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Report Highlights Hawaii's Transportation Investment Needs

Hawaii's roads and bridges are becoming increasingly deteriorated and congested and the state's rural roads have a high rate of fatal traffic crashes. Despite the state's efforts to improve its surface transportation network, 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 Hawaii: Meeting the State's Need for Safe and Efficient Mobility," finds that the condition of the state's roads and bridges is deteriorating, with 27 percent of Hawaii's major roads in poor condition -- the fourth highest share in the nation. Driving on roads in need of repair costs each Hawaii motorist an average of \$503 annually -- \$431 million state-wide and the third highest in the nation -- in the form of accelerated vehicle depreciation, additional repair costs, and increased fuel consumption and tire wear.

The report also finds a total of 43 percent of Hawaii's bridges are deficient or obsolete. Twelve percent of the state's bridges are structurally deficient and an additional 31 percent are functionally obsolete. In addition to deteriorated road and bridge conditions, 45 percent of Hawaii's major roads are considered congested. And according to the TRIP report, the fatality rate on Hawaii's rural roads is nearly four times greater than the fatality rate on all other roads in the state. The report also contains lists of needed projects to improve roads and bridges and ease congestion that can not proceed without additional transportation funding.

The federal surface transportation program remains a critical source of funding for road and bridge repairs and transit improvements in Hawaii. According to the report, from 1998 to 2008, Hawaii received \$1.8 billion in federal funding for road, highway, and bridge improvements, and \$475 million for public transit, for a total of \$2.3 billion. Federal funds provide 44 percent of revenues used annually by the Hawaii Department of Transportation to pay for road, highway, and bridge construction, repairs, and maintenance, and 14 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 \$126 million in stimulus funding for highway and bridge improvements and \$44 million for public transit improvements in Hawaii. 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.

"We will continue to do the best we can with the resources we have," said Brennon Morioka, Director for the state Department of Transportation. "The ARRA funds allow us to move forward with many projects we would have not been able to otherwise," Morioka said.