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Infrastructure Group Calls for Recommitment to Interstates on System's 50th Anniversary TRIP report highlights significant maintenance needs, shortfall in funding commitment

Nashville – Pete DeLay, chairman of the Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance, today hailed a recent study from a Washington, D.C. think-tank as an accurate snapshot of the state of Tennessee's interstate highway system. "The Interstate Highway System in Tennessee: Saving Lives, Time and Money" was issued in late June by TRIP in conjunction with celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the interstate system in Tennessee. TRIP is a national nonprofit transportation research group.

According to TRIP's analysis, the Interstate Highway System has, for fifty years, delivered \$15.9 billion in savings to Tennesseans annually. The \$2,698 per person annual savings result from increased safety, saved time, fuel conservation and lower consumer costs.

Despite the quantifiable benefits resulting from past investment uncertainty about commitments for future funding of the system threaten to erode those benefits. TRIP's report identifies a \$1.5 billion difference over the next ten years between estimated maintenance and improvement needs versus actual commitments to fund those projects.

"The TRIP report confirms with solid research what Tennesseans already know: that the investment in the state's Interstate Highway System has paid off many times over in terms of economic development, safety and quality of life," said DeLay. "This study also makes clear the fact that if we do not recommit ourselves to an adequate level of continued investment in the system, we will be denying these benefits to future generations of Tennesseans."

“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.

TRIP relied on data from the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) to calculate future interstate needs and the funding commitment shortfall. According to TDOT data:

- 29 percent of Tennessee’s Interstate bridges (404 of 1,404) will need significant repairs or reconstruction by 2016.
- Without additional capacity, 73 percent of urban Interstate miles will be congested by 2016.
- 239 miles of Tennessee’s 1,105 mile Interstate system will need added lanes by 2016 in order to relieve growing congestion.
- Tennessee’s Interstate system, which includes 3 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 Tennessee have 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.

“The Interstate system has become a lifeline to Tennessee’s communities,” said DeLay. “It is obvious that the lifeline has been stretched too thin. Our leaders and policy makers must make the maintenance and improvement of our Interstate system a top priority if they want future generations to enjoy the benefits the System has brought to past ones.”

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TRIP’s “The Interstate Highway System in Tennessee: Saving Lives, Time and Money” can be viewed at www.tripnet.org.

The Tennessee Infrastructure Alliance is a not-for-profit association of Tennessee business and community leaders and organizations dedicated to educating policy makers on infrastructure issues and advocating for adequate and consistent funding for infrastructure maintenance and improvement.