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1726 M Street, NW, #401 • Washington, DC 20036 • P: (202) 466-6706 • F: (202) 785-4722 • www.tripnet.org • trip@tripnet.org

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Report available at: [www.tripnet.org](http://www.tripnet.org)

**Contact:** Carolyn Bonifas 703-801-9212 (cell)

TRIP Office 202-466-6706

**MISSISSIPPI'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH MISSISSIPPI RESIDENT NEARLY \$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**

*Eds: REPORT CONTAINS A LIST OF THE MOST CONGESTED SECTIONS OF INTERSTATE*

**Jackson, June 20, 2006** – For the last 50 years, Mississippi's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving Mississippi residents \$5.6 billion annually - \$1,927 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But some of the benefits of Mississippi'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 Mississippi's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 3,000 lives in Mississippi since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each Mississippian \$131 annually (\$380 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. Mississippi's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$913 annually (\$2.7 billion statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$883 per resident (\$2.6 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

"Mississippi'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 Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT), 52 percent of the state’s Interstate (356 of 685 miles) will be in need of significant rehabilitation or reconstruction in the next 10 years. By the year 2026, MDOT estimates that 11 percent (85 of 768) of the state’s Interstate bridges will need significant repairs and 617 additional miles of Interstate roadway will need to be built or upgraded. In 20 years, if additional capacity is not added to Mississippi’s Interstate system, 95 percent of urban Interstates and 43 percent of rural Interstates will be congested. By 2026, 95 percent of urban and 57 percent of rural Interstate miles will need additional capacity to enhance mobility and goods movement.

“The Interstate System has long been considered one of the greatest engineering achievements of all time,” said Butch Brown, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Transportation. “Most Americans today have little experience of what the world was like without an Interstate Highway System. But even as we take it for granted, we fail to recognize that virtually all of our goods – from food and clothing – move on the Interstates en route to our homes.”

Fifty-three percent of Mississippi’s urban Interstates and 13 percent of the state’s rural Interstates are considered congested. Less than one percent of Mississippi’s Interstate bridges are structurally deficient but 36 percent are rated functionally obsolete. Eleven percent of Mississippi’s Interstate pavements are in poor or mediocre condition.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Mississippi’s Interstate system, which includes two percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 18 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Since Interstate construction began in 1956, total vehicle miles of travel in Mississippi increased by 486 percent, the number of vehicles in the state has increased by 199 percent and Mississippi’s population has increased by 33 percent.
- Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each Mississippi resident 57 hours of travel time annually - 165 million hours statewide. Mississippi’s Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 79 million gallons.