

For immediate release
Wednesday, September 2, 2009
Report available at: www.tripnet.org

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HAWAII HAS BENEFITTED FROM RECENT PROJECTS TO IMPROVE THE STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, BUT SIGNIFICANT DEFICIENCIES REMAIN; BOOST IN FEDERAL AND STATE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING NEEDED TO MODERNIZE ROADS, BRIDGES, TRANSIT AND TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC SAFETY AND PROVIDE CONGESTION RELIEF

EDS.: THE REPORT INCLUDES A LIST OF NEEDED PROJECTS THAT REMAIN UNFUNDED, INCLUDING PROJECTS TO REPAIR DEFICIENT BRIDGES, ADD CAPACITY TO CONGESTED ROADWAYS AND IMPROVE SAFETY

Honolulu, Hawaii -- Hawaii's roads and bridges are becoming increasingly deteriorated and congested and the state's rural roads have a high-rate of fatal traffic crashes. In the past decade, the state has used a combination of federal and state funding to improve its surface transportation network, but many sorely needed transportation projects still remain unfunded, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a Washington, DC based national transportation organization.

The report, "Future Mobility in Hawaii: Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," finds that the condition of the state's roads and bridges is deteriorating, with 27 percent of Hawaii's major roads in poor condition – the fourth highest share in the nation. Driving on roads in need of repair costs each Hawaii motorist an average of \$503 annually -- \$431 million state-wide and the third highest in the nation -- in the form of accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

The report also finds a total of 43 percent of Hawaii's bridges are deficient or obsolete. Twelve percent of the state's bridges are structurally deficient and an additional 31 percent are functionally obsolete. In addition to deteriorated road and bridge conditions, 45 percent of Hawaii's major roads are considered congested. And according to the TRIP report, the fatality rate on Hawaii's rural roads is nearly four times greater than the fatality rate on all other roads in the state. TRIP's report contains lists of needed projects to improve roads and bridges and ease congestion that can not proceed without additional transportation funding.

"The Hawaii Highway Users Alliance is encouraged by the cooperation of the Hawaii Department of Transportation with TRIP in developing an objective report that shows the importance of the federal surface transportation program to Hawaii and provides data on Hawaii's current road and bridge conditions and future surface transportation needs. Although the federal program has helped Hawaii, on a national scale we are below average in pavement quality and

traffic congestion,” said Panos D. Prevedouros, immediate past president of the Hawaii Highway Users Conference. “Significant state and local action will be necessary to improve pavement and bridge conditions and address congestion. The Highways Modernization Plan that was held back in the last legislative session is a good tool to address these needs.”

The federal surface transportation program remains a critical source of funding for road and bridge repairs and transit improvements in Hawaii. According to the report, from 1998 to 2008, Hawaii received \$1.8 billion in federal funding for road, highway and bridge improvements, and \$475 million for public transit, a total of \$2.3 billion. Federal funds provide 44 percent of revenues used annually by the Hawaii Department of Transportation to pay for road, highway and bridge construction, repairs and maintenance and 14 percent of the revenue used annually to pay for the operation of and capital improvements to the state’s public transit systems.

This year’s federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provides approximately \$126 million in stimulus funding for highway and bridge improvements and \$44 million for public transit improvements in Hawaii. This funding, however, serves only as a down payment on needed road, highway, bridge and transit improvements and is not sufficient to allow the state to proceed with numerous projects needed to modernize its surface transportation system.

“We will continue to do the best we can with the resources we have,” said Brennon Morioka, Director for the state Department of Transportation. “The ARRA funds allow us to move forward with many projects we would have not been able to otherwise,” Morioka said.

Recent declines in federal surface transportation revenues, as well as significant increases in the cost of transportation construction materials, will make it more difficult for Congress to authorize new federal surface transportation legislation that adequately funds needed improvements to the nation’s roads, highways, bridges and public transit systems. The current federal transportation program expires on September 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 Hawaii.

“Hawaii 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.”