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OREGON'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH OREGON RESIDENT NEARLY \$2,600 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

Portland, Oregon - June 29, 2006 – The nation's Interstate Highway System is 50, fragile and frenetic - particularly in Oregon.

Oregon, along the rest of the nation on Thursday (June 29), observes the 50th anniversary of the federal legislation creating the network of interstate freeways. According to a national report, the Interstate in urban Oregon is congested. And the state is sixth in terms of the percentage of inadequate structures.

The roots of the state's Interstate go back to the 1920s, when innovative engineering and state financing built the forerunners of I-5 and I-84. Since 1956, Oregon residents have saved \$9.3 billion annually - \$2,579 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs.

But some of the benefits of Oregon's Interstate Highway System may erode unless the state can secure additional funds for needed maintenance and widening projects, according to a the report released today by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group.

For the last 50 years, Oregon's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving Oregon residents \$9.3 billion annually - \$2,579 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But some of the benefits of Oregon'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 Oregon's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 2,900 lives in Oregon since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each Oregon resident \$102 annually (\$367 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. Oregon's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$1,101 annually (\$4 billion

statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$1,367 per resident (\$5 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

“Oregon’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.

Oregon has the sixth highest percentage of structurally deficient bridges in the nation. Thirteen percent of Oregon’s Interstate bridges are rated structurally deficient and 18 percent are rated functionally obsolete. Four percent of Oregon’s Interstate pavements are in mediocre condition. Fourteen percent are in fair condition and the remaining 82 percent are rated in good condition.

"Oregon's interstate system is the backbone of our economic health and contributes immeasurably to our quality of life," said Matthew L. Garrett, director of the Oregon Department of Transportation. " In Oregon, we are well into delivering a \$3-billion investment in highway and bridge projects -- many of them on the interstate system -- that will improve Oregon's competitiveness in national and international markets. What's more, this investment provides jobs for Oregonians and valuable experience for Oregon companies," Garrett said.

"Yet, we know there is still a lot to do, particularly in maintenance of the existing system," he added.

Scott Williams, president of Hamilton Construction and past-president of the Associated General Contractors Oregon-Columbia Chapter stated, “As general contractors, we are out rebuilding the roads and bridges every day. We know what a pounding the system has taken and how important it is to maintain what we have. It will cost more later if we delay.”

According to the TRIP report, 33 percent of Oregon’s urban Interstates are considered congested because they carry traffic levels that result in significant delays during peak travel hours. Between 1990 and 2004, vehicle travel on Oregon’s Interstates increased by 38 percent, while lane miles on the system only increased by one percent.

Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each Oregon resident 69 hours of travel time annually - 247 million hours statewide. Oregon’s Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 118 million gallons.

Oregon’s Interstate highways have saved approximately 2,900 lives in Oregon since 1956. This estimate is based on assuming that if there were no Interstate highways, traffic would be carried by other major roads in the state, which have higher traffic fatality rates. Oregon’s Interstate system has saved approximately 110 lives per year in the last ten years. Travel on Oregon’s Interstate highways is approximately three times safer than travel on all other roadways. The fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles of travel on Oregon’s Interstate system in 2004 was 0.46, while it was 1.55 on non-Interstate routes in 2004 in Oregon.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Oregon’s Interstate system, which includes two percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 25 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Since funding of the Interstate system was approved in 1956, vehicle miles of travel in Oregon have increased by 367 percent. The number of vehicles in Oregon has increased by 261 percent since 1956, and the state’s population has jumped by 115 percent during that same time.