



1726 M St., NW, #401/ Washington, DC 20036/P: 202.466.6706 / F: 202.785.4722 / www.tripnet.org / trip@tripnet.org

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Contact: Frank Moretti 202-262-0714 (cell)
TRIP Office 202-466-6706

Report available at: www.tripnet.org

TENNESSEE’S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE’S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH TENNESSEE RESIDENT NEARLY \$2,700 ANNUALLY IN SAFETY BENEFITS, SAVED TIME, REDUCED FUEL AND LOWER CONSUMER COSTS

BENEFITS OF INTERSTATE SYSTEM MAY ERODE, AS STATE FACES \$1.5 BILLION FUNDING SHORTFALL FOR NEEDED INTERSTATE REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

EDS.: REPORT CONTAINS LISTS OF TENNESSEE’S MOST CONGESTED SECTIONS OF INTERSTATE AND MOST DEFICIENT HEAVILY TRAVELED INTERSTATE BRIDGES.

Nashville, June 29, 2006 – For the last 50 years, Tennessee’s Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state’s transportation network, saving Tennessee residents \$15.9 billion annually - \$2,698 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But, as the state faces a \$1.5 billion shortfall over the next 10 years in needed Interstate funding, some of the benefits of the Interstate Highway System may erode, 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 Tennessee’s Interstate Highway System,” estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 7,500 lives in Tennessee since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each Tennessean \$161 annually (\$949 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. Tennessee’s Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$1,484 annually (\$8.8 billion statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$1,053 per resident (\$6.2 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

“Tennessee’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 Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), the state faces a \$1.5 billion shortfall over the next 10 years in funding needed expansion of the Interstate system to relieve congestion and sustain economic growth in the state. This shortfall poses a significant challenge in rebuilding the state's aging Interstate highways and bridges and providing additional lane capacity to meet growing travel demands. According to TDOT, 29 percent of Tennessee's Interstate bridges (404 of 1,404 bridges) will need significant repairs or reconstruction by 2016. If additional capacity is not added to Tennessee's Interstate system, 73 percent of urban Interstate miles will be congested by 2016 and 98 percent of urban Interstate miles will be congested by the year 2026.

"The interstate system has transformed our state. It is important that our policy makers allow that transformation to continue by securing the funds needed to finance a 21st century interstate system," said Pete DeLay, Chairman, Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance.

Bridge conditions, pavement conditions and traffic congestion are all likely to worsen unless the state can fund needed transportation projects. Fifty-three percent of Tennessee's urban Interstates are considered congested. In fact, the average amount of travel per Interstate lane mile in Tennessee increased by 46 percent from 1990 to 2004.

"Tennessee's Interstate Highway System has contributed greatly over the past 50 years to improve economic development and an enhanced quality of life for our state's residents," said Johnny Coleman, President, Tennessee Road Builders Association. "Tennessee will need an adequate level of highway funding to allow the state to continue to maintain and improve a first rate road and bridge system in the future."

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Tennessee's 1,105 miles of Interstate system, which includes three percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 28 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Tennessee needs to build additional lanes along 239 miles of the existing 1,105 mile Interstate system by 2016 in order to relieve growing traffic congestion.
- Tennessee's Interstate highways have saved approximately 7,500 lives in Tennessee since 1956. The number of lives saved by the Interstate was calculated by estimating the additional fatalities that would have occurred had Interstate traffic been carried by other major roadways in the state, which have higher traffic fatality rates. Tennessee's Interstate system has saved an average of 190 lives per year over the last 10 years, based on the above criteria.

- Since Interstate construction began in 1956, total vehicle miles of travel in Tennessee increased by 544 percent. Since that time, the number of vehicles in the state has increased by 345 percent and the state's population has increased by 71 percent.
- Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each Tennessee resident 93 hours of travel time annually - 546 million hours statewide. Tennessee's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 260 million gallons.