TRANSPORTATION AND THE ECONOMY

3 INTRODUCTION
Transportation and the Economy: Exploring the Conundrum
Andrew C. Lemer
Questions about transportation’s role in economic development and about the value of investments in transportation continue. Precise and convincing measurements of the benefits of investments in the system are surprisingly elusive. Articles offer a sampling of approaches, methods, and perspectives.

8 Investment in Transportation Infrastructure: A Case for Benefit–Cost Analysis
Alexander Heil, Mark Seaman, and David Vautin
Applications of benefit–cost analysis by two large regional agencies demonstrate the power and effectiveness of the approach—and its appropriate contexts—in prioritizing and implementing projects. At a minimum, the authors maintain, the results of an analysis can inform debate on the merits of proposed projects.

12 Applying Benefit–Cost Analysis at the Metropolitan Transportation Commission

14 Innovative Freight Production Models Using the Commodity Flow Survey: Improving Accuracy and Timeliness for Planning with Available Data
José Holguín-Veras
A National Cooperative Freight Research Program project has demonstrated that freight production models based on microdata from the national Commodity Flow Survey can provide an efficient mechanism to monitor geographic patterns of freight activity—and changes in the use of infrastructure—with publicly available employment data.

20 The Economic Value of Using Transportation Assets and Services: Figures from the Transportation Satellite Accounts
Theresa Firestine and Karen White
Transportation Satellite Accounts show not only the dollars expended on transportation for the production of goods and services but also the contribution of transportation to the total U.S. gross domestic product. The accounts offer a step toward measuring the economic value of the transportation used by industries and households, the authors note.

24 Valuing a Mature Highway System: In Search of the Holy Grail
Randall W. Eberts
The search for methods to value the highway system with accuracy must start by developing appropriate evaluation frameworks for the realities of the present system, accounting for the integration of new technologies into the infrastructure, and incorporating the wider benefits of highways into benefit–cost analyses, the author maintains.

30 Transportation Investments in Response to Economic Downturns: Increasing the Effectiveness of Federal Stimulus Programs
Joseph Morris
Using the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 as a case study, a Transportation Research Board committee examined the value of transportation investments as a stimulus and explored the structure and management of a transportation stimulus program that would produce the greatest benefit.
**TR NEWS**

features articles on innovative and timely research and development activities in all modes of transportation. Brief news items of interest to the transportation community are also included, along with profiles of transportation professionals, meeting announcements, summaries of new publications, and news of Transportation Research Board activities.

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**Editorial Correspondence**: By mail to the Publications Office, Transportation Research Board, 500 Fifth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001, by telephone 202-334-2986, by fax 202-334-3495, or by e-mail lcamarda@nas.edu.

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**Also in This Issue**:

35 From Preservation to Adaptation:
Right Sizing as an Investment Strategy
*Chandler Duncan and Anne Morris*

Right sizing integrates several longstanding concepts for a more efficient transportation system into a high-level paradigm for decision making—the primary economic objective is to direct agency resources to adapt the transportation system in the long term to a changing economy. The authors explore right sizing and present two case studies.

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**Coming Next Issue**

41 Research Pays Off
Stream Channel Maintenance at Bridge Crossings in Ohio: Collaborative Approach Leads to Innovation and Implementation
*Jill Martindale*

43 Calendar

44 Profiles
Railway consultant and executive George Avery Grimes; and freight researcher and planner Barbara A. Ivanov

46 TRB Highlights
Making a Pitch for Innovations, 46
*Alex Bigazzi*

How to Talk About Transportation and Public Health:
10th Annual TRB Contest Identifies Best Practices, 47
*Terri H. Parker*

48 News Briefs
Congestion and trucking, safer driving speeds, helmet law glitch, ecofriendly commuting, bicycling to work and health

50 Bookshelf

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Moving research into practice is the theme of feature articles in the July–August magazine—the implementation of new technologies and research findings in the real world of the practitioner and the transportation system user. Authors describe today’s successes, present a systematic approach that has proved effective at a state department of transportation, describe federal programs encouraging innovations at the state level, discuss initiatives by research programs to promote and document the implementation of results, and offer insights on technology transfer in the United States and in Europe, as well as tips on effective public relations, gathering practical ideas at conferences, assessing an agency’s technological readiness, and more.