carry 32 percent of all vehicle travel. TRIP estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 3,000 lives since 1956. In addition to saving lives, the Interstate Highway System saves the average Connecticut resident approximately 90 hours each year by offering faster and more direct routes.

According to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the state faces a \$1.6 billion shortfall over the next 10 years in needed funding for Interstate projects. This shortfall poses a significant challenge in rebuilding the state's aging Interstate highways and providing additional lane capacity to meet growing travel demands. Traffic congestion and pavement conditions are likely to worsen unless the state can fund needed projects.

“Connecticut’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.

Connecticut’s Interstate’s are becoming increasingly congested, as travel growth significantly outpaces the addition of new lanes. More than half – 56 percent – of the state’s urban Interstates are congested during peak times. By the year 2026, overall travel on Connecticut’s Interstate highways is expected to increase by 26 percent and travel by large commercial trucks is expected to increase by 43 percent. If additional capacity is not added to Connecticut’s Interstate’s, 81 percent of the state’s urban Interstate’s will be congested during peak periods by 2026. The TRIP report identifies several Interstate projects that are needed by 2026 to ease congestion and improve pavement conditions.

"The report card is here - our transportation infrastructure is failing and our economy is being compromised," said Speaker of the House Jim Amann (D-Milford). "When business and labor come together and call loudly in unison for the same thing, you know the stars have aligned. This is the year to finally do something bold and courageous on transportation."

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Since Interstate construction began in 1956, total vehicle miles of travel in Connecticut increased by 246 percent. Since that time, the number of vehicles in the state has more than tripled, increasing by 213 percent, and the state’s population has increased by 51 percent – from 2.3 million to 3.5 million.
- Connecticut’s Interstate Highway System has saved an average of 63 lives per year over the last 10 years. The number of lives saved by the Interstate was calculated by estimating the additional fatalities that would have occurred had Interstate traffic been carried by other major roadways in the state, which have higher traffic fatality rates.
- According to the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CDOT), the current anticipated average budget available for all state Interstate construction from 2006 to 2016 (including preservation, maintenance and capacity expansion) is approximately \$1.9 billion. CDOT estimates that \$3.5 billion is needed between 2006 and 2016 to allow the state to fund a program that adequately addresses Interstate preservation and capacity needs in Connecticut.
- Proposed Interstate widening projects – I-84 from Danbury to Waterbury and I-95 from Branford to New London – will need additional funding in order to move forward.
- Vehicle miles of travel (VMT) on Connecticut’s Interstate increased at a rate eight times faster than the addition of new capacity. From 1990 to 2004, VMT on Connecticut’s Interstates increased by 23 percent. But actual lane miles on the system only increased by three percent during that same period.