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Report available at: www.tripnet.org

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SOUTH CAROLINIANS HAVE BENEFITTED FROM RECENT PROJECTS TO MODERNIZE THE STATE’S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, BUT SIGNIFICANT DEFICIENCIES REMAIN; SIGNIFICANT BOOST IN FEDERAL OR STATE FUNDING NEEDED TO PROVIDE CONGESTION RELIEF, IMPROVE TRAFFIC SAFETY AND MAKE NEEDED ROAD AND BRIDGE REPAIRS

EDS.: THE REPORT INCLUDES A LIST OF NEEDED PROJECTS THAT REMAIN UNFUNDED, INCLUDING ROAD AND BRIDGE REPAIRS AND PROJECTS TO ENHANCE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE STATE.

Columbia, South Carolina- South Carolina’s roads and bridges are increasingly congested and deteriorated and have a high-rate of fatal traffic crashes. In the past decade, the state has used a combination of federal and state funding to improve its transportation system, but many sorely needed transportation projects still remain unfunded, according to a new report entitled “Future Mobility in South Carolina: Meeting the State’s Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility.”

The TRIP report, produced in conjunction with the South Carolina Alliance to Fix Our Roads (SC FOR), finds that nearly half – 48 percent - of the state’s major urban roads are congested, with travel delays in Columbia projected to double by 2030 if additional capacity is not added to the transportation system. The condition of the state’s roads and bridges is also deteriorating, with 28 percent of South Carolina’s major roads in poor or mediocre condition. Driving on roads in need of repair costs each South Carolina motorist an average of \$262 annually - \$784 million state-wide – in the form of accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear. The report also finds that more than one-fifth of South Carolina’s bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. TRIP’s report contains lists of needed projects to improve roads and bridges and ease congestion that can not proceed without additional transportation funding.

“South Carolina’s transportation network is the lifeline of our economy,” said Larry Grooms, chairman of the South Carolina Senate Transportation Committee. “By boosting transportation funding we create much-needed, well-paying jobs in the short term. The investment pays dividends in the long term by ensuring timely travel and the free flow of commerce, while directly increasing the productivity of people and businesses across our state.”

According to the TRIP report, South Carolina’s traffic fatality rate of 2.09 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles of travel is the fourth highest in the U.S. and 54 percent higher than the

national average. The fatality rate on South Carolina's rural roads is approximately five times greater than the fatality rate on all other roads in the state.

"When we talk about the health of our state's overall business climate, poor infrastructure negatively impacts South Carolina as companies decide whether or not to locate or expand here, ultimately determining the number of good jobs for our citizens," said Otis B. Rawl Jr., president and chief executive officer of the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce.

The federal surface transportation program remains a critical source of funding for road and bridge repairs in South Carolina. According to the report, from 1998 to 2007, South Carolina received \$5.3 billion in federal funding for road, highway and bridge improvements, 56 percent of revenues used annually by the South Carolina Department of Transportation to pay for road, highway and bridge construction, repairs and maintenance.

The recently approved American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides approximately \$463 million in stimulus funding for highway and bridge improvements and \$41 million for public transit improvements in South Carolina. This funding can serve as a down payment on needed road, highway, bridge and transit improvements, but it is not sufficient to allow the state to proceed with numerous projects needed to modernize its surface transportation system.

"With every year that passes South Carolina's highway infrastructure deteriorates more and more and every year construction costs to repair and maintain our state's highways, roads and bridges increase, yet it has been two decades since policy makers have increased the revenue base that supports highway improvements," said Scott Fant, chairman of the board of the South Carolina Alliance to Fix our Roads (SC FOR).

Recent declines in federal surface transportation revenues, as well as significant increases in the cost of transportation construction materials, will make it more difficult for Congress to authorize new federal surface transportation legislation that adequately funds needed improvements to the nation's roads, highways, bridges and public transit systems. The current federal transportation program expires on September 30, 2009, requiring Congress to authorize a new federal surface transportation program or extend the current program to allow federal highway dollars to continue to be provided to South Carolina.

"South Carolina has benefited tremendously from the federal transportation program," said William M. Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "While the state has put this combination of federal and state funds to good use in the past, in the coming years, many additional needed projects will remain stranded on the drawing board because of insufficient funding. It is critical that the state adequately fund its transportation system and that Congress produces a timely and adequately funded federal surface transportation program this year."