



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

For immediate release
Thursday, June 29 2006
Report available at: www.tripnet.org

Contact: Frank Moretti or Carolyn Bonifas
TRIP Office 202-466-6706

UTAH'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH UTAH RESIDENT NEARLY \$3,000 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

Salt Lake City, June 29, 2006 – For the last 50 years, Utah's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving Utah residents \$7 billion annually - \$2,941 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But some of the benefits of Utah'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 Utah's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 2,500 lives in Utah since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each Utah resident \$132 annually (\$316 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. Utah's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$1,667 annually (\$4 billion statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$1,142 per resident (\$2.7 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

"Utah'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 TRIP, 23 percent of Utah's urban Interstates are considered congested because they carry traffic levels that result in significant delays during peak travel hours. Overall, Interstate pavement and bridge conditions are acceptable, though some deficiencies exist. Five percent of Utah's Interstate bridges are rated structurally deficient and 13 percent are rated functionally obsolete. Sixteen percent of Utah's Interstate pavements are in poor or mediocre condition. Fifteen percent are in fair condition and the remaining 70 percent are rated in good condition.

Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each Utah resident 104 hours of travel time annually - 248 million hours statewide. Utah's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 118 million gallons.

Utah 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 Utah's Interstate highways is expected to increase by 89 percent by the year 2026. Traffic congestion is expected to worsen substantially on Utah's urban Interstate highways, unless additional lanes are added to these routes. By 2026, if additional capacity is not added to Utah's Interstate system, 77 percent of urban Interstates will be congested and 19 percent of rural Interstates will be congested.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- Utah's Interstate system, which includes five percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 36 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Since funding of the Interstate system was approved in 1956, vehicle miles of travel in Utah has increased by 645 percent, the number of vehicles in Utah has increased by 489 percent and the state's population has jumped by 195 percent.