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SOUTH DAKOTA'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH SOUTH DAKOTA RESIDENT NEARLY \$1,800 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

Pierre, South Dakota - June 29, 2006 – For the last 50 years, South Dakota's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving South Dakota residents \$1.37 billion annually - \$1,776 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But some of the benefits of South Dakota'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 Dakota's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 900 lives in South Dakota since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each South Dakota resident \$148 annually (\$114 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. South Dakota's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$526 annually (\$405 million statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$1,102 per resident (\$850 million statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

"South Dakota'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, by the year 2026, 85 percent of the state's Interstate system will need significant rehabilitation or reconstruction and urban Interstate capacity will need to be increased by 10 percent to keep up with growing travel demands.

“South Dakota's Interstate Highway System has contributed greatly over the past 50 years to improved economic development and an enhanced quality of life for our state's residents,” said highway contractor Mark Knight of Aberdeen, SD. Mr. Knight, a nationally recognized member of the Associated General Contractors, went on to say that: “South Dakota will need to continue an adequate level of highway funding to assure the maintenance of a first-rate road and bridge system in the future.”

Overall, Interstate pavement and bridge conditions are acceptable, though some deficiencies exist. Six percent of South Dakota's Interstate bridges are rated structurally deficient and 16 percent are rated functionally obsolete. The average age of South Dakota's Interstate bridges is 35 years. Older bridges typically need significant repairs, reconstruction or replacement after approximately 50 years. Eleven percent of South Dakota's Interstate pavements are in mediocre condition. Thirty-six percent are in fair condition and the remaining 52 percent are rated in good condition.

Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each South Dakota resident 33 hours of travel time annually - 25 million hours statewide. South Dakota's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 12 million gallons.

South Dakota faces a significant challenge in maintaining and rebuilding its aging Interstate Highway System and providing additional lane capacity to meet growing travel demand. Between 1990 and 2004, vehicle travel on South Dakota's Interstates increased by 60 percent, while lane miles on the system only increased by two percent.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- South Dakota's Interstate system, which includes two percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 29 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Since funding of the Interstate system was approved in 1956, vehicle miles of travel in South Dakota has increased by 184 percent, the number of vehicles in South Dakota has increased by 158 percent and the state's population has jumped by 15 percent.