



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

For immediate release
Tuesday, February 20, 2007
Report available at: www.tripnet.org

Contact: Frank Moretti 202-262-0714
Carolyn Bonifas 703-801-9212 (cell)

VIRGINIA FACES \$74 BILLION BACKLOG IN NEEDED HIGHWAY TRANSPORTATION FUNDS. LACK OF FUNDING BRINGS INCREASING CONGESTION, HAMPERED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, REDUCED SAFETY AND DETERIORATING ROAD CONDITIONS

New Report Examines Virginia Transportation Funding, Congestion, Economic Development, Safety, Road and Bridge Conditions and the State's Ability to Accommodate Future Growth

Richmond, VA – February 20, 2007 – Current transportation funding levels are insufficient to address needed maintenance and improvements on Virginia's highways and accommodate future growth, leading to increased roadway congestion and deterioration, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a national nonprofit transportation research group based in Washington, D.C.

The report, "Virginia's Future Mobility: An Analysis of the Ability of Virginia's Transportation System to Meet the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," examines transportation funding, congestion, economic development, traffic safety and road and bridge conditions in Virginia and includes a list of needed but unfunded transportation projects in the state. According to the TRIP report, Virginia faces a \$74 billion backlog through 2025 in unfunded highway transportation improvements and a \$31 billion backlog in needed transit improvements, which are needed to relieve traffic congestion, enhance economic development, maintain the condition of roads and bridges and improve traffic safety.

Exacerbating the funding shortfall is the fact that by 2009, state highway funds will be insufficient to match federal highway funds, preventing Virginia from making full use of available federal dollars and reducing the overall amount of funds available to the state. In addition, by 2014, all state construction funds will be used solely for maintenance of the existing system, leaving other needed projects and improvements unfunded. The Virginia Department of Transportation is currently transferring approximately \$400 million per year from funds allocated to new construction to its maintenance program

Jeff Southard, Executive Vice President of the Virginia Transportation Construction Alliance, said, "Absent additional transportation funding in Virginia, the state will be unable to fund needed projects that would improve the state's economy and make the state's roads safer, smoother and more efficient. A substandard transportation system reduces the quality of life in the state and could curb economic development."

According to the TRIP report, Virginia's competitive advantage as a major transportation hub of the eastern United States may be threatened by increasing traffic congestion and the inability of the state to fund needed transportation infrastructure improvements. Given Virginia's two critical ports in Norfolk and

Richmond, Interstates 81 and 95 crossing the state, and Dulles International Airport serving air passengers and cargo, a congested and deteriorated transportation system could severely hamper the state's economy.

Increasing traffic congestion causes approximately 38 annual hours of delay for each urban motorist in Virginia – nearly one full working week – according to TRIP calculations. Vehicle travel on all of Virginia's roads and highways increased by 33 percent from 1990 to 2005, and is expected to increase by 50 percent by 2025. In 2004, 30 percent of Virginia's Interstate, primary and secondary roadways were considered congested. By 2025, 45 percent of the state's roadways are expected to be congested unless the state's roadways and public transit systems are expanded.

“This report underscores the magnitude of Virginia's unfunded transportation needs and the reality that every year's delay by Virginia's General Assembly costs taxpayer's billions of dollars in lost time, wasted fuel and frustration. Rising construction, right-of-way and other costs also mean the failure of legislators to provide new transportation funding this year will add billions to the cost of the most urgently needed transportation solutions,” said Bob Chase, Virginians for Better Transportation Steering Committee member.

Approximately one quarter – 24 percent -- of Virginia's major roads are rated in substandard condition, and an additional 16 percent are in mediocre condition. This includes Interstates, highways, connecting urban arterials, and key urban streets that are maintained by state, county or municipal governments. The TRIP report calculates that driving on roads in need of repair costs the average Virginia motorist approximately \$280 per year - \$1.4 billion statewide – in additional vehicle operating costs. These costs include accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

The report also found that 26 percent of the state's bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, and approximately one-third are more than 50 years old. Significant bridge deficiencies exist in the state's major urban areas.

“Providing additional funding for needed highway projects is essential if Virginia's residents, businesses and visitors are to enjoy a transportation network that is safe, smooth and efficient. Needed maintenance and improvements will help ensure that congestion and deterioration on the state's roads do not worsen,” said William M. Wilkins, TRIP executive director.

Additional findings from the TRIP report:

- In 2004, 29 percent of Virginia's Interstate lane miles were considered congested. According to current projections, 79 percent of the state's Interstate lane miles will be congested by 2025.
- The current percentage of congested lane miles in each of Virginia's major urban areas is as follows: Northern Virginia – 58 percent; Roanoke – 27 percent; Hampton Roads – 23 percent; and Richmond – 21 percent.
- Virginia's population reached 7.6 million in 2005, an increase of 23 percent or 1.4 million people, since 1990. Virginia's population is projected to increase by two million more residents by 2025, with most population growth concentrated in areas that are already heavily populated and also produce most of the state's economic revenue.
- The percentage of bridges that are in need of rehabilitation or repair in the state's largest urban areas are: Northern Virginia – 19 percent; Richmond – 27 percent; Roanoke – 57 percent; and Hampton Roads – 41 percent.