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MAINE IS FALLING BEHIND IN MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING ITS ROADS, HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES AS A SIGNIFICANT TRANSPORTATION FUNDING SHORTFALL THREATENS TO STIFLE ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN THE STATE

EDS.: THE REPORT INCLUDES A LIST OF NEEDED PROJECTS THAT REMAIN UNFUNDED, INCLUDING PROJECTS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES, IMPROVE ROAD AND BRIDGE CONDITIONS AND IMPROVE TRAFFIC SAFETY

Portland, Maine -- Maine faces a \$3.3 billion gap over the next ten years in needed funding to allow the state to significantly improve road and bridge conditions, enhance economic development opportunities, improve mobility and enhance traffic safety. Without a significant boost in state or federal transportation funding, Maine will be unable to move forward with numerous projects to address the state's most critical transportation needs, found a new report released today by TRIP, a Washington, DC based national transportation organization.

The report, "Falling Behind: The Condition and Funding of Maine's Roads, Highways & Bridges," found that at current funding levels, numerous needed highway projects will not proceed, pavement conditions on the state's major roads will worsen and that the miles of Maine highways restricted to lighter vehicles will increase.

The report found that without a significant boost in state transportation funding, numerous highway projects needed in Maine to support economic growth cannot proceed. These projects include a bypass on US 1 from Wiscasset to Edgecomb, the completion of the Northeast portion of the bypass on SR 25 in Gorham, the widening of a two-mile section of US 202 from Augusta to Manchester, a bypass from I-395 to SR – 9 from Brewer to Eddington and the modernization of a 26-mile section of Route 161 from Caribou to Cross Lake Township.

At current funding levels, the report also found that the share of deficient roads in Maine are expected to increase from 18 percent in need of significant repairs today, to 24 percent in 2014 and similarly the miles of state roads which are restricted to carrying lighter-weight vehicles due to poor pavement conditions, is expected to increase from 2,212 miles in 2008 to 2,400 miles in 2011.

"As Maine looks to bounce back from a serious economic downturn, we will need to increase our investment in our highway system, which is the backbone of the state economy," said Timothy

Ouellette, chief financial officer of CPM Constructors. “Moving forward with projects to improve our roads, highways and bridges will boost Maine’s economy by creating construction-related jobs in the short-term and by providing numerous jobs in the long-term as a result of economic opportunities created by improved regional mobility.”

The report also found that the approval earlier this year of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act gave a helpful boost to the state’s transportation system, providing approximately \$131 million in stimulus funding for highway and bridge improvements and \$13 million for public transit improvements in Maine. This funding can serve as a down payment on needed road, highway, bridge and transit improvements, but it is not sufficient to allow the state to proceed with numerous projects needed to enhance its surface transportation system.

The share of the state’s major roads in poor and mediocre condition is increasing, the report found. Approximately one-quarter of Maine’s major roads are rated in poor or mediocre condition, with 13 percent rated in poor condition and 12 percent rated in mediocre condition, the report found. In 2005, 20 percent of the state’s major roads were rated in poor or mediocre condition (11 percent poor and nine percent mediocre).

The report also found that 14 percent of Maine’s bridges are rated as structurally deficient and 19 percent of the state’s bridges are rated as functionally obsolete.

With the current federal transportation program, which helps fund Maine’s transportation system, set to expire at the end of October, Congress has an opportunity to approve a new federal surface transportation program that could include a significant boost in funding for highway and transit improvements in Maine, the report noted.

“Many transportation projects needed to support long-term economic growth in Maine are likely to remain stranded on the drawing board, unless a significant boost in funding is provided,” said William M. Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. “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.”