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OKLAHOMA'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH OKLAHOMAN NEARLY \$1,700 ANNUALLY IN SAFETY BENEFITS, SAVED TIME, REDUCED FUEL AND LOWER CONSUMER COSTS

BENEFITS OF INTERSTATE SYSTEM MAY ERODE, AS STATE FACES \$625 MILLION FUNDING SHORTFALL FOR NEEDED INTERSTATE REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Eds.: Lists containing Oklahoma's most congested sections of Interstate, most deficient heavily traveled bridges, and needed Interstate maintenance and widening projects are included in the report.

OKLAHOMA CITY, May 16, 2006 – For the last 50 years, Oklahoma's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving Oklahoma residents \$6 billion annually - \$1,692 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But, as the state faces a \$625 million shortfall over the next 10 years in needed Interstate funding, some of the benefits of the Interstate Highway System may erode in the future, 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 Oklahoma's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 4,600 lives since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each Oklahoman \$165 annually (\$582 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. Oklahoma's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$506 annually (\$1.8 billion statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$1,021 per resident (\$3.6 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

"Oklahoma'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 Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), the state faces a \$625 million shortfall over the next 10 years in needed funding for Interstate projects. The cost of needed Interstate preservation and expansion from 2006 to 2016 is approximately \$1.825 billion. However, ODOT estimates the total amount available for needed Interstate preservation and expansion during that time is only \$1.2 billion. This shortfall poses a significant challenge in rebuilding the state's aging Interstate highways and bridges and providing additional lane capacity to meet growing travel demands.

Bridge conditions, pavement conditions and traffic congestion are all likely to worsen unless the state can fund needed transportation projects. Seventeen percent of Oklahoma's Interstate bridges are structurally deficient and an additional 12 percent are rated functionally obsolete. Eighteen percent of Interstate pavements are in poor or mediocre condition and 32 percent of the state's urban Interstates and 10 percent of rural Interstate's are congested during peak travel hours. In fact, between 1990 and 2004, vehicle travel on Oklahoma's Interstates increased by 41 percent, while lane miles on the system increased by only one percent. By the year 2026, travel on Oklahoma's Interstate highways is expected to increase by 48 percent. If additional capacity is not added to Oklahoma's Interstate's, 55 percent of the state's urban Interstate's and 41 percent of rural Interstate's will be congested during peak periods by 2026. The TRIP report identifies several Interstate projects that are needed by 2026 to ease congestion and improve bridge and pavement conditions.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Oklahoma's Interstate system, which includes two percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 21 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Since Interstate construction began in 1956, total vehicle miles of travel in Oklahoma increased by 346 percent. Since that time, the number of vehicles in the state has more than tripled and the state's population has increased by 54 percent.
- Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each Oklahoma resident 32 hours of travel time annually - 111 million hours statewide. Oklahoma's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 53 million gallons.
- According to ODOT, between 2006 and 2016, 219 center-lane miles of the state's Interstate system will require major rehabilitation or reconstruction and 123 Interstate bridges will require significant repair or reconstruction. During that time, 48 Interstate route miles will need additional lanes built to increase capacity.