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HIGHWAY FUNDING BOOST APPROVED IN 2006 PROVIDES OKLAHOMA OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE POOR ROAD AND BRIDGE CONDITIONS AND COMPLETE NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS; BUT POSSIBLE \$32.5 MILLION FUNDING CUT COULD BE DETOUR ON ROUTE TO BETTER ROADS

OKLAHOMA CONTINUES TO LAG BEHIND OTHER STATES IN HIGHWAY AND BRIDGE CONDITIONS AND TRAFFIC SAFETY

EDS.: A LIST OF KEY PROJECTS THAT WILL BE FUNDED AS PART OF OKLAHOMA'S EIGHT-YEAR ROAD AND BRIDGE IMPROVEMENT IS INCLUDED IN THE REPORT

Oklahoma City, May 10, 2007 – Increased funding for Oklahoma highway and bridges signed into law by Governor Henry in 2006 will potentially boost highway funding by \$1.6 billion from 2007 to 2014, allowing Oklahoma to address the state's high rates of road and bridge deterioration, improve roadway safety and move forward with numerous projects needed to relieve traffic congestion and enhance economic development. But the funding program is in danger of losing \$32.5 million in the first year alone. This would be a significant roadblock to Oklahoma's new eight-year road, highway and bridge improvement program, and would hurt the state's ability to make significant improvements in its transportation system. This is according to a new report released today by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group.

The report, entitled "Future Mobility in Oklahoma: An Analysis of the Ability of Oklahoma's Transportation System to Meet the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," finds that Oklahoma has the highest share of deficient bridges in the nation, high rates of pavement deterioration, a traffic fatality rate higher than the national average and increasing levels of traffic congestion.

"The additional funding has given us an excellent opportunity to start reversing the significant deterioration of Oklahoma's roads, highways and bridges," said Neal McCaleb, the former state secretary of transportation and director of the turnpike authority, who currently serves as President of the T.R.U.S.T. Road Coalition, an Oklahoma road funding advocacy group. "We simply can't afford to cut highway funding at a time when we have a compelling need to improve the condition and safety of the state's highway system."

According to the TRIP report, 27 percent of Oklahoma's bridges are rated as structurally deficient, the highest rate in the nation. The report also found that forty percent of major roads in Oklahoma are in poor and mediocre condition and that an average of 733 people were killed in traffic accidents annually in Oklahoma from 2001 to 2005.

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation recently launched an eight-year, approximately \$4 billion road, highway and bridge construction program earlier this year. The program is funded partly by the additional \$1.6 billion in highway funding provided by 2006 legislation that requires that an increased share of state motor fuel tax revenues, interest on some transportation accounts and some general fund revenue be spent on road, highway and bridge repairs.

“Oklahoma has an excellent opportunity to address much-needed road, highway and bridge improvements created by years of inadequate funding of its transportation system,” said William Wilkins, Executive Director of TRIP. “But providing Oklahomans with highways and bridges that are well-maintained, safe and efficient will require that the state fully fund its eight-year roadway improvement program.”

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- If fully funded, Oklahoma's eight-year highway construction program is likely to improve traffic safety and road and bridge conditions in the state. The plan calls for paving shoulders along 553 miles of roadway, adding median cable barriers to 280 miles of high-traffic routes, replacing 480 bridges, repairing 426 bridges and completing needed highway projects including the redesign and rebuilding of portions of Interstate 44 in Tulsa, the Interstate Crosstown in Oklahoma City, Interstate 35 between Moore and Norman, and several bypasses.
- In 2005 (the latest year for which data is available), 18 percent of major roads in Oklahoma were rated in poor condition and 22 percent of major roads were rated in mediocre condition.
- Oklahoma's traffic fatality rate was 1.71 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel in 2005 (the latest year for which data is available), 18 percent higher than the national average of 1.45.
- Oklahoma's population reached 3.5 million in 2005, an increase of approximately 13 percent since 1990. Oklahoma's population is projected to increase by approximately 17 percent by 2030, an increase of approximately 700,000 residents.
- Vehicle travel on Oklahoma's major highways increased by 42 percent from 1990 to 2005 – jumping from 33 billion vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 1990 to 47 billion VMT in 2005.
- Vehicle travel in Oklahoma is expected to increase by another 40 percent by 2020, reaching 66 billion VMT.