

Urban Mass Transportation  
Administration Perspective

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It is a pleasure to be here this morning, especially with my counterpart from FHWA and the other panel members. It is important to note that this is a very critical time for transportation in America. The new National Transportation Policy, which had been under development in the Department of Transportation over the past year, was unveiled by the President just a little over a month ago. In the months ahead this dynamic new policy will become a corner stone of the Administrations over all quest for a better and stronger America, was unveiled by the President just a little over a month ago.

The National Transportation Policy allows us to reflect and take a step back from the immediate concerns of this years budget and next years program. The

National Transportation Policy addresses such questions as "what should the federal role be in transportation," "where should decision making powers reside," and "which hidden subsidies are making it difficult to reach sensible transportation decisions at the local level". While previous effects to develop national transportation policies have not been remembered for their lasting effects, I think this policy may be different. The policy will have a major influence on the highway and transit reauthorization programs submitted by the Administration. The spirit of the National Transportation Policy will be reflected in these legislative proposals. It is logical to ask how this policy will be reflected in the legislative proposals.

I think of the key elements you will see reflected from the policy document is intermodalism. During the outreach phase of the National Transportation Policy last summer, this was a key concept that people kept stressing at the hearings. Both the Transit 2000 report from the American Public Transit Association, as well as Project 2020 from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, recognized early and clearly that the notion of federal transportation assistance delivered through totally separate and modally distinct program categories has outlived its usefulness.

I would suggest that the Interstate transfer program may be a precursor of the types of programs we will see in the future. It was a categorical and distinct effort that built the national Interstate system. However, in 1974 a compromise was introduced that allowed a limited number of local areas, under certain conditions, to not only stop freeway construction, but to keep the funding for these facilities for use on other transportation projects. Central

federal planning went eyeball-to-eyeball with local decisions, and central federal planning blinked. Someday, someone will put together the full history of the federal Interstate highway system. This would have to include to role President Eisenhower, played, the magnificent engineering achievements, the close federal-state cooperation, and most noticeable, the way it has changed the face of our country. However, there will also have to be a very important chapter on how urban consciousness arose midway through the construction phase of the interstate system and quite literally stopped several segments. For example, there is no inner beltway in Boston today, you can't take the Embarcadero freeway to Fisherman Wharf in San Francisco, and I-95 does not cut through residential neighborhoods in northeast Washington, D.C. These represent examples of intermodalism. It suggests that while there is a federal interest at a broad level of policy and strategy, local decision makers know the territory better than anyone in Washington, D.C. possibly can. It suggests that what the federal government does best is provide resources and what the local areas do best is make the final decision on how best to use those resources.

The reauthorization proposal that the department will soon submit to Congress, will call for a good deal of this type of intermodalism. I think it will suggest that in several of the basic programs, the resources should be made available to the local areas for their determination of what it should be spent on. This is one way to get away from the separation of highway and transit funding programs and the feeling in many areas that the most important thing is to get as much of both as possible. HOV facilities may be one of the best examples to cite for demonstrating that solving the transportation

problem is truly the real issue, not securing the maximum amount of federal dollars. HOV facilities are one of those good ideas that tended to get lost between the strict modal distinctions of competing interests, in this case obviously highways and transit. Why build a simple HOV lane if you can qualify for a light rail line under the UMTA program? Why include HOV lanes in a highway widening project if you can get UMTA to fund them at a later date? I can not think of any category of major investments whos cause will be strengthened more in the forthcoming reauthorization project than HOV lanes. There will be no more modal gamesmanship.

Intermodalism, as critical as it is, will only be one of the major National Transportation Policy themes however, that will be included in the reauthorization proposal. You will be hearing more about the other aspects of the reauthorization program in the months ahead.