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FLORIDA'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH FLORIDA RESIDENT MORE THAN \$2,000 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

Tallahassee, Florida June 29, 2006 – For the last 50 years, Florida's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving Florida residents \$36 billion annually - \$2,096 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But some of the benefits of Florida'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 Florida's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 9,600 lives in Florida since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each Florida resident \$70 annually (\$1.2 billion statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. Florida's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$792 annually (\$13.8 billion statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$1,234 per resident (\$21.5 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

"Florida'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, more than half - 51 percent - of Florida'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 Florida's Interstates increased by 73 percent, while lane miles on the system only increased by 15 percent.

"It is appropriate for Floridians to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Interstate Highway System. However, with over 1,000 people moving to Florida every single day, and \$23 billion more needed in the next ten years just to maintain *today's* conditions, it isn't enough to 'coast' on the past Interstate achievements of the Greatest Generation," said Doug Callaway, President of Floridians for Better Transportation (FBT), a statewide business and transportation association. "This current generation of Florida leaders must recognize their historic obligation to take steps today to keep Florida moving forward in the 21st Century," Callaway said.

Overall, Interstate pavement and bridge conditions are acceptable, though some deficiencies exist. One percent of Florida's Interstate bridges are rated structurally deficient and 10 percent are rated functionally obsolete. One percent of Florida's Interstate pavements are in mediocre condition. two percent are in fair condition and the remaining 97 percent are rated in good condition.

Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each Florida resident 49 hours of travel time annually - 859 million hours statewide. Florida's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 409 million gallons.

Florida 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 Florida's Interstate highways is expected to increase by 60 percent by the year 2026. Traffic congestion is expected to worsen substantially on Florida's urban Interstate highways, unless additional lanes are added to these routes.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Florida's Interstate system, which includes three percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 17 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Since funding of the Interstate system was approved in 1956, vehicle miles of travel in Florida has increased by 1,128 percent, the number of vehicles in Florida has increased by 746 percent and the state's population has jumped by 326 percent.