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MINNESOTA HAS BENEFITTED FROM RECENT PROJECTS TO IMPROVE THE STATE'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM, BUT SIGNIFICANT DEFICIENCIES REMAIN; BOOST IN FEDERAL AND STATE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING NEEDED TO MODERNIZE ROADS, BRIDGES, TRANSIT AND TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC SAFETY AND PROVIDE CONGESTION RELIEF

Minneapolis, Minnesota -- Minnesota's roads and bridges have significant deterioration, traffic congestion is likely to increase, and the state's rural roads have a high-rate of fatal traffic crashes. In the past decade, the state has used a combination of federal and state funding to improve its surface transportation network, but many sorely needed transportation projects still remain unfunded, according to a new report released today by TRIP, a Washington, DC based national transportation organization.

The report, "Future Mobility in Minnesota: Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," finds that 76 percent of the state's major urban roadways are considered congested during peak travel times – the highest share in the nation – and 32 percent of major roads in the state are in either poor or mediocre condition. In addition to deteriorating road conditions, nine percent of the state's bridges (20 feet or longer) are structurally deficient and another three percent are functionally obsolete. The report also found that Minnesota's rural traffic fatality rate of 1.27 fatalities per 100 million miles of travel is nearly two and a half times higher than the fatality rate on all other roads in the state.

Because of these deficiencies, the average Twin Cities motorist loses \$1,501 each year in the form of extra vehicle operating costs due to poor road conditions, lost time and fuel caused by traffic congestion, and the cost of traffic crashes. Minnesota roadways that lack desirable safety features, have inadequate capacity to meet travel demands or have poor pavement conditions cost the state's drivers a total of \$3.1 billion each year.

"Congestion and accident costs are a shameful waste of our resources" says Joseph Strauss, Executive Vice President of the North Metro Mayors Association. "Our families and businesses would be much better served if additional state and federal funds were invested to correct the problems that are so obvious."

According to the TRIP report, \$65 billion in transportation funding will be needed over the next 20 years to achieve state priorities for safety, mobility and infrastructure preservation. However, the Minnesota Department of Transportation estimates that only \$15 billion will be available during

that time, leaving a transportation funding gap of \$50 billion. Unless the state is able to close the funding shortfall, many needed projects will be unable to proceed. The TRIP report contains lists of needed roadway repair and capacity expansion projects in the Twin Cities area and statewide that can not move forward without additional transportation funding. Those projects include the following: the addition of lanes on portions of I-35E, I-494, I-694 and MN 36 in the Twin Cities area, the conversion of a portion of MN 252 in the Twin Cities area to a freeway, the widening of a portion of I-94 in Wright and Stearns Counties from four to six lanes, the conversions of portions of US 169, and US 10 in Sherburne and Benton counties into freeways and the replacement of buses and other fleet vehicles of transit systems in 80 counties. A full list of projects requiring additional funding to proceed is included in the report.

The federal surface transportation program remains a critical source of funding for road and bridge repairs and transit improvements in Minnesota. According to the report, from 1998 to 2008, Minnesota received \$5.8 billion in federal funding for road, highway and bridge improvements, and \$1.5 billion for public transit, a total of \$7.3 billion. Federal funds provide 26 percent of revenues used annually by the Minnesota Department of Transportation to pay for road, highway and bridge construction, repairs and maintenance and 17 percent of the revenue used annually to pay for the operation of and capital improvements to the state's public transit systems.

This year's federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provides approximately \$502 million in stimulus funding for highway and bridge improvements and \$94 million for public transit improvements in Minnesota. This funding, however, serves only as a down payment on needed road, highway, bridge and transit improvements and is not sufficient to allow the state to proceed with numerous projects needed to modernize its surface transportation system.

Recent declines in federal surface transportation revenues, as well as significant increases in the cost of transportation construction materials, will make it more difficult for Congress to authorize new federal surface transportation legislation that adequately funds needed improvements to the nation's roads, highways, bridges and public transit systems. The current federal transportation program expires on September 30, 2009, requiring Congress to authorize a new federal surface transportation program or extend the current program to allow federal funds to continue to be provided to Minnesota.

"Minnesota has benefited tremendously from the federal surface transportation program," said Will Wilkins, executive director of TRIP. "While the state has put this combination of federal and state funds to good use in the past, in the coming years, many additional needed projects will remain stranded on the drawing board because of insufficient funding. It is critical that the state adequately fund its transportation system and that Congress produces a timely and adequately funded federal surface transportation program this year. Thousands of jobs and the state's economy are riding on it."