

## State, Industry Leaders Seek New Transportation Vision

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Summary: Investment, environmental enhancement, international competitiveness, safety, freight and transportation choices were among the themes as transportation leaders from across the country met in Cambridge, Maryland this week to consider what will be needed to meet the nation's transportation needs into the future.

Eight national transportation organizations sponsored the three-day Transportation Vision and Strategy Summit that featured futurists, economists, state and local government officials, and transportation industry leaders who identified the priorities most important to their constituencies.

The conference was moderated by Jane Garvey, former Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration and former Deputy Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, who currently serves as Executive Vice President and Chairman of APCO Worldwide's transportation practice.

Garvey noted that the conference came about through the collaboration of the:

- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials;
- AAA ;
- American Council of Engineering Companies;
- American Public Transportation Association;
- American Road and Transportation Builders Association;
- American Trucking Associations;
- Associated General Contractors of America; and the
- Association of American Railroads.

During the conference, some 160 participants engaged in a series of workshops to refine draft vision statements based upon the work of transportation experts in the fields of Freight, Highways, Rail, Transit, Metropolitan Mobility, Sustainable Transportation, Advanced Technology and Innovation, Safety and Funding. Participants selected the top three strategies identified in each area, for a total of 27 recommendations. Those recommendations were further prioritized via an electronic balloting process, but all will be reflected in a report on the conference to be provided to the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission.

AASHTO Executive Director John Horsley said that the report will be compiled and presented to the Commission before the end of June, so that it is available as the Commission prepares its own recommendations to Congress, which are due by December 31, 2007.

In the opening panel discussion Robert Darbelnet, President and CEO of AAA, told the audience that fluid and efficient movement of goods, enhanced personal mobility and improved safety should be three important characteristics of a future transportation system. He also urged that the vision recognize the change in the nation's demographics, including the aging of motorists as the Baby Boom generation turns 65. He also stressed that three factors vital to the success of the system would be greater investment in research, the ability to speed the research results to the market, a multi-modal solution, and substantial increases in funding.

Drawing upon the concepts drafted for the conference, Greg Cohen, President of the American Highway Users Alliance, asked the groups to imagine a highway system without crashes, a concept that is possible through advanced technology. He also proposed a system that is free of congestion, with multi-state corridors for freight and the elimination of bottlenecks. The system should be funded, he said, by linking users with the benefits they receive, a concept that created the Highway Trust Fund in the 1950s. Finally he envisioned a system that achieved "better than before" results from transportation projects that gave equal importance to economic vitality, enhanced livability and quality of life, and environmental sustainability.

Craig Rockey, Vice President, Policy and Economics, Association of American Railroads, noted that the nation's rail network is three times the size of the Interstate Highway System and that it carries 40 percent of the ton-miles of freight. But he warned that there is no more excess capacity on the rail lines and that leveraging private investment is key to expanding the capacity needed to meet growing freight demand in the next few decades. He said the time is right for the adoption of a national rail policy that is substantive, achievable, fully funded, far-reaching and widely supported.

Bill Millar, President of the American Public Transportation Association, said that "If we do our work right, we can come out of this with a set of ideas that are unstoppable. He posed a vision for consideration, "America 2040 – A thriving country whose multi-modal transportation system is the envy of the world."

Millar also noted that a new transportation vision will have to recognize new ideas, including energy security, accommodation of 100 million more Americans in the next 30 years, economic competition from China and India and reducing the emission of greenhouse gases to address global warming.

### Environmental Challenges Ahead

Futurist Glen Hiemstra also posed the thought that the nation is approaching an "energy tipping point" adding, "and this changes everything." He described possible approaches

to re-invent energy by 2050 including zero emission vehicles, doubling fuel economy for 2 billion cars, and the installation of 3 million windmills worldwide.

He also suggested “In the future, we will travel to get together, but not to do most basic work,” because work can be done remotely.” Hiemstra outlined a number of “lessons” for the audience including the thought that “the future creates the present. If you want to change what you expect to happen in the future, to what you prefer to have happen, that will drive your policies,” he said. He suggested that participants consider what is probable, what is possible and what is preferred, and then craft a vision that is a compelling description of the preferred future.

### A Coming Revolution in Global Economics

Global economics expert Michael Gallis asked the conferees to consider, “Is America positioning itself as a 20<sup>th</sup> Century nation or a 21<sup>st</sup> Century nation?” Describing the changes in the integration of the global network, the new world geography and a new global economy, he said that the U.S. is a subsystem within a gigantic global market. Transportation is now an integrated component of trade and to an extent, the U.S. system is inefficient, it adds to costs and reduces national competitiveness.

Because of the emergence of China and India as economic players, and the consolidation of world trading blocks, Gallis said that North America is now “the island nation” that England once was. In the world we left behind, he said, the U.S. was the center of trade, but now North America will represent below 14 percent of the world’s consumers.

Worse, there is no national economic plan, he said, much less an international one to maintain our competitive edge. Citing the massive investments made by China in its transportation infrastructure, he noted, if we had a plan today we wouldn’t be able to put in place in 30 years. He concluded, “Absent a plan, one will be created for you. Create one so you’re not forced to deal with one you did not create.”

Gallis urged the participants to think globally and to ask “Are we solving congestion, or building a transportation system for the global economy?”

Bill Graves, President of the American Trucking Associations, also cited the critical need to prepare for the sharp increase in freight traffic, both domestic and international. He urged participants to consider the need for additional capacity, including such innovations as truck-only lanes to improve efficiency and safety. He noted that the trucking industry is prepared to pay for improvements with increased taxes, but said the taxes have to be tied to strategic freight investments. Graves noted that the trucking industry is being asked to help solve problems of congestion, air quality, safety and other goals, and that productivity improvements would provide resources to do so.

John Ficker, President of the National Industrial Transportation League, agreed that support can be found for increased investment, so long as the revenues are focused on

strategic improvements. He added that personal mobility and freight mobility are compatible concepts, and that transportation functions as the circulatory system of the economy.

Kevin Mills, Vice President of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, maintained that non-motorized travel, such as biking and walking, makes a serious contribution to the transportation system by making other modes work better. He said the future transportation system must provide greater choices to the public, and that walking and biking need to be a full partner in considering future transportation improvements.

### Transportation Leaders Call for Investment to Keep U.S. Globally Competitive

Trade association leaders speaking at the summit on Tuesday said imminent funding concerns face U.S. mobility providers and that long-term and innovative approaches are needed.

Panelists included Bob Bergman, Vice President for Public Affairs at United Parcel Service and Chair of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee; David Raymond, President of the American Council of Engineering Companies; T. Peter Ruane, President and Chief Executive Office of the American Road and Transportation Builders Association; and, Stephen Sandherr, CEO of the Associated General Contractors of America.

All agreed that more funding is needed to not only maintain the system, but enhance its capacity and efficiency in the future. In an effort to combine divergent interests into a collective vision for the surface transportation system, Ruane said, now “isn’t the time to surrender” and that “an incredible opportunity” exists to transform the nation’s infrastructure. “We [transportation groups] need to stay together.”

ARTBA’s proposal for a program of Critical Commerce Corridors to target strategic investments in multi-modal improvements to enhance the movement of freight received considerable attention throughout the conference.

Sandherr said the federal government needs to provide a unified vision for the nation’s future transportation system, and that stakeholders should not take for granted funding from the nation’s capital. He added that transportation leaders need to demonstrate to users what they will be getting from increased spending on infrastructure before asking the public for additional user fees.

Raymond stressed the economic edge that foreign nations are gaining because of their investments in transportation infrastructure. “If I could, I would put everyone on airplanes to China, so they could see what’s happening. Then we could start to talk about the transportation needs of this country.” To convince the public and the politicians about the need for investment “you have to raise the spectre of what’s really going on,” he said.

Bergman said the U.S. Chamber is in the midst of rallying its members and the nation's business leaders around the need to increase investment in transportation spending, saying that it is necessary to keep the U.S. competitive in the global marketplace. He also emphasized the role of advanced technology in maximizing the efficiency of the transportation system.

Panelists also agreed that energy, environmental and land use concerns will also shape the formation of future U.S. surface transportation policy since actions to improve mobility have far-reaching impacts. Panelists also said investing in public transportation will play a large part in future decisions.

### State and Local Officials Cite Needs

The role of local governments in providing transportation services and the need to rally public support was highlighted by state and local officials in a panel discussion. Colleen Landkamer, Commissioner of Blue Earth County, Minnesota, and President of the National Association of Counties, noted that local governments are responsible for 75 percent of the nation's 3.9 million miles of highway, and 51 percent of the nation's 600,000 bridges. She said that intergovernmental partnerships are critical, including a strong federal role. But she said that transportation planning can't be "top down" because of the diversity of the nation's many counties. She cited the important role of local government in transportation. Landkamer posed the question of "How do you infuse passion across the country to talk about transportation and invest in it?"

Marcia Marcoux, a council member in Rochester, Minnesota, and a transportation leader of the National League of Cities, noted that because of inadequate funding at the state and federal level, cities are shouldering an increased burden of paying for transportation improvements through such methods as property and local option taxes. Marcoux stressed that congestion is a key concern of NLC members, and that the solutions must include a mix of transportation options and a holistic view of transportation planning that takes all of them into account.

Dan Silva, Chairman of the Transportation Committee of the New Mexico House of Representatives, described the "uphill battle" that must occur to convince legislators to invest in transportation in the face of so many other needs. He noted that while frequently legislators know that more resources are needed, they also insist that no new taxes can be considered.

Vision and leadership is needed, he said, to identify resource options and "to continue to push the issue of transportation."

### Conference Identifies Top 10 Concepts for the Future

The culmination of the conference was the opportunity for participants to prioritize their top 10 recommendations to transform the future of the transportation system, from among 27 that were identified by the working groups.

Following an electronic polling process, Horsley explained that while the top 10 would be featured in a report to the Commission, all 27 recommendations had received strong support from the conference members, and would be addressed as well.

The following is a summary of the ten future recommendations that received the strongest support from the conference participants.

### Top 10 Steps Needed.

**1. Increased Funding.** Protect and enhance existing transportation infrastructure investment by significantly increasing funding for the core highway and transit programs and ensuring the solvency of the Highway Trust Fund.

**2. Modernization.** Highway modernization is essential to protect and enhance the invaluable asset that has resulted from past investments in the nation's highway network. Pavement foundations have to be rebuilt and many bridges rebuilt or replaced. Many structures need to be modernized to meet multi-modal goals, carry heavier truck loads, faster design speeds, and traffic growth. Preserving the system requires enormous additional resources through federal, state, and local investment and private partnerships beyond those available in 2007. Incumbent in this effort is the need to improve system performance through advanced technologies, improved design, and better system management techniques to reduce congestion, improve throughput, enhance public safety, and increase system reliability.

**3. Transition.** Make the transition from fuel taxes to a more diversified and reliable funding base.

**4. New funding.** Generate net new funding sources to make bold new strategic national investments beyond the core program to support the vision. Examples include freight-supported fees to support Critical Commerce Corridors for projects of national significance and tax credits for freight and multi-modal investment.

**5. Public Transportation.** Aggressively invest in making public transportation an attractive choice across America.

**6. Capacity.** Aggressively invest in transportation capacity that is needed to support population and employment growth, (for example recognition of mega-region needs as a national priority.)

**7. Tougher Laws to Save Lives.** Enact and aggressively enforce legislation to create a culture of zero tolerance for high risk behavior. This includes addressing:

- a. Drinking and driving;
- b. Primary seat belt laws;
- c. Teen graduated licensing;
- d. Motorcycle helmet requirements;
- e. Speeding;
- f. Stiffening penalties for driving without a license;

- g. Closing gaps and weaknesses in the criminal justice system;
- h. Implementation of ignition interlocking systems; and,
- i. Automated enforcement technology.

**8. Freight.** Make a quantum increase in freight transportation investment to close the gap between economic growth and currently available traditional funding sources.

**9. Preservation.** Preserve today's transportation system.

**10. Safety Improvements.** At all levels of government, promote and deploy, with flexible funding, proven safety-based policies, geometric standards, and countermeasures which maximize safety appropriate for the transportation network, roadway type and location.

*Further information on the conference is available at the website <http://www.transportationvision.org>*