

While Central Florida has been developing a vision for how we want to grow, leaders from across the country have also been working together to develop a transportation vision and strategy for how people can continue to safely and efficiently travel across our country. The article below is a summary from a recent summit held by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Transportation Vision and Strategies for the 21st Century

Congress created the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission and directed it to develop a “conceptual plan” to ensure that the surface transportation system will continue to serve the needs of the United States over at least the next 30 years. During a series of hearings across the country, Commission members themselves have called for the development of a “bold national vision” for transportation. AASHTO, in collaboration with several industry partners, has developed a national transportation vision which seeks to do both.

Calling upon the foremost transportation experts in the country, AASHTO and partner associations convened topic panels and a visioning summit to bring forward key issues and solutions. Jointly they have compiled comprehensive recommendations that will enable the United States to achieve the transportation vision described. The findings contained in this report chart a path to modernize and transform today’s system to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

The Choice—A New Vision or Complacency

The nation figuratively stands at a fork in the road. One path leads to a new vision which, if realized, will help guarantee that our children and grandchildren will have a bright future. In that vision, national leaders muster the political will to provide the quantum increase in investment needed. The best methods and materials are used to build the new capacity needed to ensure that goods and services are readily available to everyone at affordable prices, to efficiently get American agricultural products, manufactured goods, and value-added services to world markets, and to afford every American enjoyable access to the Nation’s incredible array of recreational and cultural opportunities. In that vision, technological frontiers continue to be expanded to make travel safer, and more reliable for everyone, while minimizing energy consumption, impacts on the natural and built environment, and the contribution to global climate change.

The other path is one we might take out of complacency, because we fail to appreciate what is at stake, or because we cannot muster the political will to do what is needed. At the personal level, this is a path of more congestion, more time spent in traffic, less time spent with the family, more missed deliveries, and more frustration. At the national level, this is the path of reduced economic prosperity, greater damage to the environment, and more American jobs lost to countries like China and India, who are investing in the transportation systems and technologies of tomorrow to catch up and surpass us.

The choice is ours.

The System Envisioned

America in 2040 is a thriving country whose transportation system is the envy of the world.

How will this vision be achieved?

Invest in the innovation and the highway, public transportation and rail capacity needed to support a strong economy, maintaining America as the international leader in technology and wealth creation.

Connect all regions of the country, urban and rural, to the global economy, and do so reliably every day.

Expand opportunities for jobs, places to live, time with family, education, health care, and other services.

Integrate the highway, rail and port freight systems of the North American trade bloc to enable the U.S. to remain an economic superpower.

“Delivering on our vision will ensure the continuance of what we all know as the American way of life. It is premised upon our ability to go from where we are to where we want to be, at the time we want, on the route we prefer, on that transportation mode that best serves our needs. For that to occur we have to change the course we are on.”

—Robert Darbelnet, President, AAA

Synchronize transportation policies with policies for housing, land use, energy, the economy, and the environment.

Improve the quality of life for all citizens through a dramatic increase in safety, reduced congestion, and energy independence.

Harness advanced technologies in every aspect of the system.

Preserve America’s freedom to travel, where we want, when we want, by whatever means we want, from this generation to the next.

Top 10 Steps Needed

When 150 transportation leaders came together at a National Transportation Vision and Strategy for the 21st Century Summit, they were asked to identify the steps that must be taken to transform our transportation system. While 27 recommendations received strong support from the participants, the following steps were seen as most urgent.

- **Increase Core Program 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.
- **Net New Funding for Strategic National Investments.** Generate net new funding sources outside the Highway Trust Fund to make bold new strategic national investments beyond what can be funded through Federal highway and transit programs. Examples include tax credit bonds to fund expansion of intercity passenger rail service, highway projects of national significance and transit new starts, and investment tax credits for freight rail capacity improvements which benefit the public.
- **Critical Commerce Corridors.** To help ensure U.S. global competitiveness, create a new Critical Commerce Corridors Program, a 25-year initiative to fund projects of national significance. Funded from freight-related user fees from outside the Highway Trust Fund, this would provide resources to fix freight bottlenecks, improve access to ports, distribution centers, and border crossings, and develop a national network of truck-only lanes. The system would be designated through a process where the Federal government provided coordination, and the states and MPOs did the planning, in consultation with trucking, railroads, ports, and shippers, and the involvement of affected communities.
- **Long-Term Transition.** When necessary, make the transition from fuel taxes to a more diversified and reliable funding base.
- **Preserve and Modernize the System.** Priority should be given to preserve and modernize the system of highways, transit, and rail built during the past century. Pavement foundations need to be rebuilt and many bridges rebuilt or replaced. Many structures need to be modernized to carry heavier truck loads, faster design speeds and traffic growth. Preserving and modernizing the system will require enormous additional resources beyond those available in 2007.
- **Improve System Performance.** Improve performance of highways and public transportation through advanced technologies, seamless integration of the multimodal system, and better system management techniques to reduce congestion, improve throughput, and increase system reliability.
- **Public Transportation.** Aggressively invest in making public transportation an attractive choice across America. Within 15 years, a fully functioning, high-quality, high-capacity system should be in place in every metropolitan region.
- **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.)

- **Tougher Laws to Save Lives.** Enact and aggressively enforce legislation to create a culture of zero tolerance for high-risk behavior. This includes addressing:
 - Drinking and driving;
 - Primary seat belt laws;
 - Teen graduated licensing;
 - Motorcycle helmet requirements;
 - Speeding;
 - Stiffening penalties for driving without a license;
 - Closing gaps and weaknesses in the criminal justice system; Implementation of ignition interlocking systems; and
 - Automated enforcement technology.
- **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.

New Transportation Strategies

Investment to Keep the United States Globally Competitive

As the Urban Land Institute recently stated, investment in world-class infrastructure has become a competitive imperative. The global economy pressures countries to upgrade infrastructure in order to remain competitive, gain advantage, or keep from falling behind. Moving people and goods internally with efficient access to global pathways—seaports and airports—is essential.

View the entire report at: <http://www.transportation1.org/tif5report/>