

## CLOSING SESSION

Brigid Hynes-Cherin, San Francisco County Transportation Authority—Presiding

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### Federal Response

*Jane Garvey, Federal Highway Administration*

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I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the closing session of this Conference. The presentations from the workshop sessions indicate that you have had a very productive three days. I am very interested in the suggestions emerging from the workshops, especially those related to how we at the federal level can help enhance the metropolitan transportation planning process.

The presentations this morning have provided a number of excellent ideas on additional research needs, the development of training programs and best practice case studies, and the ongoing communication of success stories. The need to simplify many aspects of the planning process was also noted in a number of the presentations.

The Administration is strongly committed to making the metropolitan transportation planning process work. The planning principles contained in the ISTEA became the starting point for the discussion of the possible review of the federal program last December. A number of the ideas presented this morning will help in this effort.

There has been a good deal of discussion this past week on the Congressional budget process. Some have suggested that the outcome of this process may encourage a return to the pre-ISTEA funding approaches. I think this would be a mistake. Utilizing the open planning process required by the ISTEA will be even more important in the future as we deal with limited funding. We do not have the financial luxury or the environmental luxury today to make unwise transportation decisions.

A number of the presentations from the workshops noted the complexity of the federal role. The ISTEA focused more authority for transportation decisions at the

state, MPO, and local levels. At the federal level, we are trying to strike the correct balance between assuming more of a leadership role and providing needed assistance, while at the same time being less prescriptive. We are still working to develop the correct balance between these and other responsibilities.

In conclusion, I think it is important to recognize the progress that has been made by many groups in many areas in implementing the provisions of the ISTEA. This includes states, MPOs, local governmental units, transit agencies, and other groups. Sometimes our goals may seem so lofty that we forget how much progress has been made. I would urge you not to get discouraged, but rather to take pride in all that you have accomplished.

I would also like to thank you for your efforts over the past three days. We will be taking the results from this Conference very seriously, and we look forward to continuing to work with all of you to ensure a successful metropolitan transportation planning process that meets the needs of the diverse regions throughout the country.

### Closing Remarks

*Brigid Hynes-Cherin, San Francisco County Transportation Authority*

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I would like to thank all of the participants for taking the time to attend this conference and for sharing their thoughts and ideas. We thought the conference would provide an important forum to begin the challenge of preparing for the next transportation reauthorization bill, which some people are already calling NEXTEA. The current activities on Capital Hill, and the potential that reauthorization may occur as early as 1996, has made the conference even more important.

It was equally appropriate that Williamsburg was chosen as the site for this conference, since the first of eight national planning conferences was held here in 1965. I would like to close the conference with a quick synopsis of what we have learned over the past few days. The thoughts and ideas you shared will provide an important benchmark in shaping the future of the metropolitan transportation planning process.

The conference began on Sunday with a series of presentations by major stakeholders in the transportation planning process. These presentations helped establish the theme for the conference. We heard first from John Horsley, representing the Administrators for FHWA and FTA, on the status of activities in Washington, D.C.