

*STAY THE
COURSE*

**HOW TO MAKE
TEA-21
EVEN BETTER**

Preface3

Chapter One: The Challenge for the New Century4

Chapter Two: A Solid Place to Start9

Chapter Three: Small Fixes, Big Results13

Conclusion21

Congress will soon embark on one of its most important legislative missions of the decade: Improving the quality of life for every American through investments in transportation. Having laid the groundwork during the last twelve years in two laws—the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991 and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998—federal lawmakers are poised to take the third step toward building a safe, environmentally-sound, multifaceted transportation system accessible to all Americans.

The good news is that because of the steady progress of the last decade, Congress has a solid base on which to build. It is a matter in many instances of making what's already good even better. Average citizens have been invited to help shape transportation policy for their communities and to provide local suggestions for using federal dollars. The public wants and supports a greater federal investment in transportation, particularly for non-highway-related projects in public transit, intercity rail, bicycling, walking and inter-modal connections.

The bad news is that reauthorization comes at a time when financial resources at every level—federal, state, and local—are shrinking. Looming deficits and unanticipated expenditures brought on by September 11th threaten the financial stability of all domestic programs—from health care and education to environmental cleanup and income security for the elderly. That means that worthy programs, including transportation priorities, must compete for fewer dollars, and may force state and local agencies to delay, table or abandon needed projects.

As Americans embrace a new century, they are cautiously hopeful that the nation will rise to its potential and overcome the obstacles evidenced of late. The tragedy of September 11th reminds us of our vulnerabilities and our shortcomings. Yet, America remains resilient as citizens in every part of the country face these challenges every day, continuing to work and raise their families while building better communities.

This national spirit—the qualities that bring us together in heritage and purpose as well as geography—owes its strength in part to the roads, rails, walkways and bikeways that link our neighborhoods, our cities, our regions. They form the nation's lifeline from coast to coast and from block to block. The challenge for this Congress—and the people it represents—is to enact laws that recognize the enduring importance transportation plays and will continue to play in the United States in the coming decades. Our investments in transportation projects for the coming century will do much more than take Americans to their destinations. They will help steer a course that will strengthen our democracy and improve the quality of American life.

CHAPTER I: *The Challenge For The New Century*

Beginning in the late 1950s, the federal government began making substantial investments in transportation—mostly through the construction and upkeep of Interstate highways. Today, 45,000 miles of Interstate form a concrete ribbon throughout the continental United States, giving motorists easy access to interstate travel and increasing mobility for millions of Americans.

While the American love affair with the automobile is not yet over, cautionary concern about the effects of automobiles—on the environment, on public health, on the shape of our communities and landscape—have led to policies and projects that promote more efficient use of the automobile, from HOV lanes to auto-emission standards. At the same time, innovative alternatives have become more widely available as well: public transit including commuter and light rail, bicycle paths and public walkways. Americans have come to expect and rely on a multifaceted network of travel options—so much so that the public often takes those choices for granted (until there is, say, a snowstorm or other calamity). Federal spending on transportation over the years has proven to be a wise long-term investment.

“I never thought I would see (transit) in Texas, but it’s happening more than in any other place in the nation.”

-- Roger Snoble, former
President and Executive
Director of
Dallas Area Rapid Transit
(DART)



Transit riders and commuters win! In 1999, voters in the Dallas metropolitan area overwhelmingly approved a bond measure to accelerate construction of the next 53 miles of light rail. Courtesy: DART

The investment strategy for transportation programs shifted dramatically in 1991 with passage of ISTEA, legislation that introduced a series of reforms to the nation’s surface transportation policies. The effort continued with the reauthorization of that legislation, known as TEA-21, six years later. Congress nearly doubled federal spending commitments in less than a decade. Equally important, this legislation invited more and meaningful local input and control about how best to meet the transportation needs of communities. And it infused transportation planning with concerns about environmental protection, energy conservation, accessibility, and healthy, safe communities. These laws also gave states and local officials greater flexibility in deciding what improvements to make: roads, transit, sidewalks or bikeways.

CHAPTER I: *The Challenge For The New Century*

The ISTEA and TEA-21 laws also required new accountability on the part of state and local agencies to fulfill those goals. And, they provided a record \$300 billion during the decade for surface transportation. Much of that helped underwrite better-maintained roads and more safety improvements. Early in the last decade, construction was completed on the 45,000-mile Interstate highway system. Efforts then shifted to system maintenance, evidenced by the record number of road and highway miles repaired in the 1990s.

Washington's revitalized transportation agenda also inspired a host of alternatives to highway use in the last decade—options that coincide with other federal policies, particularly those to protect the environment. For example, Congress built on important statutes such as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental law that has become the navigation tool that guides state and local decision-makers and the public in creating and sustaining ecologically balanced communities. NEPA has promoted early and active public participation on key environmental decisions and consideration of the impact of federal actions on the environment.

ISTEA and TEA-21 also re-affirmed long-standing promises made in other, early laws. For example, when the U.S. Department of Transportation was created in 1966—in a provision known as Section 4(f)—Congress ensured that there would be substantive protections for parks, wildlife refuges and historic sites. It subsequently linked the provisions of transportation law to the Clean Air Act, producing real results in areas of the nation struggling with air pollution. Now transportation policy is directing more attention to NEPA and other considerations at the beginning, which is making NEPA and these other provisions more effective as well.

In addition to new projects, ISTEA and TEA-21 upgraded facilities and repaired infrastructure through redesign, rebuilding and even reengineering to make them more accessible and more economically and environmentally sound. The laws also have enhanced the visibility of some of nature's most beautiful byways and countryside. It is no wonder that public opinion polls demonstrate that most Americans are pleased with these new directions in transportation policy.

“We are not seeking to build the public transit system as an end to itself. Rather, our efforts to develop this system is to support how our community will grow in the years ahead and provide our citizens with a real choice in how to get around.”

— Hon. Patrick McCrory, Mayor of Charlotte, in 10/8/02 Senate Testimony

CHAPTER I: *The Challenge For The New Century*

Because of this decade of enduring reforms, three important principles guide national transportation policy:

Transportation decisions are contextual. Washington expects that federally funded projects will always be part of a larger plan, one that sustains and improves the quality of life for all Americans.

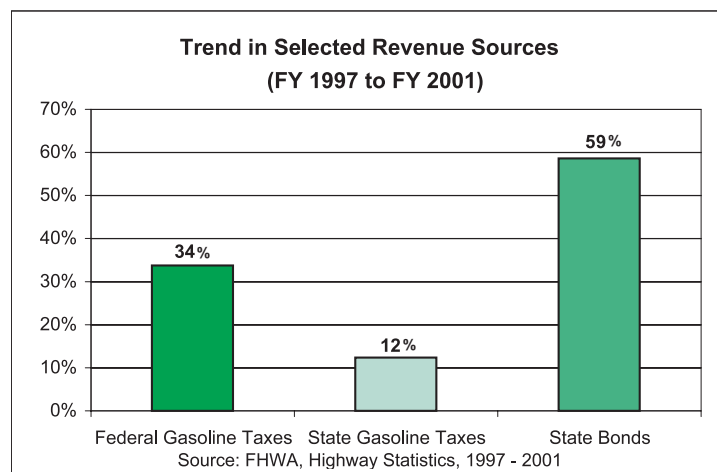
Transportation decisions are locally initiated and approved. Washington encourages state and local leadership, as well as average citizens and taxpayers, to take a broader role in determining how federal transportation dollars can best serve their community's needs.

Transportation decisions are inter-modal. Washington strives to create a network of transportation choices that allow citizens to reach their destinations.

This approach, coupled with significant capital investment in transportation over the last decade, is something Americans can be rightly proud of. But the task is not complete. The policy promises of ISTEA and TEA-21 has not been fully realized; indeed, recent trends over the last several years threaten advancements of earlier years.

Consider two troubling developments. First, transportation spending in many states has been shifting back to highway construction and away from repair of existing facilities and away from more environment-friendly, efficient modes of travel. Second, states generally have not matched the federal spending increases under TEA-21, relying instead on "growth" revenues from their general funds and increased state borrowing (the fastest growing source of new transportation spending from 1997-2001), to match federal dollars and raise funds for their state transportation programs. *In other words, many state transportation officials have been making unfortunate spending decisions, and then funding them with borrowed dollars.*

Between 1997 and 2001, federal gas tax revenues increased by 30 percent. Meanwhile, state gas tax revenues increased by just over 12 percent. State bonds, which grew by fifty-nine percent, represent the fastest growth in new transportation spend.



CHAPTER I: *The Challenge For The New Century*

These trends have caused some unnecessary backsliding away from the purpose of ISTEA and TEA-21. But it is important to remember that the problem lies with the execution of the law, not its intent. Financial and accounting oversight requirements have not been met. Environmental concerns have often been ignored. Community input has been marginalized. Alternatives to old patterns have gone unexplored. At the same time, some transportation decision-makers are looking to TEA-21 renewal as an opportunity for scaling back procedures under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other important laws, wrongly arguing that these changes will be cost-effective and harmless.

As reauthorization proceeds, lawmakers would be wise to build upon the many aspects of the law that work well and increase funds for intermodal connections, urban transit and other under-financed projects. It will be an opportunity to eliminate those stumbling blocks that have inhibited progress in recent years and put in place threshold accountability measures. It will also be a debate about the future of transportation and travel in the United States for this century.

The reauthorization comes at an ominous time in the nation's history—one that does not bode well for the continued progress the public is seeking. State governments, recently flush with revenues from the robust economy of the 1990s, now face unprecedented deficits. Already, state transportation agencies have begun to cancel or postpone needed transportation projects on the basis of gloomy economic projections and because of debt acquired in better times. Worse, states are shifting transportation dollars and abandoning important transportation reforms and initiatives in order to help meet other urgent state needs—health care costs, education spending, the rising need in unemployment and social service programs.

But shifting funds away from transportation to meet other crucial needs may, in the end, will prove counter-productive. Take for example, two pressing national interests: homeland security and health care. Since the September 11th attacks in 2001, state and local governments have had to pour millions into previously unanticipated homeland security needs, from emergency information centers to larger fire departments. At the same time, health care costs are soaring, the result often of socio-economic and demographic trends: an aging population, the alarming rise in obesity and unhealthy air quality affecting more Americans are factors that contribute to about thirty percent of total state spending.

"We need to work collaboratively to streamline the entire process of moving projects forward. Attempts to weaken or bypass the environmental laws should not be part of that effort. If everyone involved in the regulatory process focuses on fixing the administrative delays and hurdles, we'll get better projects that result in better environmental protection, and get them faster and at less cost."

— Jeff Morales, Director,
California Department of
Transportation

CHAPTER I: *The Challenge For The New Century*

Transportation can help address these problems. More efficient public transportation, for instance, will streamline the evacuation of communities in times of crisis. Projects that promote walking and cycling will mean Americans breathe in cleaner air and get more exercise. Even as state and local transportation agencies look for ways to spend public dollars more effectively, they face another hard reality about revenues: Congress is less likely than in past years to increase spending. Unlike the last decade, the federal government is facing its own financial spending crises this year, thanks to unprecedented and unexpected deficits, enormous new commitments expected from U.S. engagement in international hostilities, the on-going war on terrorism, and a Congress and White House with an appetite for scaling back domestic spending in all areas.

How transportation generally will fare in this precarious economic climate is also a larger question than simply how much, and for what purpose, highway and transit dollars are directed. For the first time, all three major transportation bills—reauthorization of federal airport construction and aviation needs, support for intercity passenger rail transportation, and surface transportation—will be considered in the same year. If legislative history repeats itself, lawmakers could view modes of transportation separately and competitively, funding them narrowly, instead of viewing each reauthorization bill as part of the whole of federal transportation.

Despite these difficulties, the debate in the coming months about transportation legislation has a new ally in the fight for progress and more reform: public awareness. As much as the last decade has witnessed the most comprehensive transportation reforms and investments in our history originating from Washington, citizens throughout the United States have come to appreciate that they can take charge of planning and developing the places and neighborhoods where they live. For every community—rural farmlands to expansive suburbs to inner cities—the lesson of the last ten years is that the residents themselves want to be full partners with Washington in designing and developing what is uniquely best for their communities.

To be effective, particularly in the current economic climate, that partnership must be joined at the beginning: before the funding decisions are made, before the legislation is drafted, and especially, before the legislative debate is polluted with special interests out of touch with the public and their communities. The path to the next six-year federal commitment to Americans on the move—whether they are commuters, vacationers, or children walking to school—deserves and demands the nation's attention right now. This platform offers simple reform proposals to keep us moving in the right direction.

The changes brought on by ISTEA and TEA-21 in the last decade cannot be underestimated. Before those laws came on the books, few states devised plans to guide their transportation programs; instead, they simply drew up wish lists for unrelated projects, often with unrealistic price tags. Decisions about how to spend billions in transportation funds were made in the backrooms, with little public knowledge or input. Little consideration was given to the special needs of certain sectors of the community, particularly seniors and persons with disabilities. Little thought was given to alternatives to highway travel. Most significantly, the tremendous impact of transportation projects on the environment was, at best, an after thought, despite federal requirements spelled out in other laws.

“ISTEA established flexibility in the use of funds; a commitment to strengthening the intermodal connections of the Nation’s transportation system; new investments in, and deployment of, information technologies for transportation services; and heightened sensitivity to the impacts that public transportation has on our quality of life and on the shape and character of America’s communities.”

— U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta in 3/13/02 Senate Testimony

Now that pattern has changed dramatically. It is no accident that ISTEA in 1991 and TEA-21 in 1998 greatly improved the safety of highways and bridges, enhanced transportation access and mobility, preserved scenic byways and vistas, and in the process contributed to a cleaner, safer environment. The authors of the laws understood that these benefits would not come about without specific guidance in the legislation. As the current reauthorizing debate begins, it is essential that Congress again expressly call for:

- ❖ The development of comprehensive long-range state transportation plans that describe a strategic framework for the billions being invested.
- ❖ A requirement to base metropolitan plans on realistic revenue assumptions and to keep within those budget constraints.
- ❖ A requirement for broad public participation and consultation in both the state and metropolitan plans.
- ❖ The inclusion of bicycle transportation in state and regional planning.
- ❖ The leveling of the playing field between highway and transit projects.

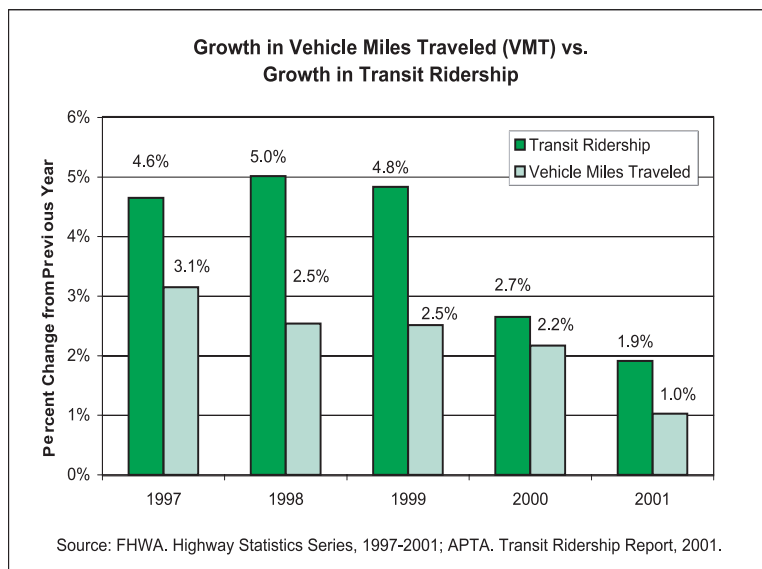
In addition to these decision-making principles, Congress should re-affirm its support, and fully fund, these successful programs also originating from ISTEA or TEA 21:

The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement program (CMAQ): The federal CMAQ program, created under ISTEA and expanded under TEA-21, helps scores of local transportation agencies comply with the Clean Air Act. CMAQ projects work in tandem with environmental quality experts to reduce auto emissions, enforce clean air standards, and encourage alternatives to more polluting forms of travel. Congress must assure that this program remains strong, funding it fully to meet current and future air quality challenges.

The Surface Transportation Program (STP): The STP program creates more equitable and varied transportation opportunities in every region through proven standards that should be reiterated. Four are especially worthy of note:

- ❖ ***Flexibility in Investment.*** Eighty percent of STP funds can now be used for other modes, giving state and local agencies authority to decide how best to meet the needs of their constituents.
- ❖ ***Allocation of Funds to Larger Metropolitan Areas.*** Metropolitan planning organizations have a voice in directly deciding how federal funds are used to balance the complex urban and suburban transportation demands, particularly public transit.
- ❖ ***Transportation Enhancements Program (TE).*** The TE program, also created under ISTEA and expanded under TEA-21, fosters local economic and community development, and helps reconnect communities divided or negatively impacted by highway construction. With only two cents of every federal transportation dollar, TE projects—bicycle and pedestrian facilities, main street revitalization programs, renovation of train stations and other historic projects, scenic easements and billboard removal along highway corridors—are the most popular and visible use of TEA-21 funds.
- ❖ ***Safety Set-Aside.*** To underscore Congress' concern for improved safety, 10 percent of STP funds are set-aside for state investments in safety measures.

The Public Transit Programs: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) supports a range of programs for transit, through formula and discretionary grants, funding which more than doubled since ISTEA. This effort has led to a wide range of improvements, such as renovated and expanded rail transit systems, expanded bus fleets, new transit service in rural areas and for low-income workers, seniors and persons with disabilities.



Federal Transit Investments Are Paying Off! Transit ridership grew by nearly 20 percent between 1997 and 2001 while driving increased by less than 12 percent. This trend, marking the first time since World War II that growth in transit ridership has substantially outpaced growth in driving, is poised to continue as new systems and extensions are opened. Forty-seven of the nation's top 50 metropolitan areas are pursuing rail investments, many in new transit markets.

The Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program (Bridge program): The Bridge program, created about twenty-five years ago after several high-profile bridge collapses throughout the United States, brings major improvements to the nation's infrastructure. The percentage of U.S. bridges in need of serious repair dropped from 20.7 percent in 1992 to 14.2 percent in 2001, largely because of this program.

The Interstate Maintenance Program: The Interstate Maintenance program underwrites the repair of the nation's 45,000-mile network of Interstate highways, a system constructed with 90 percent federal money. Like the Bridge program, the Interstate Maintenance program, enjoyed a high rate of success in the last decade. In 1994, for example, 60 percent of all Interstate highways were in need of substantial repair. By 2001, the percentage of those roads in rated "in less than good condition" had dropped to 34 percent.

The Jobs Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC): The Jobs Access and Reverse Commute program (JARC), created in TEA-21 just to coincide with comprehensive federal welfare reform, provides modest but important resources for the mobility needs of low-income individuals to help smooth the transition for welfare to work. It offers an excellent example of how federal, state and local agencies have been able to coordinate services for low-income people.

The National Scenic Byways Program: The National Scenic Byways program, created in ISTEA, helps many states preserve roadways that wind through our most beautiful urban and rural areas. The program also enhances cultural, historic and environmental features that make up the nation's magnificent landscapes. The preservation of highways and their environs, on roads such as the Pacific Coast Highway and the Blue Ridge Parkway, help attract tourists, educate visitors about the nation's history and stimulate local economies. The program generates more than \$1 billion a year in economic revenue and jobs.

The Transportation and Community and System Preservation Program (TCSP): The TCSP program, one of TEA-21's most innovative programs, invests modest resources in local initiatives aimed at addressing the complex links between land use, community, quality of life and transportation. The demand for TCSP resources has overwhelmed the available funding that TEA-21 provided, reflecting the substantial local appetite for new solutions and approaches to transportation system development.

Beyond TEA-21's key highway and transit programs now before this Congress, other federal statutes that protect the environment, civil rights and working conditions deserve the continued vigilance and support of the transportation community to ensure that those laws continue to make transportation agencies responsive to these valued national goals. Among these laws are: the National Environmental Policy Act, the Clean Air Act, Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 13(c) of the Federal Transit Act. While transportation decision-makers rightly weigh in on aspects of implementing these laws, there is no need to weaken them in the name of streamlining the delivery of transportation projects and services.

Building upon this strong foundation—TEA-21 programs and related federal policies—the next chapter offers simple reform proposals, recommending “small fixes” that will yield “big results.”

As strong as the record of success, TEA-21 is not perfect. But with small changes during reauthorization, the next transportation bill can correct deficiencies and unlock new potential. These changes will bring the law closer to achieving the goals set forth in STPP’s *New Transportation Charter*, a four-point proposal for advancing federal transportation policy issued in December 2001 and now endorsed by more than 650 local organizations. Drawing from those four principles—I. Build Communities and Promote Choice, II. Learn to Serve People, III. Require Accountability & Reward Performance, and IV. Fix It First—Congress can and should improve on TEA-21 with reforms that:

I. BUILD COMMUNITIES AND PROMOTE CHOICE

The renewal of TEA-21 should significantly increase Americans’ opportunity for better, more balanced travel choices within and between communities: well-maintained roads, public bus and rail services, walkways and bicycle paths, and safe transport for seniors and persons with disabilities. This will meet the public demand, evidenced in national public-opinion polls and the popularity of community-based programs like Transportation Enhancements, Scenic Byways, Recreational Trails and the Transportation and Community and System Preservation (TCSP) Program.

“CMAQ is the only federally funded transportation program explicitly targeting air quality improvement.”

-- TRB Special Report 264:
“The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program. Assessing 10 Years of Experience”

HERE’S HOW:

Renew Commitments to Clean Air

- ❖ Increase resource commitments to the CMAQ program to meet the targeted demands of the new ozone standard.
- ❖ Ensure that funds provided to the CMAQ program are increased relative to the number of metropolitan areas made eligible.
- ❖ Direct CMAQ funding to local areas served by metropolitan planning organizations that do not meet federal air quality standards for ozone and carbon monoxide (including maintenance areas).

Increase Local Decision-Making

- ❖ Provide all Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds* to local areas, allocating funds directly to those served by metropolitan planning organizations.
- ❖ Fund locally developed initiatives, such as low-cost safety improvements on rural roads, in areas below 50,000 in population.
- ❖ Increase the level of metropolitan planning funds provided by FHWA and FTA to reflect the rising demands on MPOs as well as the increase in the number of such agencies.

* STP funds here include state STP funds, unprogrammed Minimum Guarantee funds, and transferred funds to STP.

Accelerate Investment in New Transit Starts

- ❖ Expand the level of resources for public transit, including the “New Starts” program, to meet the substantial demand for rail, bus-rapid and other transit investment needs, especially in underserved areas.
- ❖ Maintain the level playing field in the federal matching requirements for major highway and transit capital projects.

Foster More Transit Oriented Development

- ❖ Incorporate alternative land use scenarios, based on policy goals and regional visions rather than simply extrapolating from past trends, in the metropolitan planning requirements.
- ❖ Ensure that local land use requirements for development that is well served by transit, walking and biking is given more consideration as a criterion for allocating transit ‘New Starts’ funding. In addition, the construction of shell space to accommodate transit supporting retail and social services in transit stations should be an eligible expense for federally funded new starts projects.

“The challenge is to build on the foundation of ISTEA and TEA-21 in a way that works to give metropolitan areas greater powers and more tools in exchange for enhanced accountability.”

-- Brookings Institution
Center on Urban and
Metropolitan Policy, “TEA-21
Reauthorization: Getting
Transportation Right for
Metropolitan America,”
March 2003

Equalize Commute Benefits with Parking Benefits

- ❖ Amend the tax code to ensure that commute benefits for transit and vanpools are commensurate with tax-free parking benefits.
- ❖ Expand the Transportation Fringe Benefit to include those who carpool, bike or walk to work.

Promote Safer Places

- ❖ Authorize a “Safe Routes to Schools” program as part of the STP Safety Set-aside program.
- ❖ Provide training for states and local agencies to design, reconstruct, and maintain transportation systems in a way that promotes safety for all users of the system, not just vehicles.

Provide for Routine Accomodation

- ❖ Require that all transportation projects include appropriate provisions to accommodate transit, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Providing Safe Routes to School. Responding to demand from local communities, California has poured millions of dollars into projects that improve traffic safety around schools specifically for walking and bicycling. In Marin County, investments in traffic speed enforcement, new sidewalks and bike paths, and “traffic calming” measures funded by a state Safe Routes to School program have spurred a 57 percent increase in the number of children walking and bicycling to school and a 29 percent drop in car trips—all in the first year of operation.

Courtesy: Marin County Bicycle Coalition



II. LEARN TO SERVE PEOPLE

The next federal transportation bill must guarantee enforcement of ISTEA and TEA-21 requirements for broad public participation in the planning processes at the metropolitan and state levels, particularly for those who have been denied a seat at the table in the past such as representatives from poor communities, seniors and persons with disabilities. It also means better, more extensive and timely data collection by the U.S. DOT and others measuring how transportation affects the environment, the health and safety, and the economy of the nation.

Improving Access to Jobs and Childcare.

Working with a coalition of congregations, the City of Columbus and the Columbus Ohio Transit Authority used a Job Access and Reverse Commute grant and other federal, local, and private funds to create the Linden Transit Center. The transit hub has become an anchor for the low income and predominately minority community. It houses a childcare center, employment and job training facilities, a health clinic, and banking and other needed services. Moreover, express bus service connects residents to suburban job centers at the intermodal transit station.

HERE'S HOW:

Protect Civil Rights and the Public's Health

- ❖ Increase the federal matching share to 90 percent on federally assisted projects that are directly or substantially intended to further compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.
- ❖ Allow STP funds, on an interim basis, to be used to support the delivery of complimentary para-transit services for persons with disabilities.

Improve Training and Planning Practices

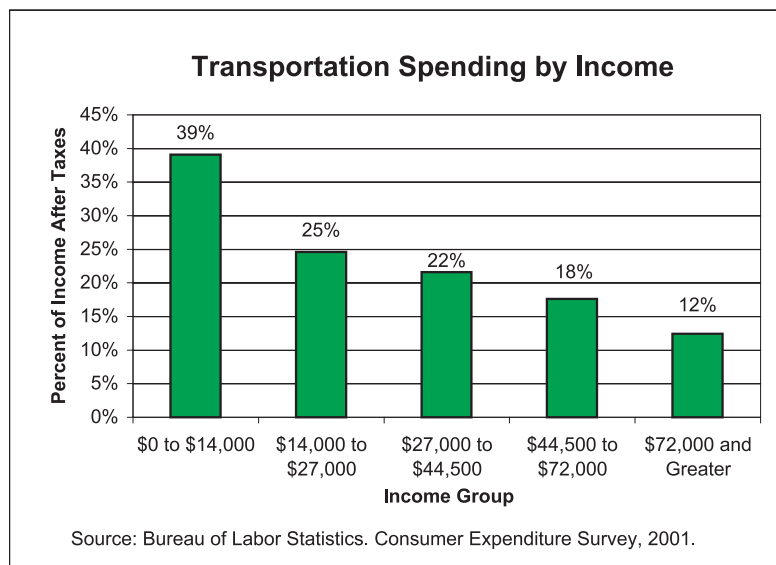
- ❖ Allow states and MPOs to waive federal matching requirements on community planning grants to encourage more consensus in planning transportation improvements.
- ❖ Allow states and MPOs to waive matching requirements for planning, data collection, resource reviews and other efforts that improve project implementation.
- ❖ Set aside FHWA and FTA funds for state and local officials to use for training in new technologies and other innovative planning techniques, including tools for increasing public participation.
- ❖ Direct FHWA and FTA to provide workplace training programs that recognize the many new demands on transportation workers due to security threats and the use of new technologies.

Improve Data and Research Efforts

- ❖ Direct U.S. DOT's Bureau of Transportation Statistics to upgrade and expand standards for data collection, consistent with other federal domestic agencies.
- ❖ Address the information deficit that now inhibits transportation systems from serving millions of Americans in need of health care, access to jobs, affordable housing, public education and economic opportunity.
- ❖ Fund each program - the Federal Cooperative Environmental Research Program and the Transit Cooperative Research Program - at \$15 million, rising to \$28 million by the end of the renewal period.
- ❖ Support specific research initiatives by MPOs, local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in order to better define and address local needs, including metropolitan congestion and rural isolation.
- ❖ Direct U.S. DOT to measure transportation costs as a percentage of household expenditures, consistent with tracking systems of other federal agencies.
- ❖ Fund states and MPOs to measure the impact of transportation cost on household expenditures, particularly those of low-income families.

"I'm not happy to find out I'm paying more for transportation than I am for my mortgage, and frankly, I'm not sure I wanted to know."

-- Christian Landry of Houston, TX, whose family owns 3 cars, ABC World News Tonight, 11/30/00



Recent analysis of Consumer Expenditures Survey data finds that American households spend an average of 17.5 percent of their income on transportation. The lowest quintile of Americans spend 39 percent.

III. REQUIRE ACCOUNTABILITY & REWARD PERFORMANCE

With adequate, accurate data in place, the next transportation bill must hold state and local transportation agencies accountable for meeting goals and targets commensurate with inter-city and local needs.

HERE'S HOW:

Reward State and Local Success in Meeting Accountability Goals

- ❖ Encourage state DOTs and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), to regularly report to the public how federal transportation funds are spent.
- ❖ Direct FHWA and FTA to provide technical assistance to state and local agencies, particularly with respect to setting targets and measuring performance.
- ❖ Include incentives to reward states and MPOs with discretionary transportation funds and incentives, if the agency shows how the additional resources support state and locally adopted performance targets.
- ❖ Provide for the same level of analysis of impacts and costs and benefits for major transportation capacity investments.

Provide One Spending Authorization

- ❖ End the practice of providing states with ‘excess’ spending authority by requiring equal spending authority (i.e. program apportionments) and obligation limitations.

Disclose Annual Spending Priorities

- ❖ Require the governor to make an annual statement that shows how the state plans to allocate its federal highway funds among the various federal programs and subcategories and how these funds were spent in the prior year.

Promote Context Sensitive Design/Solutions

- ❖ Take into account the natural, scenic, historic and cultural features of communities and landscapes in federal transportation projects, by emphasizing “context sensitive design” throughout the federal program.

IV. FIX IT FIRST

The current reauthorization bill should encourage state and local agencies to make the best use of transportation options already in place, and to find creative solutions to traffic congestion and other problems by better management, re-design, and reallocation of resources. These changes include: reinvestment in public transit and other travel options, improved operations and system management, better design of development around highways, taking a new look at pricing strategies and tolls to better manage traffic demand on existing highways, improvements to existing facilities to address environmental impacts, such as water pollution.

HERE'S HOW:

Balance Investment in Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation

- ❖ Ensure that states equitably fund off-system bridge needs, beginning with elimination of the 35 percent limit now in current law.

Preserve Core System Capacity

- ❖ Sustain current commitments to the Interstate Maintenance program to preserve this critical asset.
- ❖ Provide necessary funds for timely replacement of buses and rail cars and for properly maintaining basic facilities such as bus garages, transit centers, bus shelters, track and structures, and other facilities.
- ❖ Dedicate a share of National Highway System funds for improvements in intercity passenger and freight rail projects that improve travel options and traffic conditions in NHS corridors.
- ❖ Provide new funds for intermodal investments and the important connections among the modes—highway, rail, transit, air, and water—to better meet intercity travel needs and reduce urban congestion.

Set Targets for Road and Bridge Repairs

- ❖ Direct states and MPOs to set targets for the maintenance and repair of roads and bridges, particularly Interstate facilities and off-system bridges.



Meaningful Public Review Creates Better Projects. Paris Pike runs through the heart of Kentucky's Bluegrass country, a region known for its historic horse farms and scenic beauty. Plans to develop the route from Paris to Lexington as a four-lane divided highway were rejected for thirty years due to community concerns. In 1993, a new design team took a new approach to Paris Pike, transforming the 12-mile corridor into a model for place-based, community-based planning and context-sensitive highway design.

Courtesy: Jones & Jones Architects and Landscape Architects

Preserve Scenic Byways

- ❖ Increase substantially funding for the National Scenic Byways program to be distributed on a merit basis.

Enhance Water Quality and Supply

- ❖ Allow states and MPOs to use up to 20 percent of their STP funds for environmental and pollution abatement projects related to transportation projects, including storm water-related improvements.
- ❖ Expand eligibility requirements for the Interstate Maintenance and Bridge programs to allow for the mitigation and remediation of problems related to storm water runoff, increased impervious surface, and loss of natural hydrology and aquifer recharge.
- ❖ Modify state and metropolitan planning requirements to ensure that transportation projects contribute to improving water-quality and supply, both now and in the future.

Strengthen Interagency Communication

- ❖ Direct U.S. DOT to improve coordination of its surface transportation program efforts with other key federal departments and agencies, including Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Labor and the Environmental Protection Agency.

This plan for TEA-21 renewal can serve as a guide to national leaders who now come to the task of crafting a new transportation law at this defining moment in American history. The challenge before them is to not only meet today's complex and varied travel needs; they must also anticipate the future, as they devise legislation that reflects a clear-eyed vision of looming budget constraints and security concerns. To many, the federal investment in transportation may seem extraordinary—more than \$250 billion over the next six years. As large as the federal commitment is, however, it represents only about three percent of the \$1.6 trillion annually that is spent on all transportation investments and services.

What distinguishes the federal investment—particularly since enactment of ISTEA—is the national agenda it helps shape, through its contribution to the quality of life in every state and every community. The law will enable the federal government to inevitably change and dramatically improve the American way of life as much as any national effort.

That's as it should be. Throughout our history as one nation, transportation has always remained a federal interest—even as more and more power was transferred to state and local authorities. President Lincoln continued to advance the building of a transcontinental railroad, arguing that it was as important to bringing about national unity as ending the Civil War. President Eisenhower argued forcefully for the Federal Highway Act because he understood that post-WWII prosperity depended on the unifying nature of a nationally maintained system.

Now, as we enter another landmark period in our nation's history, filled with uncertainty and promise, Americans find that they need to reunite, reconnect, and reinvigorate our communities and our citizenry. The coming transportation debate affords that opportunity; the task remains to persuade Congress to reauthorize it wisely and carefully, and to make sure that state and local agencies develop and implement each transportation project effectively—in close collaboration with the people it serves.

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Founded in 1990, the Surface Transportation Policy Project is a national coalition of more than 650 organizations working to promote transportation policies and investments that expand transportation options for everyone, conserve energy, protect the environmental and aesthetic quality of neighborhoods, promote access to those now under served, including senior and persons with disabilities, and strengthen the nation's economy. STPP is headquartered in Washington, D.C. with offices in Sacramento, San Francisco, Albuquerque, and Pittsburgh. For more information, or if you would like to share your views on these issues, visit our web sites: www.transact.org, www.tea3.org, www.antc.net or write us at: stpp@transact.org.

Stay the Course: How to Make TEA-21 Even Better

With small changes during reauthorization, the next transportation bill can correct deficiencies and unlock new potential. These changes will bring the law closer to achieving the goals set forth in STPP's New Transportation Charter, a four-point proposal for advancing federal transportation policy issued in December 2001 and now endorsed by more than 650 local organizations. Drawing from those four principles—I. Build Communities and Promote Choice, II. Learn to Serve People, III. Require Accountability & Reward Performance, and IV. Fix It First—Congress can and should improve on TEA-21 with reforms that:

I. BUILD COMMUNITIES & PROMOTE CHOICE

- ❖ Renew Commitments to Clean Air
- ❖ Increase Local Decision-making
- ❖ Accelerate Investment in New Transit Starts
- ❖ Foster More Transit Oriented Development
- ❖ Equalize Commute Benefits with Parking Benefits
- ❖ Promote Safer Places
- ❖ Provide for Routine Accommodation

II. LEARN TO SERVE PEOPLE

- ❖ Protect Civil Rights and the Public's Health
- ❖ Improve Training and Planning Practices
- ❖ Improve Data and Research Efforts

III. REQUIRE ACCOUNTABILITY & REWARD PERFORMANCE

- ❖ Reward State and Local Success in Meeting Accountability Goals
- ❖ Provide One Spending Authorization
- ❖ Disclose Annual Spending Priorities
- ❖ Promote Context Sensitive Design/Solutions

IV. FIX IT FIRST

- ❖ Balance Investment in Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation
- ❖ Preserve Core System Capacity
- ❖ Set Targets for Road and Bridge Repairs
- ❖ Preserve Scenic Byways
- ❖ Enhance Water Quality and Supply
- ❖ Strengthen Interagency Communication