

DINNER REMARKS OF GLORIA JEFF, ASSOCIATE ADMINISTRATOR FOR POLICY, FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION

Allow me to preface my remarks this evening by saying that they do not represent the official positions of the U.S. Department of Transportation or the Federal Highway Administration. I was asked to reflect upon the current status of transportation planning and likely challenges over the next several years. I will do this primarily from a perspective of a transportation professional who has been in the business in different roles for many years. I want to talk about the transportation profession preparing for the 21st century. I have intentionally structured my remarks to be thought-provoking and controversial. Most critically, I want you to think about things "outside of the box."

I want to challenge some conventional wisdoms. The first is the contention by many groups influential in transportation policy making that a livable community is one where walking and/or transit friendliness characterizes the mobility options of the residents. This conventional wisdom envisions an American city where work, schools and recreational facilities are all within walking distance, or at most a short transit ride away. There is an abundance of open space, and exotic and common ecosystems coexist in a peaceful, passive and wonderfully supportive way with human beings. It is a place where economic conditions make absolutely no difference in the life styles of the residents of that city. This is not the urban America I know in 1996. One hopes it will become the American city of the 21st century.

As professionals, and for many of us as responsible government officials, we also need to recognize that rural America is important to this nation and that rural needs should be considered at the same level of equity as one considers urbanized area needs. We have become caught up in our profession in focusing on the needs of our metropolitan areas and have unintentionally relegated rural areas to a "back burner." Rural America is important.

What I would like to do this evening is to offer a top 10 list of policy issues and areas of consideration that will face transportation professionals in the 21st century. Let me start my list from the bottom.

Number 10: "*Transportation is not alone.*" Like those of us who are waiting for the premier of *Independence Day*, the movie, we are not alone and the aliens that we have to deal with are sometimes hostile, sometimes friendly, but always expectant and wanting. Transportation needs to consider its position in

relationship to a number of complex issues. While some argue that transportation policy and planning should not be held hostage to the resolution of social and economic activities, the reality is that as a great agent of change, transportation represents the single most effective way to get people to modify behavior.

And so the reality is that we are not alone. Transportation and the environment, transportation and land use, transportation and housing, transportation and urban form, transportation and economic development, transportation and life styles—all these are terms that we use in describing the world within which we live. The reality is that transportation is part of almost every social issue facing America. So, while we might like to think that transportation investments can stand-alone and that we should be able to make decisions in an independent fashion, we cannot. Dealing with these interrelationships is one of the key challenges for us in the 21st century.

Number 9: "*All the low hanging fruit has been picked.*" The easy and readily acceptable changes to our constituents have already occurred. Americans are now faced with being encouraged to do the things that they are not predisposed to doing. This is what I mean when I say "the low hanging fruit has been picked." Americans will have to make different and difficult choices in the 21st century. In transportation, these choices include how they travel, where they live, who lives next door to them, where they shop, where they work, what economic status they hope to achieve, and perhaps how much they are willing to pay for high levels of mobility. So, as we look at transportation solutions over the next decades, all the easy ones have been done. We are going to have to work harder, more creatively, and in all candor, put up with a whole lot more of whatever we did not want to put up with in order to find solutions. The one redeeming quality is we as a profession are some of the world's best problem solvers, so we are up to the task.

Number 8: "*Travel growth is good.*" I apologize to those who have argued against the negative impacts associated with travel growth, but I strongly believe travel growth is good. People shopping, working, receiving needed medical attention, visiting neighbors, relatives and places where they recreate or engage in enjoyable, safe and socially acceptable activities is exactly what we want in a vibrant society. We all support the idea that the world is better when we interact with one another. What we need to do as a profession is clearly define our challenges and articulate the problems in understandable ways. We want

growth to occur, but we want people to make different choices about how they travel. I come from a place where people stopped shopping near home; they stopped buying the products made in their home town. They stopped traveling. We want them to travel again. We want them to engage in those socially acceptable activities. However, we want them to change the way in which they do it. We want them to make different decisions about land use. We want them to make different decisions about when they need to go to the grocery store. Do they have a land use that permits them to take the two block walk or do they live in an environment where they have no option but to drive?

When one looks at the National Personal Transportation Study, we see that for the most part the rate of growth will begin to slow. This is true for the population as a whole. However, when we look at subpopulations with regard to driving, we find ourselves looking at a completely different set of groups than we have looked at in the past. Women and minorities are going to be driving much more. The question becomes how do they travel in ways that are different than we have had in the past? And more fundamentally, as we talk about controlling the growth of travel, do we expect these groups to forego all the advantages that those who went before them had by being able to travel when and where they wanted to? I don't think so. Our challenge is to get them to think carefully about how they travel, not if they travel.

Number 7: "*Immigration*" America is a country of immigrants. As a result, we are going to have very different expectations from many of our citizens of what the transportation system should be doing. I live in Washington, D.C. The only rule seems to be "get out of my way." Immigration will continue to be a significant source of population and workforce growth in the United States. The cultural diversity that this will represent to the U.S. will begin to change the norms and expectations of transportation. Our new citizens will not all have grown up having learned that the very first vehicle that they own is a single occupant one. So, as we begin to talk about being closer to our customers, we are going to have to recognize that our customers are different; they have different expectations; and they come from places where transportation works very differently. When we begin to shape the transportation systems of the 21st century, we need to bear in mind that it is not necessarily "more of the same". It will be very different from what it might have been if we had assumed that there was no immigration. Walking, transit, and rail could be viewed differently in terms of potential use.

Number 6: "*Integration as a key.*" The transportation system is composed of many different

modal networks. The system is intended to achieve a number of purposes and some of those purposes include permitting people to experience a lot of different activities. For example, there are some who were here this morning who managed to be home in Seattle to watch the Supersonics win this evening. There are those who are at the Supersonics game tonight who will be home before midnight in Salt Lake City. Transportation permits people to live these kinds of lifestyles. Such mobility, however, cannot occur without all modal elements of the transportation system working in an integrated and coordinated way.

Integration also involves moving goods, both finished and as part of the production process, and has to be efficient and timely. Freight movement must increasingly be discussed in the context of international movement of goods. Many products, from automobiles to transit buses to baseball mitts, are made in half a dozen countries overseas with final assembly occurring in the United States. We have to recognize that manufacturing and industrial production in the 21st century will increasingly take place on a global level and not just on a domestic level. Such a production process involves multiple modes all working in an integrated way. The flows will also cause increased sharing of transportation infrastructure by passenger and freight travel, further necessitating greater integration.

Number 5: "*Equity*" There are many voices crying out that we ought to keep things as they are, or that we ought to change things from what they used to be, or that we should not allow others to go places and do things that might provide some level of discomfort to the local community. I remember being a staff person at a regional transit authority and listening to local elected officials explain why a subway system could not be extended from the central city to their community. They considered transportation in and of itself as good; they liked the mobility; and they were not opposed to the cost. The problem was that "those people" could get on the system and gain access to their communities for all sorts of activities that were considered unwanted, especially crime.

But the reality is that equity questions with respect to transportation really do not focus around such people, but really around the question of how do we make sure that there is equal opportunity to live where one wants to live, to live with whom one wants to live, and to be able to take advantage of the goods and services that transportation makes possible in certain communities. It has to deal with an aging population—what do we do with an aging population that is accustomed to using automobiles and who will expect to continue to be mobile, in spite of all our efforts to say that driving a car at advanced age is not appropriate?. How do we design

transportation systems and its individual modal networks to make sure that they do not result in inequities because these people are not being given opportunities? How do we find solutions that are not income-biased or employment-type biased? How do we address life style choices so that the difference in male and female travel patterns are reflected in the solutions and address equity questions associated with gender differences? Men have it easy. They take nice long trips and they only take a few of them a day. Women tend to take short trips, and lots of them. Women are the ones who get the phone call when a child gets sick. Household errands need to be done, family members/friends require assistance.

Ultimately it comes down to the question of "Is transportation merely an ends to itself or is it a mechanism by which we create opportunities for people to take advantage of the American dream?"

Number 4: "*System performance*" We simply need to find measures that represent transportation system performance outcomes that people care about. As a profession we are very good at talking about performance indicators in terms of increasing the longevity of a particular pavement mixture and type; and that is great because we care about that in the profession. The general public really doesn't care, nor does the business community. What we have to do in terms of performance is to find indicators that represent outcomes that people want or care about and articulate them in ways that people care about and will respond to. Otherwise, we will increasingly find ourselves in the position of saying "yes, we spent your money and no, we can't explain what you got for it in ways that you care about." This means, of course, that performance indices related to productivity, market-share, employment and access must be developed. Outcomes must be described in terms which reflect the consumer priorities.

Number 3: "*Skill sets*" The folks who brought us the eighth wonder of the world, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Interstate System, are very talented. Let there be no doubt in your minds, their accomplishment is truly amazing. They have made us the envy of the world in terms of the quality, expanse, and technological aspects of our highway system. The real success was not because they were great engineers, it was because they were outstanding problem solvers. The problem was we needed a series of roads that interconnect major metropolitan areas and economic activity centers across this country.

That is what we said we wanted in 1956. They went out and delivered it. But the skill set that we tend to acknowledge them for is that of being technicians and engineers as opposed to problem solvers. So, when we move to the 21st century, we need to build on their strengths, which is their problem solving skills, and use that as the foundation for the new skill set of the transportation professional in the 21st century. Because as we talk about managing the system and protecting the investments that we have made, the skill set for the future transportation professional is going to include the ability to understand the context of transportation and the complexity of human needs; to recognize that there are multiple problems requiring multiple, interdependent solutions; to learn how to do simultaneous equations in a context other than story problems; and to understand how we implement transportation programs and activities that are primarily intended to influence behavior. We build on the foundation of being good problem solvers, but we must recognize that problem-solving is not just limited to technical analysis.

Number 2: "*Politics*" Transportation professionals cannot ignore the reality that in order to implement any kind of transportation action, no matter how great we are at solving problems, that we have to come up with solutions that are not only technically correct, but which are politically implementable and financially feasible. Our job in solving problems is to be able to address all three—technical, political and financial feasibility. We sometimes stop at being technically correct and we are learning better to be financially feasible. It is not doing one or the other but doing all three. If we accomplish all three, we will get the transportation program for the 21st century that we need.

Number 1: "*Proactive leadership*" We have to be proactive leaders. We cannot wait for the problems to stare us in the face and then organize to solve them. We are going to have to identify the problems, come up with creative, innovative, and in all candor different solutions than we have in the past. This, of course, is the essence of planning. As proactive leaders, we should be constantly looking for ways to make improvement. The motto of our professional forefathers was "if it ain't broke don't fix it." Our motto is going to become "it ain't broke, but let's make it better."

Thank you for your attention.