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**RHODE ISLAND ROAD AND BRIDGE CONDITIONS LIKELY TO WORSEN UNLESS \$1.3 BILLION TRANSPORTATION FUNDING SHORTFALL IS REDUCED; NUMEROUS PROJECTS NEEDED TO REPAIR STATE'S KEY HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES REMAIN UNFUNDED**

*EDS.: REPORT INCLUDES LISTS OF DETERIORATED ROADWAYS IN NEED OF RESURFACING OR RECONSTRUCTION*

**Providence, RI - October 7, 2008** – The condition of Rhode Island’s roads, highways and bridges is likely to worsen unless the state is able to increase transportation investment and close a significant transportation funding shortfall. The state faces a transportation funding shortfall of nearly \$1.3 billion through 2013 for needed repairs and improvements to its highway transportation system. If this funding shortfall is not addressed, numerous critical projects to repair the state’s roads and bridges will be left unfunded or unable to proceed, causing further deterioration and hampering economic development. This is according to a new report released today by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group.

According to the TRIP report, titled “Rhode Island’s Crucial Links: The Current Condition and Funding of the State’s Roads and Bridges,” the state needs a total of \$2.76 billion through 2013 to significantly improve road, highway and bridge conditions. However, only \$1.47 billion will be available, leaving a shortfall of nearly \$1.3 billion for needed improvements to the state’s transportation system.

Further compounding Rhode Island’s transportation funding shortfall is the escalation of the cost of roadway improvements due to rapid increases in the price of key materials needed for highway and bridge construction. Over the five-year period from August 2003 to August 2008 the average cost of materials used for highway construction, including asphalt, concrete, steel, lumber and diesel, increased by 75 percent.

“Without adequate funding, Rhode Island’s transportation system is stuck on a dead-end street,” said Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) Director Michael P. Lewis. “A sound infrastructure is crucial to safety, mobility, and economic vitality, especially when what RIDOT does touches everyone.”

The TRIP report found that approximately half of Rhode Island’s bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, with conditions expected to worsen in the future under current transportation funding projections. In 2008, 21 percent of Rhode Island’s bridges were structurally

deficient and an additional 29 percent of bridges were functionally obsolete. This includes all state, municipal and local bridges 20 feet and longer. Under current funding projections, RIDOT estimates the number of bridges in need of significant repair or replacement will increase by 10 percent by 2013.

In addition to declining bridge conditions, Rhode Island's roads and highways have significant deterioration, with approximately a quarter of the state's major roads rated as "failed" or "poor". Ten percent of Rhode Island's major roads are rated in failed condition, and an additional 16 percent are in poor condition. TRIP estimates that driving on roads in need of repair costs Rhode Island motorists \$360 million annually – \$482 per driver – in extra vehicle operating costs, including accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. Included in the TRIP report is a list of 35 segments of deteriorated roads that are in need of resurfacing or complete reconstruction.

"It is critical that Rhode Island find the resources to develop and maintain a transportation system that can carry the state into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Further deterioration of the state's roads, highways and transit system will diminish quality of life in Rhode Island and hinder economic development," said Will Wilkins, TRIP's executive director.

As a major tourism and industrial center, it is critical to Rhode Island's economy that the state's transportation system is efficient and well maintained. Every year, \$21 billion in goods are shipped from sites in Rhode Island and another \$18 billion in goods are shipped to sites in Rhode Island, mostly by trucks. Sixty-nine percent of the goods shipped annually from sites in Rhode Island are carried by trucks and another 24 percent are carried by courier services, which use trucks for part of their deliveries. Similarly, 77 percent of the goods shipped to sites in Rhode Island are carried by trucks and another 13 percent are carried by courier services. Commercial trucking is expected to increase by 38 percent in Rhode Island by 2020.

**Additional findings of the TRIP report:**

- According to the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, of the 772 total bridges in the state, 164 bridges are currently in need of significant repairs or replacement. By 2013, RIDOT estimates that 180 bridges will be in need of significant repairs or replacement.
- Of the 1,100 total miles of state-maintained roadway, 231 miles are currently in need of significant repair or rehabilitation. By 2013, without an increase in transportation funding, RIDOT estimates that 300 miles of roadway will be in need of significant repair or rehabilitation.
- Travel in Rhode Island increased by 18 percent from 1990 to 2006 – jumping from 7 billion vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 1990 to 8.3 billion VMT in 2006. Vehicle travel in Rhode Island is expected to increase 20 percent by 2025.