

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

Meeting the New Challenges

U.S. Department of Transportation

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Transportation is essential to America's security, economic prosperity and quality of life. Our surface transportation system the Nation's our strong economic performance, and the evolution of world commerce. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) provided record levels of investment to improve the safety and performance of our surface transportation system.

With the development of new proposals for reauthorizing our surface transportation programs come the challenges of ensuring a safe, secure system that advances our vital national interests and enhances the quality of life of the American people.

Meeting these challenges will require a *collaborative approach*. The Department will encourage cooperation among Federal, State, and local governments, private industry and other stakeholders in building the broad spectrum of support necessary to solve the transportation challenges before us.

The Department will continue to encourage *locally developed solutions* that are the most effective in addressing the problems and concerns in each community.

The Department will endeavor to maintain the *flexibility* necessary to support the development of the appropriate mix of transportation facilities and services.

Addressing new transportation challenges will require *intermodal solutions* that focus on the entire transportation system including surface, air and water.

We welcome your reactions and views. They will be used to shape the proposals that the Administration sends to Congress in early 2003 for reauthorization of America's vital surface transportation programs.

Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary of Transportation

Introduction

The enactment of the predecessor of TEA-21, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), revolutionized the Nation's approach to surface transportation. With that legislation, new principles in the implementation of the Nation's surface transportation programs were established: building partnerships with local and State officials to advance the strategic goals for transportation capital investment; flexibility in the use of funds; a commitment to strengthening the intermodal connections of the Nation's transportation system; expanded investment in, and deployment of, new information technologies for transportation services; and a heightened sensitivity to the positive impact that transportation has on our quality of life and on the shape and character of America's communities.

TEA-21 built upon initiatives in earlier legislation and, through its financial provisions, provided State and local governments and other transportation providers with greater certainty and reliability in transportation funding. It achieved this by reforming the treatment of the Highway Trust Fund to ensure that, for the first time, spending from the Highway Trust Fund for infrastructure improvements would be linked to highway revenues. The financial mechanisms of TEA-21 provided greater equity among States in Federal funding and record levels of transportation investment.

The programmatic and financial initiatives of these two historic surface transportation acts have provided us with a solid and balanced structure around which we can shape the Administration's forthcoming reauthorization proposals. While the legislation should continue to build upon ISTEA and TEA-21, we have the opportunity and the obligation to do more.

TEA-21 Accomplishments

In five principal areas, TEA-21 has strengthened the Nation's transportation system: funding levels and program equity; safety; mobility and system upgrading; new technologies; and quality of life.

Funding Levels and Program Equity

TEA-21 dramatically altered transportation funding mechanisms and authorized record amounts of funding for transportation, a 40 percent increase over the period of ISTEA. The minimum guarantee and the Highway Trust Fund firewalls enhanced the ability of State and local officials to plan, finance and implement their programs. States and local communities also increased funding levels to match the Federal commitments. Importantly, TEA-21's minimum guarantee ensured that highway funds were distributed equitably among the States.

Funding flexibility, first allowed in ISTEA and continued in TEA-21 has allowed States and communities to tailor their transportation choices to meet their unique needs. It has enabled State and local decision-makers to consider all transportation options and their impacts on traffic congestion, air pollution, growth patterns, economic development, and quality of life. TEA-21's innovative loan and grant programs encouraged public/private partnerships and further augmented the highway and transit funding.

Safety

TEA-21 introduced new programs, greater flexibility and increased funding to meet the ongoing safety challenge. Since enactment of TEA-21, the Department has awarded a total of \$729 million in State and community formula highway safety grants to encourage proper use of occupant protection devices; reduce alcohol and drug-impaired driving; reduce crashes between motorcycles and other vehicles; reduce school bus crashes; improve police traffic services; improve emergency medical services and trauma care systems; increase pedestrian and bicyclist safety; improve traffic record systems; and improve roadway safety.

Mobility and System Upgrading

ISTEA and TEA-21 placed an increased emphasis on developing a more fully integrated, intermodal transportation system that links highways, rail, transit, ports and airports. The dramatically increased funding provided by TEA-21 also led to upgrading the condition of highways, particularly the National Highway System, and transit systems. As a direct result, overall highway system conditions – as measured by pavement condition, ride quality, alignment adequacy, bridge ratings, and the condition of rail transit assets – have improved.

Although Federal funding represented only 17 percent of the Nation's total investment in transit in 2000, stable Federal funding has translated into results for the public. Under ISTEA and TEA-21, the substantial investment in the Nation's transit systems has led to a 17 percent increase in total capacity and a corresponding 24 percent increase in transit ridership. In 2000, transit ridership reached a forty-year high, and Americans realized \$60 billion in the value of time saved and enhanced productivity. We reduced the national cost of traffic congestion by one-third, and increased the time and resources available for our families, work, recreation, and communities.

New Technologies

TEA-21 facilitated the development and deployment of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), pavement improvement, congestion reduction, seismic hardening of highway infrastructure elements, strengthening of bridges, and new tunnel technology. The Highway Safety Research and Development program includes behavioral research to reduce traffic deaths and injuries, crash avoidance research, roadway design and operational improvements, and vehicle safety performance standards. Rail-related research and development has focused on the next generation of high-speed rail equipment and train control, maglev systems, and innovative technologies to mitigate grade crossing hazards.

Significant progress has been made in ITS deployment. From 1997 to 2000, the Nation has enjoyed a 37 percent increase in the number of freeway miles equipped with real-time traffic data collection technologies, a 55 percent increase in the coverage of freeways by closed circuit television, a 35 percent increase in the number of buses equipped with automatic vehicle location systems, and an 83 percent increase in traveler information dissemination on our freeways.

Quality of Life

TEA-21 has given States and communities across America additional tools and opportunities to enhance the environment and quality of life for their residents. It continued and increased funding for several important programs, broadened eligibility for others, and established the new Transportation and Community and System Preservation (TCSP) pilot program.

The TCSP program helps transportation make better use of land. TCSP grants have provided funding for planning and implementation as well as technical assistance and research to investigate and address the relationship between transportation, community and the private sector. The Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, provided more than \$8 billion in funding for use by State and local partners to support traffic flow projects, cleaner fuels, improved transit services, and bicycle and pedestrian programs that reduce congestion and emissions and improve the quality of life. The National Scenic Byways program and the Transportation Enhancements program have helped States and communities protect the environment and promote America's natural beauty. Since the enactment of TEA-21, more than \$1.4

billion in Transportation Enhancement funds have been obligated to local communities to implement community-focused, non-motorized activities that enhance transportation.

Core Principles and Values

This is a time of extraordinary challenge and opportunity in the transportation sector. The world of surface transportation is changing. The Administration has launched an ambitious new research initiative to develop fuel cell technology that will improve environmental quality and reduce our need for petroleum-based fuels. As we look forward, we will need to consider other sources of revenue for the Nation's transportation programs in anticipation of these technological advances. Furthermore, the events of September 11th have demonstrated how critical the Nation's transportation system is to the security of every American and to our economic well-being.

The Department has articulated a set of core principles and values that will frame our approach to the reauthorization of our surface transportation programs. These principles seek to enhance the safety and security of all Americans, even as we increase their mobility, reduce congestion, and grow the economy. These are not incompatible goals; the lessons of TEA-21 demonstrate that these are appropriate, indeed necessary, goals of national transportation policy and that they reinforce each other. It is possible to have a transportation system that is safe and secure, efficient and productive.

The Department's reauthorization effort will be motivated by the following core principles and values:

- Assure adequate and predictable funding for investment in the Nation's transportation system. This funding can contribute to the long-term health of the economy and, by enhancing the mobility of people and goods, promote greater productivity and efficiency.
- Preserve State and local government funding flexibility to allow the broadest application of funds to transportation solutions.
- Build on the intermodal approaches of ISTEA and TEA-21.
- Expand and improve innovative financing programs, in order to encourage greater private sector investment in the transportation system, and examine other means to augment existing trust funds and revenue streams.
- Address the security of the Nation's surface transportation system.
- Make substantial improvements in the safety of the Nation's surface transportation system. It is not acceptable that the Nation still suffers 41,000 deaths and over 3 million injuries annually on the highway system.
- Strengthening the efficiency and integration of the Nation's system of goods movement by improving international gateways and points of intermodal connection.

- Simplify Federal transportation programs and continue efforts to streamline project approval and implementation.
- Develop the data and analyses critical to sound transportation decisionmaking.
- Foster ITS as a means to improve safety, reduce congestion and protect the environment.
- Improve on the performance of the entire transportation system through better planning, management, construction, operations, asset management, maintenance and construction.
- Increase accessibility to transportation so that all Americans can enjoy its benefits.

It is particularly important to underscore the overarching importance of the security of our Nation's transportation system. Following the September attacks, Federal officials working with State and local transportation officials took immediate steps to enhance security. They added security personnel, emphasized security awareness and response training, and began the process of hardening our transportation infrastructure against the threat of terrorism. This urgent work is continuing. The TEA-21 reauthorization process furnishes an important opportunity to address the security issue in the design and funding of our programs.

Outreach

This is a moment of great opportunity. We are confident that, working together with our partners, we can establish, preserve, and enhance surface transportation programs that will provide not only for a safer and more secure system, but one which is more efficient and productive and enhances the quality of life. The answer to the events of September 11 is to strengthen, not diminish, the right of all Americans to mobility and the need to grow the economy. We look to these goals to inspire and inform our work in preparing new surface transportation legislation.

The Department of Transportation looks forward to working with the Congress, State and local officials, tribal governments, private industry, and stakeholders in shaping the surface transportation reauthorization legislation. The Department has established an intermodal process to develop surface transportation legislative proposals for reauthorization. In the next few months, the Department will work with stakeholders and Congressional committees in shaping the reauthorization legislation.

Send comments or questions to: ???