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WEST VIRGINIA'S INTERSTATE SYSTEM TURNS 50 YEARS OLD, REMAINS CRITICAL LINK IN STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, SAVING EACH WEST VIRGINIA RESIDENT MORE THAN \$2,000 ANNUALLY IN SAFETY BENEFITS, SAVED TIME, REDUCED FUEL AND LOWER CONSUMER COSTS

BENEFITS OF INTERSTATE SYSTEM MAY ERODE, AS STATE FACES \$1.4 BILLION FUNDING SHORTFALL FOR NEEDED INTERSTATE REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

EDS.: REPORT CONTAINS LISTS OF WEST VIRGINIA'S MOST DEFICIENT HEAVILY TRAVELED INTERSTATE BRIDGES.

Charleston, June 21, 2006 – For the last 50 years, West Virginia's Interstate Highway System has remained the most critical link in the state's transportation network, saving West Virginia residents \$3.7 billion annually - \$2,032 per person- in safety benefits, saved time, reduced fuel and lower consumer costs. But, as the state faces a \$1.4 billion shortfall over the next 20 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 West Virginia's Interstate Highway System," estimates that the additional safety features of the Interstate Highway System have saved approximately 2,400 lives in West Virginia since 1956. In addition to saving lives, improved traffic safety provided by the Interstate system saves each West Virginian \$167 annually (\$304 million statewide) in reduced healthcare costs and costs associated with lost productivity due to traffic crashes. West Virginia's Interstate Highway System also saves the average resident \$947 annually (\$1.7 billion statewide) in the value of saved time and fuel, and saves \$918 per resident (\$1.7 billion statewide) in reduced consumer costs for apparel, food, housing and transportation.

"The interstate system in West Virginia has provided state taxpayers with 50 years of growth, not only in economic development and jobs, but also with improving our way of life," said Paul Mattox, Secretary of the West Virginia Department of Transportation,

According to the West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT), the state faces a \$1.4 billion backlog over the next 20 years in funding needed repairs and improvements to the Interstate system. 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. Also according to WVDOT, 46 percent of West Virginia's Interstate bridges (300 of 654 bridges) will need significant

repairs or reconstruction by 2026, and 63 percent of the state's Interstate system (351 of 555 miles) will need significant rehabilitation or reconstruction by 2026 to provide a smooth pavement surface. WVDOT also estimates that it will need to add additional lanes along 142 miles of its existing 555-mile Interstate system by 2026 in order to relieve growing traffic congestion.

"West Virginia's Interstates 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.

Overall current road and bridge conditions are acceptable, but road conditions, pavement conditions and traffic congestion are all likely to worsen unless the state can fund needed transportation projects. Eight percent of West Virginia's urban Interstates and 21 percent of the state's rural Interstates are considered congested. Between 1990 and 2004, vehicle miles of travel on West Virginia's Interstates increased by 57 percent, while lanes on the system increased by only nine percent. Seven percent of West Virginia's Interstate bridges are structurally deficient and an additional 12 percent are rated functionally obsolete. Ten percent of Interstate pavements are in poor or mediocre condition.

"The TRIP study offers no surprises to the Division of Highways. We know that the majority of our interstate highways are in good shape. However, to maintain what we currently have and address the needs for reconstruction and construction of additional lanes that the study mentions, along with addressing the deterioration of our secondary road system, the division will need to continue to work hand in hand with the Governor and Legislature looking for future funding options," said Mattox.

Additional findings of the TRIP report:

- The total cost of needed repairs and expansion of West Virginia's Interstate highways over the next 20 years is \$2.7 billion: \$2.1 billion for repairs and \$600 million for expansion. The West Virginia Department of Transportation has only \$1.3 billion available for improvements to the state's Interstate highway system through 2026.
- West Virginia's Interstate system, which includes three percent of all roadway lane miles in the state, carries 28 percent of all vehicle travel in the state.
- Since Interstate construction began in 1956, total vehicle miles of travel in West Virginia increased by 273 percent and the number of vehicles in the state has increased by 147 percent.
- Because it reduces travel times and provides more direct routes, the Interstate system saves each West Virginia resident 59 hours of travel time annually - 107 million hours statewide. West Virginia's Interstate system annually reduces statewide motor fuel consumption by 51 million gallons.