

# NEW ERA FOR TRANSPORTATION



**William W. Millar**

## Introduction

Transportation continues to hold a primary place among the nation's economic, social, and environmental needs. Safe and effective methods of transportation, for both people and goods, are vital for every American citizen.

The signing by President Bush of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in December 1991 and the initiation of other transportation legislation enhance the likelihood of meeting many of the necessary short- and long-term goals for safe and effective transportation. ISTEA authorizes federal expenditures for highways and transit of more than \$150 billion dur-

ing the next six years. This legislation has sparked many new ideas and questions concerning the future of the nation's transportation systems. It also draws more deserved and needed attention to the intermodal aspects of transportation, including highways, transit, air, water, and rail systems, and affects the programs administered by the Federal Highway Administration, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration for fiscal years 1992-1997.

The authorization of this legislation represents a milestone for transportation in the United States. Perhaps one of the most significant emphases is on increased spending in the fields of transportation research and technology transfer. For example, ISTEA authorizes the investment of more than \$700 million in research and development for intelligent vehicle-highway systems (IVHS), high-speed rail, and magnetic levitation systems. It establishes a new transit planning and research program that includes a

broad-based cooperative research program modeled after the long-standing and successful National Cooperative Highway Research Program. All areas of the transportation industry will benefit from increased research and development expenditures authorized in this legislation.

With passage of ISTEA also comes the establishment of several new councils and commissions to further investigate methods for improvement in the areas of surface transportation, research and technology, and education and training. Highlighted in this special issue of *TR News* is the effect of ISTEA and other federal legislation on transportation research and development by various federal agencies (Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Highway Administration, Maritime Administration, Federal Transit Administration, National Transportation Safety Board, Federal Aviation Administration, and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration). The articles were prepared by representatives of these agencies in an attempt to explain the impact of recent legislation on existing programs, along with new high-priority initiatives and focus areas. Other federal agencies may be featured in future issues of *TR News*.

In some cases, for example the Federal Transit Administration, the legislation provides for significant increases in research and technology transfer funding and functions. In other cases, for example the Maritime Administration, the legislation encourages aspects of intermodal operations and technology transfer, but minimally affects research and development activities.

In sum, ISTEA and legislation that affects other transportation modes represent a series of opportunities. The question is: are we in the transportation community up to the challenge?

*William W. Millar, Chairman  
TRB Executive Committee*



President Bush signs ISTEA. From left: Arnold Martinez, Austin Bridge Construction Co.; Rep. Bud Shuster (R., Pa.); Sen. Daniel Moynihan (D., N.Y.); Angela Dominguez, Austin Bridge Construction Co.; President Bush; Rep. John Hammerschmidt (R., Ark.); Rep. Robert Roe (D., N.J.); and Rep. Norman Mineta (D., Calif.).

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