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SOUTH CAROLINA'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH SOUTH CAROLINA RESIDENT NEARLY \$2,200 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

Columbia, South Carolina - June 29, 2006 – For the last 50 years, South Carolina's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving South Carolina residents \$9.2 billion annually - \$2,195 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But some of the benefits of South Carolina'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 South Carolina's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 5,300 lives in South Carolina since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each South Carolina resident \$160 annually (\$671 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. South Carolina's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$980 annually (\$4.1 billion statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$1,055 per resident (\$4.4 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

"South Carolina'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 TRIP report, 46 percent of South Carolina'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 South Carolina's Interstates increased by 69 percent, while lane miles on the system only increased by 13 percent.

Overall, Interstate pavement and bridge conditions are acceptable, though some deficiencies exist. Three percent of South Carolina's Interstate bridges are rated structurally deficient and nine percent are rated functionally obsolete. Eight percent of South Carolina's Interstate pavements are in mediocre condition. Fifteen percent are in fair condition and the remaining 77 percent are rated in good condition.

Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each South Carolina resident 61 hours of travel time annually - 256 million hours statewide. South Carolina's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 122 million gallons.

South Carolina faces a significant challenge in maintaining and rebuilding its aging Interstate Highway System and providing additional lane capacity to meet growing travel demand. Travel on South Carolina's Interstate highways is expected to increase by 60 percent by the year 2026. Traffic congestion is expected to worsen substantially on South Carolina's urban Interstate highways, unless additional lanes are added to these routes.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- South Carolina's Interstate system, which includes three percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 27 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Since funding of the Interstate system was approved in 1956, vehicle miles of travel in South Carolina has increased by 538 percent, the number of vehicles in South Carolina has increased by 304 percent and the state's population has jumped by 84 percent.