

TRIP

The Road Information Program

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For Release

Tuesday, May 27, 2003

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ONE-FOURTH OF MAJOR URBAN ROADS PROVIDE UNACCEPTABLE RIDE COSTING AVERAGE MOTORIST NEARLY \$400 ANNUALLY – INADEQUATE FEDERAL INVESTMENT WILL RESULT IN GREATER COSTS

The top 10 urban metropolitan regions (cities and surrounding suburbs with at least one million people) where motorists pay the most annually in extra vehicle operating costs because of roads with poor ride quality are: Los Angeles - \$706, San Jose - \$705, San-Francisco-Oakland - \$674, San Diego - \$667, Detroit - \$621, New Orleans - \$617, Baltimore - \$612, Sacramento - \$609, Boston - \$606 and Oklahoma City - \$578.

Eds: Pavement condition data is based on the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) 2001 annual survey of state transportation officials on the condition of major state and locally maintained roads, based on a uniform pavement rating index. The report contains data for urban areas one million and greater (Appendices A & B) and 500,000 to 1,000,000 residents (Appendices C & D).

WASHINGTON, May 27, 2003 – One out of every four major urban roads in the United States provide drivers with an unacceptable ride quality and are in need of resurfacing or reconstruction, according to a new report released today by a national nonprofit transportation research group based in Washington, DC.

The Road Information Program (TRIP) report, *“Keep Both Hands on the Wheel: Cities with the Bumpiest Rides and Strategies to Make our Roads Smoother,”* finds that motorists in the nation's major urban regions are paying an average of \$396 annually per driver in extra vehicle operating costs to drive on roads in need of repair.

“Congress has the opportunity to increase federal funding to improve these roads when it reauthorizes federal surface transportation legislation this year,” said William M. Wilkins, TRIP's executive director. “Without additional federal investment, our nation's roads are going to get worse and motorists are going to pay a higher “hidden tax” in the form of additional vehicle operating costs,” he added.

The high level of pavement deterioration on major urban roadways can be attributed to a significant increase in urban traffic, particularly from large trucks, which increases wear on these key roads. Further significant increases in travel in the years ahead will put further wear and tear on roads and make it even more costly to improve and maintain them.

Overall travel on urban roads increased by 30 percent between 1991 and 2001. Travel by large commercial trucks increased by 46 percent over the same time period. Vehicle travel is projected to increase by 42 percent by 2020, while travel by heavy trucks is projected to increase by 49 percent.

While a desirable goal for state and local governments is to maintain 75 percent of its roads in good condition, only three of the nation's urban areas of one million people or more – Atlanta, Orlando and Phoenix – achieve this goal. In fact, only 14 major urban areas have at least 50 percent of their major roads in good condition. These major arterial routes carry 78 percent of the more than 1.7 trillion miles driven annually in urban America.

A 2002 U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) study prepared for Congress found that urban road and highway pavement conditions are likely to get worse at current funding levels. The DOT study concluded that improving the physical condition and performance of urban roadways would require a 49 percent increase in annual funding, from \$13.6 billion annually to \$20.2 billion per year.

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), which increased federal spending on road and bridge improvements over the past six years expires Sept. 30. Congress has begun deliberations on reauthorizing new federal surface transportation legislation. The leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure has proposed that federal funding of roads and bridges during 2004 to 2009 be increased to \$300 billion.

“This level of investment will not only allow state and local governments to improve pavement conditions, but provide needed funds to improve safety and traffic flow,” said Wilkins. “An added benefit will be the creation of thousands of badly needed jobs,” Wilkins added.

The report also stated that there are new materials and techniques, which offer the opportunity of building and reconstructing roads and highways to provide a smoother ride to the public and for longer periods, delaying the need for major road repairs.

TRIP offers the following recommendations for insuring a smooth drive:

- Build and rebuild roads and highways with the highest level of smoothness.
- Insure that foundation for roads and highway pavements is built and maintained in good condition.
- When critical routes are constructed or reconstructed, consider using pavement designs that will provide a longer-lasting surface.
- **Implement a pavement preservation program that postpones the need for significant rehabilitation by performing initial maintenance on road surfaces while they are still in good condition.**
- Resurface roads in a timely fashion using pavement material that is designed to be the most durable given local climate and the level and mix of traffic on the road.
- **Maintain an aggressive pothole repair program that uses the best patching material available.**
- Invest adequately to insure that 75 percent of local road surfaces are in good condition.