

ROAD TO SAFETY

Congestion Erodes Safety Benefits Of Interstate System

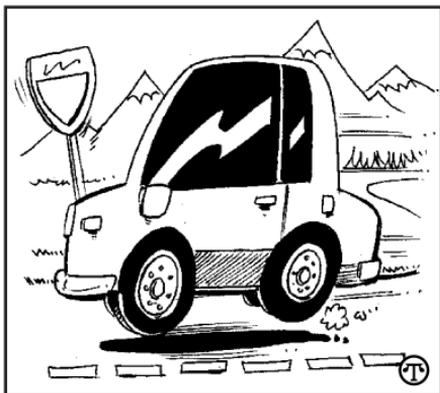
(NAPSA)—A report by a national transportation research group finds that America's Interstate highways—the most critical link in our surface transportation system—are increasingly congested because new travel is rapidly outpacing existing capacity and eroding the system's safety and economic benefits.

"The Interstate Highway System: Saving Lives, Time and Money, but Increasing Congestion Threatens Benefits," examines the current condition and future challenges of today's Interstate system, 50 years ago when President Eisenhower was inaugurated and the funding and scope of the system were being debated.

"The same transportation challenges that the president and Congress faced a half century ago — defense (and homeland security), economic productivity, traffic congestion and safety—exist today, and just as President Eisenhower promoted the creation of the Interstates to address those challenges, now is the time for our national lawmakers to formulate a bold new transportation vision for the 21st Century," said William M. Wilkins, executive director of The Road Information Program (TRIP).

"Congress and the Administration will have the opportunity this year to develop and fund a modern transportation system when Congress takes up the reauthorization of federal surface transportation legislation," Wilkins said. "Given the outstanding transportation needs that exist, increased funding is crucial to any successful plan of action."

Travel on the Interstate system increased by 37 percent from 1991



New travel is outpacing the existing capacity of the Interstate system.

to 2001, while additional lane mileage increased by five percent, meaning that vehicle travel grew at a rate seven times higher than additional capacity was added over the last decade, according to the TRIP study.

This trend has contributed to increasing levels of traffic congestion on our Interstate system, with two out of five urban Interstate miles considered congested because they carry traffic at volumes that result in significant delays.

Interstate highways are the safest roadways in the country. The Interstate system saved approximately 6,235 lives in 2001, based on an estimate of the number of traffic fatalities that would have occurred if there had been no Interstates.

The features that make Interstates so safe include: a separation from other roads, a minimum of four lanes, gentler curves and often paved shoulders, median barriers and rumble strips to warn drivers if they are leaving the roadway.