

For immediate release

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Report available at: www.tripnet.org

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DRIVING ON DEFICIENT ROADS COSTS EACH ALBANY DRIVER MORE THAN \$1,100 PER YEAR; BOOST IN STATE AND FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING NEEDED TO MODERNIZE ROADS AND BRIDGES TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC SAFETY AND PROVIDE CONGESTION RELIEF

Albany, New York – The average Albany driver loses \$1,145 each year as a result of driving on roads that lack some desirable safety features, have poor pavement conditions or have inadequate capacity to meet travel demands. In total, New York State motorists lose \$16.4 billion each year due to traffic crashes, additional vehicle operating costs and congestion-related delays, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a Washington, DC based national transportation organization.

The report, *“Future Mobility in New York: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility,”* finds that nearly half of major roads in the Albany area are deteriorated. Fourteen percent of major roads in the area are rated in poor condition, and an additional 34 percent are rated in mediocre condition. In addition to deteriorated road conditions, 27 percent of Albany area bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Thirty-five percent of Albany’s urban highways are considered congested, costing area drivers 19 hours each year due to congestion-related delays. Twenty-eight people were killed in 2008 on Albany area roads, giving the region a traffic fatality rate of 6.2 fatalities per 100,000 population.

“In order to improve the state’s transportation system, ease the burden on drivers, and kick start New York’s economy, transportation investment must be a priority at the state and federal level,” said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. “Without adequate investment, many critically needed transportation projects will remain stranded on the drawing board.”

The TRIP report finds that New York State faces a transportation funding shortfall of approximately \$87 billion from 2010 to 2030. The challenge of meeting this transportation funding shortfall will be exacerbated by growing debt repayments for funds borrowed to fund road, highway and bridge repairs in the state. Nearly half (49 percent) of the revenue going into the New York State Highway and Bridge Dedicated Trust Fund is currently being used to pay off

debt. By 2013, debt service is expected to consume 72 percent of the State Highway and Bridge Dedicated Trust Fund's incoming revenues.

State transportation funds are also being diverted away from making needed road and bridge improvements. From state fiscal years 1993-1994 to 2008-2009, 35 percent of disbursements from the New York State Highway and Bridge Dedicated Trust Fund were spent on capital construction projects – the funds used to repair and improve the state's roads and bridges. By 2013, the share of the New York State Highway and Bridge Dedicated Trust Fund going to capital construction projects is expected to decline to 21 percent.

Barbara Brassard, executive director of the Ticonderoga Area Chamber of Commerce, warned of the economic dangers to a community when they lose part of their transportation infrastructure. “Last October, we lost the Lake Champlain Bridge in Crown Point. Since the bridge closed, commutes to Vermont that were once measured in minutes are now measured in hours. Some businesses have experienced an 80% loss in business,” Brassard stated. “The Chamber is working twice as hard to promote tourism in southeast Essex County. Businesses along the Lake Champlain Bridge corridor are open, but without adequate funding for bridge repairs, other communities may be forced into the same situation. I wouldn't wish this crisis on any other community.”

A 2007 analysis by the Federal Highway Administration found that every \$1 billion invested in highway construction would support approximately 27,800 jobs, including approximately 9,500 in the construction sector, approximately 4,300 jobs in industries supporting the construction sector, and approximately 14,000 other jobs induced in non-construction related sectors of the economy.

Kenneth Adams, president and CEO of The Business Council of New York State, Inc. said, “A safe and reliable transportation system is vital to commerce in New York. Our economy depends on the movement of goods and services. Maintaining our highways and bridges, with our fair share of support from the federal government, is very important.”