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Complete report available at: www.tripnet.org

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“Poor,” “Mediocre” Describe Nearly Half of Louisiana’s Roads *State Receives Failing Grades in New Transportation Report*

BATON ROUGE, January 8, 2007 — Nearly half of Louisiana’s major roads and highways are in poor or mediocre condition, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a national transportation research group based in Washington, D.C.

The TRIP report, entitled “Making the Grade in Louisiana: An Analysis of the Ability of Louisiana’s Transportation System to Meet the State’s Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility,” examined the condition, use, safety and funding of Louisiana’s roads and bridges as well as the state’s ability to meet future mobility and traffic safety needs. Based on state and federal data, TRIP assigned the following letter grades to the system’s components: Roads, F; Bridges, D-, Congestion, C; Safety, F; and Funding, D.

One of the report’s key findings is that 22 percent of Louisiana’s major roads are rated in poor condition, and an additional 25 percent are in mediocre condition. Nationwide, 13 percent of major roads are rated in poor condition and 20 percent are rated in mediocre position.

“It is critical that Louisiana develop and maintain a modern transportation system that can accommodate the state’s re-population, growth and increased vehicle travel to foster economic development,” said William M. Wilkins, TRIP’s executive director. “Further modernization of Louisiana’s system of roads, highways, bridges and public transit is crucial to providing a safer, more efficient transportation system.”

TRIP found that traffic congestion levels in Louisiana are rising as vehicle travel on the state’s roadways is increasing faster than additional roadway capacity is being added. Twenty-eight (28) percent of Louisiana’s urban Interstates and other highways or freeways are considered congested because they carry a level of traffic that is likely to result in significant delays during peak travel hours. This is an increase since 2000 when 22 percent of urban Interstates/highways/freeways were considered congested.

According to 2005 data (the latest year for which bridge data is available), 15 percent of Louisiana's bridges (20 feet or longer) were rated as structurally deficient, and approximately 17 percent were functionally obsolete. Nationally, 13 percent of bridges are structurally deficient and another 13 percent are functionally obsolete.

In addition, Louisiana's traffic fatality rate was 2.1 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2005 (the latest year for which fatality data is available), 40 percent higher than the national average of 1.5.

Finally, TRIP found that the lack of transportation funding is a major challenge for Louisiana in maintaining and rehabilitating or rebuilding its aging highway system and providing additional lane capacity to meet growing travel demand. Officials with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development have determined the state has nearly a \$12 billion backlog in unmet road construction needs, which includes maintenance and preservation, safety features and congestion relief.

"Crumbling roads and traffic congestion are hurting Louisiana in its efforts to recover and grow economically," said Derrell D. Cohoon, Chief Executive Officer, Louisiana Associated General Contractors, Inc. "Louisiana's funding of roads is broken, and we must fix the funding mechanism in order to get maximum federal transportation matching funds. If we don't, we'll simply fall further behind."