

Letter from the Editor

This issue of the New York Transportation Journal explores the theme of change, on a number of levels and perspectives. We have just concluded an historic election cycle which has brought significant political change to the nation. Recent developments in the areas of energy, the economy and the environment all underscore the current state of flux impacting the lives of those who live and work in the New York metropolitan region. Looking forward, we foresee change in all of these areas and we also anticipate change in forecasts of how we might grow and develop as a nation and as a region. Our articles are a reflection of this change and a response to

(Continued on page 5)

Inside NYTJ

Changing Lanes – Interview with Andrew Spano and C. Scott Vanderhoef
 By Rachel Weinberger

The Six Immediate Transportation Challenges for The Obama Administration
 By Francis X. McArdle

Federal-Multistates Planning Partnerships: A New Transportation Approach
 By Martin E. Robins

Enhanced TOD: Connecting Transportation and Land Use
 By John R. Nolon and Jennie C. Nolon

Take my Automobile Please... Why Americans are Driving Less and the Impact on Transportation Funding
 By Suzanne Seegmuller

**CHANGING LANES — INTERVIEW WITH
 ANDREW SPANO AND C. SCOTT VANDERHOEF**

For this issue, Rachel Weinberger, Assistant Professor of City and Regional Planning at the University of Pennsylvania, interviewed Andrew Spano and C. Scott Vanderhoef, the county executives (CEs) of Westchester and Rockland, respectively. She talked with both CEs about the broad transportation issues they face, including the transportation system's impact on the environment and on their respective constituents' quality of life. In addition, she asked about the Tappan Zee Bridge (TZB), which according to Vanderhoef "made Rockland County what it is today." Both CEs have an extraordinary commitment to transit as their mobility future and are steadfastly focused on transit as the means by which to usher in the next chapter in their counties' histories.

Rachel Weinberger: I'd like to focus on the Tappan Zee Bridge (TZB) but it would be good to contextualize it within the bigger transportation picture; how would you characterize the big issues?

Andrew Spano: In Westchester, getting people out of cars is a major transportation problem. We have two main issues: one is moving our people around effectively and the other is reducing the carbon footprint, which means we have to get people out of cars. I don't have adequate funding to put in a transportation system that will take care of the entire county, but robust transit will be key.

Scott Vanderhoef: We need to think about increasing the transit options for Rocklanders, so that we have a one-seat transit ride to Manhattan. We also need to think about allowing folks, particularly seniors, who are the fastest growing segment in our population, more flexibility in moving back and forth to transit modes headed to New York City, to the airports — including Stewart — or to other popular and needed destinations.

The federal and state governments must provide greater funding for mass transportation in order to make this happen.

RW: Is congestion an issue?

AS: We have some congestion in Westchester, mostly from people coming through the county but only at certain times. On I-287 it's a little worse since all the connections were made. There used to

be a reliable 15 minute delay, sometimes between 7:30 and 9:00 a.m. Then billions of dollars got invested to save people a couple of minutes driving, but congestion has been made worse elsewhere. The New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) just looks at the congestion, and people complain about it. NYSDOT wants to make the investment, that's what they do. I have nothing against DOT, they lay concrete...

SV: State Route 59, the old Nyack Turnpike, gets congested for the entire length of the County immediately with any kind of blockade or congestion on the Tappan Zee Bridge. When there are accidents or other incidents on the bridge, we literally can have such congestion that even ambulances and fire trucks have trouble getting through.

RW: Would adding capacity improve the situation?

SV: One thing we do not want in Rockland is more lanes of single occupancy vehicles. We do not want more traffic; that's over. To expand Rocklanders' ability to move in and out of New York City and eventually within the county we need mass transportation. That is the key link here. We used to have the West Shore Rail Line, which stopped sometime in 1955 or 1956. It ran down from what had been the most populated areas on the eastern side of the county. That has become solely a freight rail line with no passenger access. The key for us now is building commuter rail on the new bridge and ultimately branching lines to other

(Continued on page 2)



C. Scott Vanderhoef, Rockland County Executive.
Photograph provided by his staff.

parts of the county to provide more access. Thus, the new capacity must be in more mass transit, not in single occupancy road lanes that results in more local and highway congestion.

AS: When you build a road you just increase traffic. You don't solve the congestion problem. You just increase movements. People adjust to their environments. When gas prices started going up people started to take mass transit. Our transit numbers were going up because the gas prices were going up. And that's what will happen if you crowd the roads. People will start shifting modes or move closer to work or something else. Scott [Vanderhoef] and I would not vote for the NYMTC study of the 287 corridor until NYSDOT agreed to some things: 1) that the study would not look at expanding 287. I don't want it any wider; 2) that it had a mass transit component; and, 3) that it didn't impact the landfall at Tarrytown. Those were my three concerns. They agreed to that. Scott had some concerns as well, in particular the one seat ride going down. I think that's a good idea too.

RW: At the same time, you must have a vision for development.

AS: Absolutely. How and where we develop is really important. When NYMTC did the annual report and identified growth areas Scott and I agreed that the 287 corridor should be the focus for our counties. We want to build more spaces to which people can walk, and more transit centers. Transit oriented development (TOD) is a big issue with us and we're looking at that very carefully. We want to get people to transit centers without cars. Our trails and sidewalks may be good for that. We are beginning to explore sidewalks in the north part of Westchester County where we have very few. The planning department is focused on centers of all sizes, including hamlets and village areas, where we have a lot of infrastructure, that's usually where the train stops are as well. We're working with a number of our communities trying to reinforce the walking connections. This is all part of our 2025 update.

SV: In Rockland, about 97 percent of the developable land has been developed, so we're really talking about redevelopment. However, you really have to join the land use issues with transportation. Land use planning through the transportation corridor will have an enormous impact on this county. This is why the configuration of the bridge is so important. Andy [Spano] and I have worked together well on this. We're in agreement on several things. When NYMTC asked the counties for the places where we want to focus growth, we said the [I-287] corridor. For five or six years we've said "the corridor," "the corridor."

I can also foresee a number of spots that should allow multi-use development: some residential development and shopping with pedestrian walkways between them. We could have shuttle buses moving on north-south corridors to bring people to these transportation hubs. For example, the Nanuet Mall owners are looking at a complex right off of the Route 59 corridor that could potentially connect, via light rail (LRT), to the Palisades Center Mall, where there would be a rail connection on a Commuter Train over the New TZB. In turn, the Palisades Center Mall could become a whole new redevelopment site, not just box development, but a pedestrian friendly community with a series of different types of complexes and residences. This way, the Route 59 corridor can be redeveloped to create a better, less congested corridor with transit stations along the old Nyack Turnpike route. If you focus the development intelligently you preserve much of the suburban feel for the communities outside of the redeveloped area.

RW: Where would you put the transit infrastructure?

AS: Imagine if [Robert] Moses had said mass transit, not the private automobile, was king. Imagine what we would have today. I went to former Governor Spitzer, and I said to him, "We can build all this stuff on the cheap." He asked, "How?" I said, "You already have the roads going where you want them to go, they're flat, they already cut through the mountains. Put the mass transit on the roads." And he asked, "What will we do with the cars?" I said, "The cars? They'll drive on what's left." I don't think it's so wild to put a mass transit component right on the thruway, you can get to any part of the state with it. I don't usually talk about this much in public but I want people to understand where I'm coming from.

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SV: One way might be to run transit right on the center lane of the state highways. You would have a couple of stops without having too many stops that would cause unwarranted delays. We don't want subways, but we do want to get people out of their cars. If you add transportation hubs you can achieve that goal. I don't frequently talk about this transit idea because it's a very long term project, but you never know how things may get started.

RW: Let's talk about the bridge.

AS: The bridge has to be replaced; and it has to have at least the capability of holding commuter rail. But we can't afford it now. The cheapest way is to build a bridge capable of holding commuter rail and put BRT on it. Although that's not what I would prefer, it is certainly a good first step as it would leave all the options open.

SV: The bridge itself has to be replaced and it is critical that the commuter rail component not be delayed by too much longer. That corridor provides a vital link between the Mid-Atlantic States and New England. The bridge facilitates this interstate transportation and commerce. It also can't function without the commuter rail. Having that connectivity would provide reverse commuting capacity for workers outside of Rockland to employers located in Rockland, which could result in an immeasurable boost in jobs not only to Rockland, but to the entire Hudson Valley, west of the Hudson River. That said, the State really can't afford it now. So the question becomes how do you do it together? You do it by creatively funding it. Public private partnership is one way to go.

Keep in mind, too, that the new TZB project is a major transportation improvement; it has significant value even when viewed at the national level. The rationale for federal funding — through the much discussed new stimulus package or other federal funding sources — is clear on its face. This project should be the poster-child for stimulus spending.

RW: You both have mentioned that you don't see the value in, or any opportunities to, increasing highway capacity. How do you feel about the selected alternative for the bridge? If the BRT lanes are also HOT lanes you have a large increase in auto capacity — how

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Andrew Spano, Westchester County Executive. Photograph provided by his staff.

will you absorb the additional traffic on the existing road system?

AS: We need to keep discussing that with NYSDOT. All the options for the new bridge are eight travel lanes which are supposedly equivalent to today's seven. The BRT lanes could be two additional ones if they are used as HOV lanes as well. If those are opened as general travel lanes and if people can afford to drive on them, that could increase capacity as well as congestion in Westchester. I'm against any HOV lanes anyway. They don't work. They just encourage cars and divert trips from transit. I just want to see a bridge that's going to last for 150 years. What you do on top of the bridge can change. As long as the structure is sound it is not the bridge that is the problem but rather what you do on it.

NYSDOT wants to increase car capacity, but really that just leads to more traffic. At this point, we've raised these issues and we need to see how they are addressed in the draft environmental impact statement. One thing more car capacity could do is give you a better shot at a public private partnership because anyone who wants to put money into the bridge, or buy it, wants cars and trucks and not mass transit.

SV: We'd actually like to reduce capacity for single occupancy vehicle traffic on the bridge and not expand it at all. We're opposed to adding a climbing lane to Rockland County. In my experience, climbing lanes just get more traffic and bottlenecks. It's true, there's quite an incline there. The problem is that everybody uses the lane when it is congested, then the trucks can't merge back. Everybody stops and you're back in congestion. By and large more lanes are not going to help. I just don't think the climbing lanes or extra capacity are worth much. But coming back to your

(Continued on page 11)

Andrew Spano serves as Westchester County Executive. Elected to this position three times by wide margins, he has initiated dozens of programs to improve the quality of life in Westchester, including those that protect the environment, encourage affordable housing, combat domestic violence and enhance the security and safety of all county residents.

A protector of the environment, Mr. Spano has preserved 2,000 acres of open space from Yonkers to Yorktown and instituted programs to safeguard water quality. He tripled, to \$30 million, the County's New Homes Land Acquisition Fund, which helped builders of affordable housing overcome the high cost of land. As past president of the County Executives of America and as past co-chairman of the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, Mr. Spano has used his influence to make changes in state and national policy. Throughout his tenure, he has brought Westchester into the national spotlight, with cutting edge programs such as Westchester's Airport's Environmental Management System, which in 2004 was among only three airports nationwide to be certified to the ISO14001 standard.

Mr. Spano has received numerous awards in the areas of human rights, education, government, and labor, including the 2000 League of Conservation Voters award.

C. Scott Vanderhoef, an environmental attorney, is now serving a fourth term as County Executive of Rockland County. He has remained true to his campaign promises that government should be run like a business, by creating a streamlined, efficient and cost-effective government. Under his leadership, one-third of all County departments were consolidated or eliminated. County property taxes are now 8.30 percent lower than when Vanderhoef took office.

Throughout his administration, Vanderhoef has advocated for more reasoned and thoughtful land-use planning. He commissioned the first new comprehensive master plan in over 25 years. Under his direction, the Office of Community Development has built and rehabilitated more than 1,600 units of affordable housing and supported revitalization efforts for the county's downtowns. He has also helped secure new trains, express service, enhanced transportation stations and parking for Rockland commuters. Vanderhoef has created the County's first-ever Open Space Preservation Program, leading to the creation of five new parks, the preservation of two farms and the addition of 632 acres of parkland.

Besides these accomplishments, he has served as president of the New York State Association of County Executives in 2003 and currently serves on the National Association of Counties' Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs Steering Committee.

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

THE SIX IMMEDIATE TRANSPORTATION CHALLENGES FOR THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

BY FRANCIS X. McCARDLE

In its first year, the Obama administration faces a series of challenges in transportation policy, spending and finance. These challenges are both immediate and short term, and ones that have long term implications for the vision of his administration for national transportation policy and its direction. I want to talk about my top six.

1. The first challenge to the Obama administration: Integrating transportation capital spending into its plans for an economic stimulus. Deciding that the nation needs a substantial and sustained economic stimulus through the injection of government funds, the President has promised to create at least two and a half million jobs in two years and has announced that he intends to invest in infrastructure the largest amount of federal capital spending in 50 years.

Transportation capital investment opportunities abound. Projects were postponed over the last two years as inflation in construction prices reduced the buying power of federal and state dollars at the bid openings. An opportunity is presented to buy back, so to speak, those effects of construction inflation through the stimulus package, an 'extra check' sent off to state Departments of Transportation to buy down their backlog. And there are opportunities in every community to create low-design-content investments in high-employment projects such as sidewalk creation and repair, small parks development, and bus shelters. But, as we have learned from the Japanese, just building transportation projects as a form of economic stimulus is not enough. If we do not choose wisely what we decide to build we will waste both capital and human/contractor resources.

"The stimulus package, however large, cannot substitute for a major effort in reauthorization and a new direction for federal transportation policy."

The first challenge for the Obama administration in transportation will be the choice of projects to fund in its stimulus package. Not every project has virtue in its community. Not every project will create the underpinnings for long term growth. The low-design content/high employment projects have the virtue of getting paychecks in the hands of workers the quickest and can contribute substantially to the quality of life in communities, but the projects do not create as much long term economic value or underpinning.

Buying down the backlog moves ready-to-go projects to the fore, and their employment impact is longer term. However, many of the projects that are in the backlog are projects with complications. The Obama administration will have to lay down clear criteria for choices.

If it will be hard for the Obama administration and the new Congress to take up the challenges of new funding for transportation (what I have identified as the third challenge), it is imperative that we look at the stimulus package as the last big block of new funding that we are going to get for the next decade and invest it accordingly. Not every ready-to-go project should be a high priority if resources are to be constrained for the long term.

2. The second challenge: Refilling the design queue. The stimulus package, however large, cannot substitute for a major effort in reauthorization and a new direction for federal transportation policy. The legislative agenda begins formally with the expiration of the existing legislation on September 30, 2009. The stimulus package, while it may reduce the pressure on the immediate project construction funding issues, accelerates the timing of decisions on the long term agenda, guiding the refilling of the design queue emptied through stimulus investments.

The next reauthorization is about many things. But it will be primarily about what we allow to be designed as future projects and the circumstances of their choice.

The Obama administration has to quickly tell all of us how it wants to see the design queue refilled. If we simply focus on doing as before and do nothing else, we will get a message. But this will not be change, in transportation policy, that we can believe in. The policies in transportation that would seem to be best fitted to the Obama administration's message will be those that integrate efforts to limit climate change, reduce our dependence on petroleum based fuels and improve the productivity of the national economy. For example, states with major port complexes must be encouraged to invest in alternative fuel infrastructures, fleets and facilities to reduce carbon emissions and to eliminate the current sources of truck gridlock and bottlenecks that limit the growth potential of port throughput. Mass transit systems must be encouraged to eliminate existing system bottlenecks as well as to invest in new routes. And in every case the land-use paradigms that encourage choice, lower fuel

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uses and minimize trip creation have to be at the center of the decision process.

The Obama team will have its first opportunity to send us its message in the stimulus package that it chooses to advance. While it may be tempted to just fund what is on the shelf and ready to go, it would be just reinforcing the old ways if it did so.

3. The third challenge: Funding transportation going forward. The amount of federal funding for the design queue will depend on what we do about the highway trust fund. Do we increase the revenues into the fund or do we just allow the fund buying power to wind down? If we do choose to grow the revenues into the trust fund, do we continue our traditional reliance on fuel-based user fees or move beyond fuel-based user fees to some other form of charging? Do we now start charging for the trip, as we do in mass transit or airline use? How do we balance the need to support current system usage and rehabilitation and the need to create new infrastructure to underpin future population growth and economic development? What gets said in this area will be a key statement about the relevance of transportation investment to the Obama administration's view of America's economic future. Will his administration allow future population and economic growth to flow anywhere or will they insist that population growth be preceded by effective investment in supporting infrastructure?

The highway trust fund, which has been the source of most federal funding for four decades, is now both broke and broken. It is broke because there is not enough income to go forward and meet the needs of the system. A continued federal program requires at least that the buying power of the fund be maintained. The trust fund is broken because it is not structured to adapt to changing user habits, whether alternative fuels, more use of mass transit, or new patterns of transportation demand, from walking to transit-oriented development, that put new and different use burdens on the system that are not now properly priced.

To say nothing and to do nothing is a signal in itself. If the highway trust fund is not to have new revenues, we are effectively shutting down the system of federal leadership in transportation over the next decade. If the debate continues as a debate between donors and donees, then the federal program will be lost even sooner, because the donor states know that sending their dollars through the federal gas tax mechanism to Washington ends up costing both time and treasure before they get them back.

4. The fourth challenge: Defining our transportation energy future. American transportation today is 97 percent dependent on petroleum for fuel, using 67 percent of the petroleum consumed in the United States, or 20 percent of the world's petroleum production. This takes place in a world of peak oil, where the cost of finding and extracting the next barrel of oil is much more costly than the barrel that we just used. Every additional barrel of oil used in transportation comes from imports, mostly from nations that are not long term allies. Moreover, transportation produces 33 percent of the carbon usage in the United States.

Whether one believes that changes are needed in the transportation sector to deal with global warming or energy availability or energy independence, it will be the task of the Obama administration to set out its vision of how we move forward, and in what steps and increments.

There is more here than just using a new fuel source. The fuel must be produced in the context of a carbon constrained world. The infrastructure needed to support the chosen fuel or fuels must be readied. If electricity is chosen, the national and regional grids must be strengthened and local recharging options created. If compressed natural gas has a role, then there will have to be new infrastructure created for local distribution and availability.

This new critical infrastructure has to be in place in tandem with the adoption of the new fuel or fuels by new vehicle manufacturers or converters. At the same time, the existing infrastructure systems have to be maintained for legacy vehicles. All of these costs will have to be captured and incorporated into the user charging systems.

As with many challenges, time will not be on the side of the Obama administration. While we enjoy a temporary fuel cost respite (as the worldwide economic downturn suppresses the global demand for oil and increases the needs of some producer countries for current revenues at any cost), we have to recognize that an economic recovery with the same fuel uses will just drive up costs again and impoverish our citizens.

Transportation energy investments have another virtue during this time of economic uncertainty. They can create jobs for workers and mechanics being displaced from our factories. Few of the people who have lost their manufacturing jobs in the last year are trained or suited

Letter from the Editor (Cont. from p. 1)

it. They explore a variety of its characteristics and offer thoughts and options for policies and approaches within the context it sets.

Frank McArdle, who served on the National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission, presents his ideas on the transportation imperatives he sees for the incoming administration of President Barack Obama. Martin Robbins offers his thoughts on transportation policy and planning options to be considered in the legislative process as the current Federal legislation which authorizes spending for transportation improvements nationally expires and new legislation is developed.

While John Nolon and Jennie Nolon offer their perspective on the implications of expected growth in population and travel on future land use and transportation, Suzanne Seegmiller looks at emerging travel trends related both to this growth and to the economic, energy and environmental developments that are dominating our policy discussions.

In our region, planned improvements in the Interstate 287 corridor in the lower Hudson Valley promise far reaching change in that area's transportation system. In this issue's interview by Rachel Weinberger, Rockland County Executive C. Scott Vanderhoef and Westchester County Executive Andrew Spano provide their thoughts on these improvements, the changes they will bring and the outlook for growth in the northern suburbs.

Together, our contributors provide a snapshot of some of the aspects of change that we face as the first decade of the 21st Century draws to a close and a new federal administration starts. They also offer information and ideas for how we can understand, respond to and shape that change going forward.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Journal*.



(Continued on page 15)

BEYOND THE REGION

FEDERAL-MULTISTATE PLANNING PARTNERSHIPS: A NEW TRANSPORTATION APPROACH

BY MARTIN E. ROBINS

Now that the Interstate highway system has been long completed, a challenging question repeatedly asked over the past two decades is, "What should be the federal government's transportation mission?" Conservatives have argued that the best thing to do would be to "devolve" federal transportation funding programs by sending federal fuel tax revenues to the states and letting them individually decide how the money is used. The virus of congressional earmarking further lowered expectations of a strong federal role. The report of the July 2007 National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission (the "National Commission"), however, rejects the devolution approach. It acknowledges that the nation's transportation system must keep evolving, as have our economy and settlement patterns, for our nation to stay competitive in the global economy and for our transportation network to continue to respond to the travel needs of its businesses and citizens.

The nascent change-oriented administration of President Barack Obama, working through his Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, has the opportunity to establish new transportation paradigms for the federal government. For example, the Regional Plan Association's (RPA) America 2050 Report, quoted approvingly by the National Commission, perceptively observed that "increasingly, investments and interventions must occur at the megaregional scale, which provides the necessary breadth of resources to grow and compete globally." Consequently, America 2050 has proposed a federal initiative, "Competitive Corridors and Gateways," which RPA describes as "[a] research driven multi-modal national study [that] could determine pressing national needs to facilitate global trade, intercity passenger movement and metropolitan and megaregion accessibility."

A New Federal Approach to Transportation

Recognizing that our economy is spatially organized in megaregions and supply chains stretching over many states, the Obama administration should adopt an alternative paradigm in approaching federal transportation policy planning — the promotion and financing of robust multistate partnerships to tackle significant projects of the types outlined by the National Commission and America 2050. Funding incentives, in particular, can influence behavior of intended recipients. In at least five modal or functional areas, such partnerships, underwritten by the federal government, offer promise, including in aviation congestion relief, intercity rail development, surface freight movement, short sea shipping and interstate highway operations. In its "Corridors of the Future" program dealing with interstate highway operations, the federal government has already launched a

similar multistate approach. A broader federal initiative that applied the multistate partnership approach to all of modal/functional areas previously mentioned could benefit our tri-state metropolitan area as well as the nation as a whole.

"Recognizing that our economy is spatially organized in megaregions and supply chains stretching over many states, the Obama administration should adopt an alternative paradigm in approaching federal transportation policy planning — the promotion and financing of robust multistate partnerships...."

The National Commission recognized that, when the federal government attempts to address intermodal issues such as metropolitan mobility and goods movement, the rigid modal structure of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), organized as it is around specific transportation modes, acts as an impediment. The Commission, therefore, recommended a dramatic departmental restructuring. Additionally, the Commission's recognition of the significant role that intercity passenger rail could play in megaregional mobility has suggested that USDOT should strengthen its planning and policy control over quasi-independent Amtrak, more resembling the relationship that existed in the 1970s when USDOT conceived and executed the successful Northeast Corridor Improvement Program.

One way to raise the profile of this new federal planning and project development approach through multistate partnerships is for the U.S. Transportation Secretary to organize a new unit within his office that either initiates these arrangements, especially when the partnerships involve more than one transportation mode, or monitors their functioning within USDOT's various units. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 set just such a precedent by establishing an Office of Intermodalism within USDOT that reported directly to the Secretary. In an economic geography

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marked by megaregions and multistate supply chains, that federal organizational precedent should be adapted to the promotion of multistate partnerships for the planning and implementation of projects.

The Northeast megaregion is well positioned to respond to such a new paradigm. Its I-95 Corridor Coalition, whose membership now runs from Maine to Florida, was formed in the 1990s in response to the advent of E-ZPass toll technology and the need for its uniform application to the corridor's toll roads. Recently, the I-95 corridor has been selected by FHWA as a "Corridor of the Future" to develop multimodal transportation improvements. The USDOT's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) describes the undertaking as "using a comprehensive approach across state boundaries to bring real-time traffic information, expedited incident clearance procedures, and integrated intercity transit service that will reduce congestion and improve mobility along this critical corridor." In addition, the I-95 Corridor Coalition's agenda has broadened to include rail freight improvements for the Mid-Atlantic states, coastal shipping and intermodal customer information for Amtrak Northeast Corridor riders.

Recent Experience

The idea of federally-initiated multistate partnerships is not novel. Recent programmatic attempts at such partnerships include the National Corridor Planning and Development and Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program enacted in 1998 as part of the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). Some of the successes of this program were the coordinated rail freight/highway grade separations in the Los Angeles area's Alameda Corridor East (ACE) and port access roads and grade separations in the Seattle region's Freight Action Strategies Corridor (FAST). However, after a promising beginning, the program soon became dominated entirely in legislated funding earmarks and was not continued in TEA-21's successor legislation, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

A more recent multistate initiative by the USDOT, arising from former Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta's concern about interstate highway congestion, is the competitive "Corridors of the Future" program designed to develop innovative national

and regional approaches to reduce congestion and improve the efficiency of freight delivery. This existing federal approach toward multistate partnerships should be nurtured and expanded by the new administration.

A current multistate initiative, with earmarked federal financial support from SAFETEA-LU is the Heartland Corridor Project, involving the states of Virginia, West Virginia and Ohio and the Norfolk Southern Railway. The primary focus of this public-private, multistate initiative is on improving the movement of freight by rail from the Norfolk, Virginia marine terminals on the Atlantic Coast inland to Midwest markets and from manufacturers in the Midwest back to Norfolk. Priced at \$309 million, this federally-funded multistate project involves creating more efficient routings, multiple tunnel clearance projects to permit movement of efficient double-stack containers and a variety of intermodal terminal improvements.

Areas for Experimentation

One of the most challenging areas for multistate collaboration is devising alternative modal solutions for certain intercity air trips to address the issue of aviation congestion in the major metropolitan markets. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has determined that the air travel markets between New York City and Washington D.C. and within Southern California are particularly plagued by flight delays, with too many planes for the air traffic control system and airport facilities to handle. The emergence of regional commuter jets have spurred increased air service to short distance destinations, which contributes to this congestion. The FAA has postulated that upgrading or reintroducing intercity rail passenger or intercity bus service could divert short distance air trips and, consequently, reduce aviation system overload. In this regard, federal attention should be directed to the Northeast Corridor (for example between New York City and Philadelphia or Washington D.C.), where the respective services provided by short-distance air and intercity-rail target similar markets.

At the FAA's initiative, an Airport Cooperative Research Program study has been launched to examine this issue. The study has illuminated the reality that the

UPDATE ON THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BILL

Recalling that SAFETEA-LU was signed into law 22 months late, many are concerned that the next transportation legislation would be delayed by months. Furthermore, the US Department of Transportation, which has primary responsibilities for this bill, already has a full agenda for this year. It includes setting priorities for funding on "ready-to-go" projects; developing a strategy to deal with many transit agencies at risk of defaulting on loans;¹ and, tackling the FAA authorization bill, expiring in March 2009.

Moreover, the authorization process may be long as it involves the input of multiple stakeholders, with the US Congress as a major player. The US House of Representatives' Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, chaired by Congressman James Oberstar, has already held numerous hearings and completed some work in advance of deliberations, which are expected to start late this spring or early summer.² This committee will call for a major revamp in investment, and highway, transit and safety programs. A bill of up to \$500 billion over six years is expected.³

The Senate has yet to announce when it would start deliberations. Its legislative process requires coordination among several committees, including the Environment and Public Works Committee, with responsibility for highway, intermodal, safety and congestion programs,⁴ among others; the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, dealing with safety and trucking programs; and the Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee, tackling transit programs. In addition, the Finance Committee in the Senate and the Ways and Means Committee in the House will write the main tax portion of this legislation.⁵ The involvement of other stakeholders – from officials at various government levels, to transit, transportation and planning agencies, to industries, labor and advocates – is also needed to ensure a balance bill.

Fortunately, work by two Commissions established under SAFETEA-LU, will facilitate the authorization process, especially their reports on revenue sources, financing and program reform. However long this process ends up being, it offers an opportunity to set a new transportation strategy that should not be missed.

1. Kenneth Orski: The Transportation Agenda of the Obama Administration; Planetizen, 11/17/08. www.planetizen.com/node/36087

2. Webinar: Reinvesting in America's Transportation System: Challenges and Opportunities for the 2009 Federal Surface Transportation Authorization; 1/21/09. www.fccma.org/coaching/PDF/FloridaWebinartalkingpoints.doc

3. Ibid.

4. Statement of Senator Boxer: Transportation Field Briefing in Sacramento, CA, 9/3/08, Press Release <http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=PressRoom.PressReleases&ContentRecordId=2A10AD57-802A-23AD-448B-ZEF6E9583735>.

5. Webinar, op. cit.

(Continued on page 14)

TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE

ENHANCED TOD: CONNECTING TRANSPORTATION AND LAND USE PLANNING

BY JOHN R. NOLON AND JENNIE C. NOLON

This article addresses several enduring questions asked about land use and transportation planning.

Why has it been so hard to coordinate land use and transportation planning? Although there are some inspired examples of coordination between these two critical fields of planning, they have operated in separate spheres since the early days of the 20th Century. Land use planning is a

This serendipitous mosaic of laws arranges people (and their cars) in expansive development patterns, greatly increasing the number of vehicle trips and vehicle miles travelled. A relatively small percentage of the regional population lives within walking distance of a transit station. Planning for station areas has only recently become an important aspect of land use planning and only in a relatively few communities. The comprehensive land use plan is responsible for more than transportation planning. Its focus includes public buildings, water and sewer service, residential development, including affordable housing, commercial and industrial development, environmental protection, preservation of agricultural lands, archeological resources, historic preservation, and more.

Local planning is fundamentally political. Local taxpayers and property owners elect local legislators who adopt comprehensive plans and zoning laws, and who appoint local volunteers to serve on planning boards, which approve applications to build residential and non-residential projects. The equation is simple: land use law determines what is built on the land, which in turn affects local taxes, property values, and the quality of community life. Anything that threatens local control over these fundamental community concerns is rejected. The myth of local home rule justifies these exclusionary impulses.

Transportation law, much of which is federal, tries hard not to invade this local domain. The Tenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution reserves the power to control land use to the states: land use control is not a federal prerogative. Since all politics is local, no effort that usurps local home rule will succeed, unless carefully camouflaged as an incentive or general policy. State legislatures grant local land use power and can take it away, but politics is local in Albany as well and throughout the country attempts to arrogate land use planning to preemptive regional or state-wide agencies



Photograph of Bloomington Central Station; provided by Oslund and Associates. Available online at: http://www.oaala.com/projects/BloomingtonStn/Bloomington_Station.htm

local prerogative. Across the country, 40,000 local governments have been delegated the power to adopt comprehensive land use plans and zoning laws that conform to them. The relevant jurisdiction is the municipality: generally planning stops at the local border. In the lower Hudson Valley region, there are 256 cities, towns, and villages and nearly that many comprehensive plans (many of which are out-of-date) and zoning ordinances, which ascribe some permitted land use to every privately owned acre of land in the community.

John R. Nolon and Jennie C. Nolon are Counsel and Staff Attorney, respectively, at the Land Use Law Center of Pace University School of Law.

have failed, with modest exceptions. Well-meaning efforts to use transportation funding to influence local land use planning are seldom attempted, again to avoid disturbing local tranquility. Meanwhile transportation planning deals at the metropolitan and state levels,

"...With the U.S. Census Bureau predicting 100 million additional people in the country by 2043, things have to change. The Urban Land Institute estimates that this new population... will cause the private sector to build 70 million more homes ... "

with capital plans focused on maintaining and building an integrated network of roads. While area-wide in scope, transportation planning can be as myopic as land use planning, focusing on the road and its relevant intersections or the transit station and its adjacent parking.

It is not surprising that most transportation and land use planners don't show up at the same conferences, belong to the same professional organizations, or speak similar languages.

Has anything changed? Is there hope for connectivity? Yes. With the U.S. Census Bureau predicting 100 million additional people in the country by 2043, things have to change. The Urban Land Institute estimates that this new population, plus the projected obsolescence of existing buildings, will cause the private sector to build 70 million more homes and 100 billion square feet of additional non-residential buildings. It matters very much where this new development goes on the landscape. Seventy percent of domestically generated carbon dioxide, the prime culprit in climate change, comes from transportation and buildings. In the past decade, 60 percent of households chose to live in single-family neighborhoods. If 60 percent of the additional 100 million people chose the same option, 40 million more households will be spread across the landscape. They will take 10-to-15 vehicle trips per day and drive longer and longer distances to work, school, shopping, recreation, and

services. Their buildings will consume large amounts of building products and fuel for transportation of those products during construction, use excessive amounts of energy for heating and cooling, and cause a number of environmental impacts we can no longer afford: increased storm water run-off, flooding, erosion and sedimentation, and water shortages at a time when fully 26 states have declared water shortages.

To the satisfaction of all but a few, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in reports issued just over a year ago, has declared that climate change is real, that our actions significantly exacerbate it, and that its consequences will be profound. How we develop our land to accommodate this additional 100 million people depends largely upon how municipalities plan now for increased development within their land use regulations. Compact, transit oriented development (TOD) – a mix of housing and business in dense patterns with walkable neighborhoods and available public transit – is a critical tool in reducing house size and automobile dependence. How we will live and transport ourselves and the next 100 million people is therefore inextricably connected to climate change.

There is hope for connectivity. Urban living is becoming more desirable in the marketplace as our preference for suburban living wanes. This change is a result of not only a desire among present-day Americans to live in a lively, walkable, community environment, but also a changing American demographic: the next 100 million will include more young, single, senior, and immigrant households than ever before – all oriented toward urban living.

What is enhanced TOD and why is it important? TOD is often thought of as a medium to high density, mixed-use development within a walkable distance of transit stations. But mere density and proximity to transit may not be sufficient in many communities to reduce automobile reliance and create a pedestrian-oriented environment. "Enhanced TOD" goes beyond density and proximity. It ensures, through local land use regulation and incentives, that transit oriented neighborhoods are sustainable because they are walkable, well designed, energy efficient, and create a sense of place that encourages community interaction. Evidence explored in the next section of

(Continued on page 10)

NEW DIRECTOR APPOINTED TO THE RUDIN CENTER

New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service is pleased to announce the appointment of Anthony E. Shorris as the new director of the Rudin Center for Transportation Policy and Management and as Professor of Practice at the Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. The previous director of the Center, Dr. Allison L. C. de Cerreño stepped down from this position on January 31, 2009.

Mr. Shorris most recently served as Executive Director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the nation's oldest public authority responsible for the region's five airports, three container ports, six bridges and tunnels connecting two states, the PATH transit system, and the World Trade Center. Prior to that post, he was a faculty member at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University and the director of the Policy Research Institute for the Region. Previously, he served as Deputy Chancellor for Operations and Policy at the New York City Board of Education, and has more than 30 years of experience in public and non-profit management, including serving as New York City's Commissioner of Finance under former Mayor Edward Koch.

At Wagner, in addition to his teaching and directing the Rudin Center, he will be exploring how the Center can join forces with other research entities within NYU to address contemporary infrastructure-related policy and management issues.

Mr. Shorris is a Fellow at The Century Foundation in New York. He holds an A.B. from Harvard College and a Master's degree in Public Affairs from Princeton University.

Enhanced TOD.. (Cont. from page 9)

this article shows that local governments are adopting a variety of new land use laws and programs that create enhanced TOD in a variety of ways. They are responding, in our view, to a societal imperative. We understand intuitively that a new development pattern is necessary to avoid the impending catastrophes of climate change: flooding, land erosion and subsidence, worsening natural disasters, droughts, global warming, habitat shifts, and species elimination, among others.

Enhanced TOD can mitigate the causes of climate change dramatically. It is one of the most effective mitigation strategies that is available using current technology – all of it available to land use and transportation planners, if they work together. According to the Urban Land Institute's Growing Cooler report: "much of the rise in vehicle emissions can be curbed simply by growing in a way that will make it easier for Americans to drive less. In fact, the weight of the evidence shows that, with more compact development, people drive 20 to 40 percent less, at minimum or reduced cost, while reaping other fiscal and health benefits."

Compact development, as defined in the Growing Cooler report "does not imply high-rise or even uniformly high density development... that will result in the 'Manhattanization' of America." It refers to development at about 12-to-14 dwelling units per acre, which is 75 percent above the 2003 national average density for all housing development. The report concludes that "shifting 60 percent of new growth to compact patterns would save 85 million metric tons of CO₂ annually by 2030." This shift is aimed at abating the alarming increase in driving caused by the dominant single-family growth pattern, which, if continued, will increase driving by 59 percent by 2030 while the population increases by 23 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Energy's forecasts.

The concept of "lock-in" – often used in environmental policy discussions – applies here: if our communities begin to build in a compact, dense, transit-oriented pattern, they will lock-in certain levels of efficiency and savings for generations to come. If it were possible to shift half of the additional eight million households nationally from single-family settlements to higher density urban development – the type associated with transit oriented development – the positive effect on the environment and climate change would be dramatic. Using a variety of data, the following annual results accompany shifting to Enhanced TOD developments:

- 150 million fewer metric tons of CO₂ emissions
- 74 billion fewer cubic feet of stormwater
- 33 billion fewer square feet of impervious coverage
- 100 billion gallons of potable water consumed

Undoubtedly, this type of shift in our settled patterns of development requires a new integrated model of land use and transportation planning – one that engenders a different set of local zoning and planning decisions.

How is it accomplished? Lessons from the field. Local governments across the country are taking part in the creation

of this enhanced model. Through their programs, policies, and regulations, these governments are beginning to foster mixed-use, higher-density communities with smaller average housing sizes resulting in fewer vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled. They are beginning to incorporate green site and building standards that themselves lessen the impact of development on climate change.

In Bloomington, Minnesota, for example, the City Code provides for an "HX-R"(high intensity mixed use with residential) district, which is aimed at reducing car dependency by embracing TOD. It attempts to reduce vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled by maximizing high-intensity development in close proximity to transit, making transit stations the focal points of development, and creating a walkable, bikeable environment. Bloomington's zoning ordinance prohibits drive-through uses; provides a minimum density of 30 dwelling units per acre of gross site area for residential development; and also sets a minimum floor area ratio (FAR) of 1.5 and a maximum of 2. Building flexibility and incentives into the regulation, the ordinance allows an increase in maximum FAR through bonuses for retail and service uses, below grade parking, development of plazas or parks, affordable housing, public art, and sustainable design. Parking is restricted in order to promote walking, biking, and transit use, and must be located below grade, within structured ramps, or in individual on-street spaces parallel with and adjacent to low volume streets. Bicycle parking facilities commensurate with anticipated demand must be provided near building entrances and development sites that contain

"... 'shifting 60 percent of new growth to compact patterns would save 85 million metric tons of CO₂ annually by 2030.' This shift is aimed at abating the alarming increase in driving caused by the dominant single-family growth pattern, which, if continued, will increase driving by 59 percent by 2030 while the population increases by 23 percent..."

a transit station must provide sidewalk and bikeway connections between the transit station and on-site buildings as well as to adjacent sites.

In addition to Bloomington, many communities are using incentive-based zoning models (instead of the more frequent command-and-control approach) to create development that is transit oriented, to provide developers the flexibility to make a project work, and to proactively attract the type of development and amenities that are needed. A bonus system or other incentive model can be created to reflect a community's priorities – like public art, affordable housing, and sustainable design, under the Bloomington ordinance. A review of the policies and regulations creating enhanced

TOD from communities across the country reveals some common elements:

- Residential development required in conjunction with office development – creating a simultaneous flow of commuters into and out of a transit area
- A streamlined approval process for developments meeting certain requirements
- Defined transit areas: typically concentrating new development within a quarter mile (the classic walkable distance) of a transit station or town center
- Density bonuses to encourage development that is consistent with specific guidelines
- Increased densities and building heights near transit stations, and decreased setbacks
- As-of-right status given for developments consistent with TOD regulations
- Prohibitions on land uses that do not generate transit ridership and require access primarily by car
- Prohibitions on drive-through uses (to discourage automobile dependence)
- Transportation impact fees
- Restrictions on development of cul-de-sacs and roads with a single point of access
- Aggressive reductions in parking requirements, especially for multi-family apartments
- Requirements for sidewalk and bike-way connections to transit stations and for bicycle parking near building entrances
- Requirements for mixed-use development
- Streetscape design / walkability standards

Policies and zoning regulations that employ a range of these techniques not only create sustainable communities because they are better for the environment (increasing energy efficiency, reducing cumulative stormwater runoff, reducing impervious coverage, etc.) but also because they create the kind of aesthetically pleasing, lively, pedestrian-oriented environments that encourage people to get out of their cars and to remain committed to a neighborhood, generation after generation. ♦

Interview (Cont. from page 3)

question, you can't do this project by just building eight lanes and expect that congestion will be relieved. There has to be mass transportation on it. Otherwise, at some point, you're going to be right back where you are now and no difference will have been made.

RW: What else do we need to think about?

SV: I have asked NYSDOT: "once you open up with eight lanes and use BRT on both sides, how long it would take before you're actually back to congestion – because of population growth or use?" That's why it's so important that we don't frame this as a road project but rather as a commuter rail/road project and that's different. We have to think differently about all of it. This is a major infrastructure improvement for mass transportation to move people in and out of a congested area and give them alternatives. My fear is that government can be so slow in reacting. If you pass by the opportunity to fund and build a commuter rail, my concern is that you'll never build it and you will just talk about it forever. But the highway component will not work alone. You cannot do just one or the other and relieve the congestion and deal with the issues of the environment, economic development or land use. You've got to contemplate them together and that's what's going to be the challenge. That's the big problem going forward, other than the much larger question of funding.

The funding question must be viewed in light of the economic stimulus that will be created. We're not just throwing money at a project, we're genuinely investing in a major, national transportation upgrade that will create a return on the dollars spent in economic development and jobs creation.

AS: The real key here is to decrease traffic, especially the number of people who have to travel long distances. People have to work closer to their homes and not have to travel in five days a week. One of my problems with current transportation planning is that it does not include technology considerations, such as virtual transportation and working at home. We need to look at that more closely or we are in danger of putting money into and old paradigm.

And finally, there are times like this when there are tremendous problems but they also offer incredible opportunities to make changes in a way that could have a big effect. Right now, since we don't have a lot of money and we are in an economic crisis, the creativity that we can apply to some of these problems is much greater and we should be doing that. ♦

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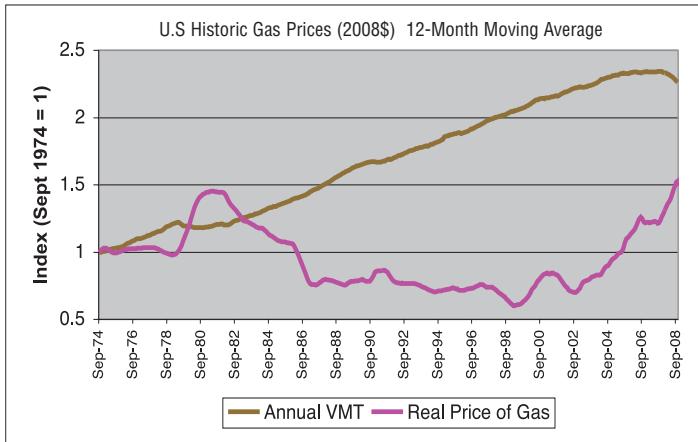
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Take my Automobile, Please... (Cont. from page 16)

Figure 2 shows real gas prices indexed compared with the overall VMT trend.

Figure 2: Real Gas Prices vs. VMT, 1973-2008



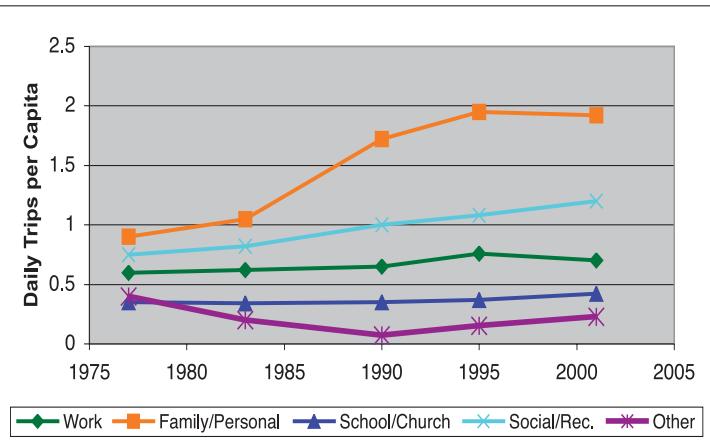
Source: FHWA, EIA

Figure 2 displays little overall correlation between historical gas prices and the VMT trend. But it appears that when the real price reaches a certain threshold (about \$3 in today's dollars) as it did in 1980 and 2008, the VMT trend flattens and begins to decline. The unprecedented spike in gas prices over the past six years has made people today more aware of gas prices, the fuel efficiency of their vehicles, and the possibility of changing their driving behavior to compensate. The automobile industry is now responding to higher gas prices and consumer demand by manufacturing more fuel-efficient vehicles (new fuel efficiency standards for light trucks were instituted by Congress in 2007) and offering alternative fuel options. Increased fuel efficiency and the use of alternative fuels, however, has the unfortunate effect of reducing gas tax revenue.

Internet

Another factor that has likely contributed to the large reduction in discretionary trips – and has also made it

Figure 3: Trips per Capita by Purpose, 1977- 2001



Source: *Commuting in America III*, Transportation Research Board

easier to work from home – is the advent and availability of high-speed internet service.

While travel to work is usually a necessity, many other types of trips are discretionary. In terms of each trip purposes' share of total VMT, the United States Department of Transportation's 2001 National Household Travel Survey found that 27 percent of vehicle miles are traveled on trips to and from work, followed by other family/personal business (18.7 percent), shopping (14.5 percent) and other social/recreational (13.2 percent). Alan Pisarski's *Commuting in America III* study found that work travel in 2001 constituted only about 16% of trips but, as Figure 3 shows, this relatively small proportion is attributable to the dramatic growth in other trip purposes rather than to diminished work travel. While data for more recent years is not available, evidence suggests that it is these discretionary trips that have been substantially reduced over the past several years. There has not been enough of an increase in transit, carpooling, or working from home to suggest that work trips per capita have decreased by any significant amount, therefore it can only be concluded that trips for discretionary purposes – personal, social, shopping, etc. – decreased considerably, perhaps to pre-1990 levels.

The growth of the Internet over the past ten years has resulted in a new, all-encompassing resource used by many people as their primary source of information, for communication and as a medium for the purchase of goods and services. Through the Internet, people can complete errands, do social networking, and find entertainment without ever leaving their homes. In theory, the availability of the Internet makes a number of discretionary vehicle trips unnecessary.

The proportion of U.S. households with broadband Internet increased from less than 5% in 2000 to more than 50% in 2007. According to Nielsen Online, Americans now spend an average of nearly 33 hours per month on the Internet – more than seven hours per week.

A study completed in 2000 by the Stanford Institute for the Quantitative Study of Society (SIQSS) included a survey of more than 4,000 adults nationwide to determine how the Internet has affected society. The study revealed that of regular Internet users who spend five or more hours a week online, 25 percent reported spending less time shopping in stores and 14 percent reported spending less time commuting in traffic. While making some tasks more convenient, the Internet has also made it less necessary to leave home to accomplish discretionary tasks.

Age of Population

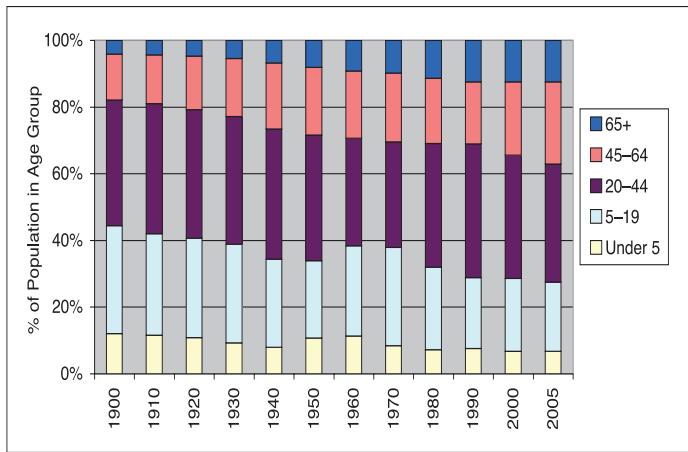
Shifts in the age of the U.S. population are also likely contributing to the recent VMT phenomenon. The post-World War II Baby Boom caused a spike in birth rates between 1946 and 1964. Since then, birth rates have generally been

Suzanne Seegmuller is a Consultant for Jacobs Engineering. She has seventeen years of experience in Traffic and Revenue Forecasting.

declining. The age group that produces the most VMT — those 20 to 44 years of age — has seen a reduction in its share of the population since 1990, as shown in Figure 4. Meanwhile, the 45 to 64 and 65 and over age groups, who drive less and less each year, have grown proportionally. The oldest of the Baby Boomers have already begun to retire from their jobs, as they turned age 62 in the year 2008.

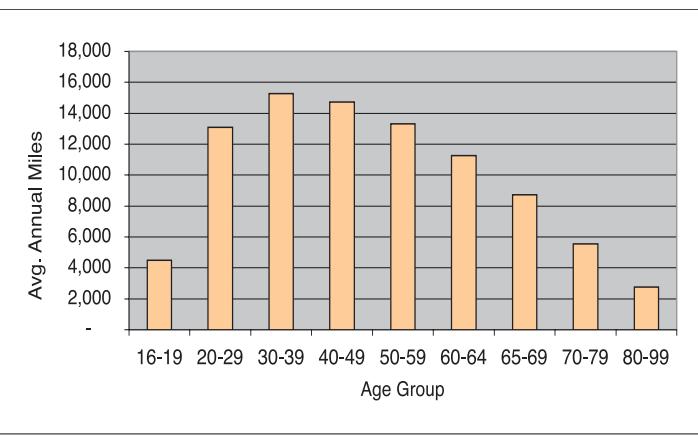
Figure 5 shows how the aging of the population is contributing to the decline in VMT, since older people drive fewer miles

Figure 4: US Historic Age Distribution



Source: US Census

Figure 5: Average VMT Driven per Person by Age Range



Source: 2001 National Household Travel Survey, U.S. DOT

annually. The 30 to 39 age group had the highest annual VMT per person, and the youngest of the Baby Boomers are now age 44. While population is still growing, and there will continue to be more and more eligible drivers each year, the high percentage of older drivers in the coming years is expected to contribute to flattening the VMT trend from its previous level of growth.

What Does This Mean for the Future of Road Travel and Funding?

Since July 2008, gas prices have begun a steady, yet unexpected, decline. The effects of this development on the VMT trend remain to be seen. It is also unclear what the impact will be of doing errands, socializing, and other activities online versus leaving home and driving. Online retail sales are seven times what they were in 1999, with no indication of flattening. More and more businesses and commercial ventures are encouraging the use of the Internet to conduct business, including applying for jobs, managing accounts, and paying bills.

Consequently, we cannot assume an immediate change back to the traditional increase in road travel as a result of the recent decrease in gas prices, because the continued use of the Internet is expected to increase.

With regard to the aging of the Baby Boomer generation, while it will not reduce overall travel because population continues to grow, it will likely reduce the huge VMT growth we have seen in previous years.

The implications of these dynamics are clear. We can no longer assume that the growth in road travel — and therefore gas tax revenue generated based on the current rate — will be what it once was. At the same time, the need for roadway repairs and expansions is not likely to substantially decline, nor are the associated costs of construction. In order to compensate for the diminishing return on the

gas tax, alternative measures both private and public must be taken to ensure funding for highway repair and expansion. These may take the form of an increase in the gas tax, additional highway tolling, or other usage-based fees. ♦

UPCOMING RUDIN CENTER EVENT

Friday, March 6, 2009

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES FOR THE NEXT DECADE

This conference is co-sponsored with Princeton University's Policy Research Institute for the Region, in association with Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. The conference will explore the status of the next surface transportation bill, the potential for new sources of financing transportation infrastructure, and the ways in which the transportation community may want to — and need to — link transportation to broader policy goals and legislation in energy, health, and the environment.

This event will be held at Princeton University's campus in New Jersey. Further information about the program is available at: <http://www.princeton.edu/prior/events/conferences/transportation-infrastruc/index.xml>

COUNCIL ON TRANSPORTATION

Representing major private and nonprofit sector organizations, the Council on Transportation is a bipartisan group created by the NYU Wagner Rudin Center, committed to improving transportation in the downstate New York region.

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William Rudin
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Samuel Schwartz
Dominic Servedio
Kate Slevin
Richard Trenergy
Robert Yaro
Jeff Zupan

Federal-Multistate Partnerships... (Cont. from page 7)

federal government's transportation policy apparatus is a "no-man's land" in cases such as this, segmented by mode and quasi-autonomous organizations without established communications channels and dispute resolution mechanisms. Therefore, in order to achieve coordination, extraordinary organizational leadership and follow-through will be required to create new relationships between the Federal Aviation Administration, the Federal Railroad Administration, the private airlines and Amtrak. Moreover, the difficulty in assembling information from privately-owned airlines and Amtrak impedes the implementation of findings, even if the FAA's hypothesis proved to be true.

The absence of multistate partnerships for aviation congestion relief is reflected in the current litigation over congestion relief measures in which the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey successfully petitioned a court to enjoin the FAA from auctioning airport slots at LaGuardia Airport. Sharp disagreements about methods for dealing with long-festering intergovernmental issues, such as this one, are less likely when long-standing partnerships exist.

Freight movement is another area in need of new paradigm of federal-state collaboration. The recent report of the National Commission provides Secretary LaHood with a number of opportunities to experiment with the concept of federally-initiated multistate partnerships to plan and develop significant and complex freight projects. The report calls for the development of a National Freight Transportation Plan to address the reality that investment has not kept pace with the emergence of trade-driven supply chains and, consequently, freight movement is choked by a lack of adequate capacity and missing links. It calls upon the federal government to work with multiple states and metropolitan areas in this endeavor. Experience and the current project inventory (the Heartland Corridor project, the I-95 Corridor Coalition's Mid-Atlantic Rail

"...the Administration should seize the opportunity to define a new federal mission in transportation – to foster many variations of multistate transportation planning and project development partnerships and reorganize USDOT to perform that mission."

Operations project proposal to improve rail freight movements into and among the Mid-Atlantic states and Norfolk Southern's Crescent Corridor proposal to relieve truck congestion on the I-81 Corridor), indicates that multiple states must be involved. A federal initiative that: a) facilitates the states to organize around each of these goods movement projects, b) encourages the privately-owned railroads to participate, and c) provides continuing feedback and financial support, is ready to be tried.

A third new area that is ripe for a federally-initiated multistate partnership and collaboration with Amtrak and pri-

vately-owned railroads is the development of higher speed short-to-medium distance intercity passenger rail hub networks. The most obvious place for Secretary LaHood to try the idea of a robust federal-multistate partnership-private sector collaboration would be in planning and implementing the Chicago hub network for higher speed intercity trains serving Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Missouri, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio. These trains would radiate from Chicago to points such as Milwaukee, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Detroit, Indianapolis, and Cleveland.

The Northeast Corridor is another location where federal-multistate partnership-private sector collaboration could be tried. The I-95 Corridor Coalition "Corridor of the Future" grant is intended to develop better customer information links that would allow travelers on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor intercity service with much improved information about transit links at both ends of their trips. Strong support from USDOT will be required for this project to produce helpful and quick dividends.

The recent federal Amtrak reauthorization legislation tentatively tests the collaborative paradigm of multistate cooperation with the formation of a Northeast Corridor Infrastructure and Operations Advisory Commission. Composed of the Northeast Corridor states, USDOT and Amtrak, the Commission is charged with developing recommendations for short- and long-term capital investment needs, as well as addressing operational improvements, scheduling, dispatching, marketing and future capacity requirements. The new Administration should consider taking the reins from Amtrak in managing this advisory commission and seeking legislative change to include in its charge a review of Northeast Corridor governance arrangements, including the multistate partnership format advocated in the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center report, "Northeast Corridor Action Plan: A Call for a New Federal-State Partnership."

Finally, multistate collaboration for planning and development could be applied to coastal shipping. The Atlantic Coast is an ideal test bed, with its congestion and heavy truck usage on I-95 and less than robust rail freight traffic between the Southeast and Northeast. The National Commission looked into this possibility, and the I-95 Corridor Coalition is primed to pursue this collaboration. A federal initiative on a multistate basis for the Atlantic Coast would draw considerable interest.

Building upon this nation's federal principles which allocate responsibilities between the states and the federal government, the Obama Administration should carefully weigh the reality of today's economy, the nation's demography and its geography for how transportation planning and policy are conducted. Harnessing the nation's energy for positive change, so thwarted by a decade of rampaging federal funding earmarks and devolution thinking, the Administration should seize the opportunity to define a new federal mission in transportation – to foster many variations of multistate transportation planning and project development partnerships and reorganize USDOT to perform that mission. The results could well turn out to be stunningly rewarding and satisfying for the nation and its megaregions. ♦

The Six Immediate Transportation... (Cont. from page 5)

for infrastructure construction work. But alternative fuel retrofits and installations can provide work that is both useful to the nation and helpful to some displaced workers.

5. The fifth challenge: Keeping more Americans alive on the highways. We have to stop killing over 40,000 people a year on our highways and maiming hundreds of thousands more. Each year we kill almost as many people as died during the entire Vietnam conflict. Annually as many Americans die in highway fatalities in Illinois as died in the peak year of casualties in Iraq. If so many made a cause from the number of young Americans unnecessarily dying on battle-fields, can't we march to keep alive those who die at home?

The highway deaths cannot be just accepted as a price to pay for all the benefits that we enjoy. Most deaths and accidents are preventable, either by physical reconfigurations of our roads and highways or by a resocialization of our problem drivers. There are technology solutions, such as those that can prevent most drunk drivers from being able to drive, and there are behavior modification programs, whether directed at anger management or unnecessary risk taking, that can redirect the problem driver into positive on-road behaviors. But do we have the national will to insist on their use?

This is a question both for now and for the future if we do not deal effectively and comprehensively with the issue. If we plan to use lighter passenger vehicles as a key to higher fuel economy, which is the model in the rest of the world, then we are going to have to fully segregate our traffic streams to limit heavy/light interactions and we are going to have to root out as many of the causes of avoidable accidents as we can. Until we do, soccer moms are going to want larger and heavier vehicles to protect their families when they have to travel on the highways.

The Obama administration will also have to tackle the inconsistent federal standards for avoidable deaths. EPA has a legislative mandate on avoidable deaths from air pollution that resulted in the recent adoption of an ozone standard that would reduce annual deaths by 1100 at a cost of \$8.8 billion dollars per year. We have no comparable standard for highway deaths and we do not require the spending of comparable amounts on highway safety to avoid the deaths we could. We must treat highway deaths as just as preventable as those from avoided air pollution.

6. The sixth challenge: Reconfiguring federal planning and project review processes to match the pace of private capital investment. Federal good intentions for community involvement and environmental review add, it is said, an average of four years of pre-construction time to the duration of most major projects that use federal funds. States with time sensitive or development-related projects avoid using federal funds, because developers with opportunities will not put their lives on hold to wait out the federal approval cycles.

The problems of federal process are not always about the standards to be imposed. The problems are routinely about the process itself. The issues are not always about the environmental review process. It is often unnecessarily long to clear agency reviews when there is a finding of no significant impact. Faster state review processes have been found in states with high review standards, such as New York and California, and in states such as Florida where the state review processes were seen to be less rigorous.

Adding an unnecessary four years to a project timeline is unacceptable in today's economic climate because it adds substantial costs to the project and delays the realization of benefits to the wider community. The differentials in time by mode, that make it twice as hard to implement a mass transit project with federal funds as a highway project, leave communities frustrated in their attempts to rationalize local land use development strategies.

This challenge has particular resonance today. The massive stimulus program funds can really only make a difference in the next four years if they are not encumbered by federal process requirements. The projects that they fund must be process-ready to really get to the bidding stage quickly. So if we can minimize the process issues for the stimulus, by speeding up federal process reviews or giving clearer guidance to state and local agencies, can't we fix the problems for the regular program?

If we don't cure the process problems, there will be big gaps in our construction cycles as we try to get the next round of projects ready to go. More donor states will get disillusioned and ask to keep their funds at home. And we will continue to suffer from delays in benefits and unnecessary additions to our cost structure, something we can no longer afford.

With these six challenges, and many more to come, the Obama administration will have their hands full. ♦

Rudin Center Highlights

FEATURED PROJECT AND UPCOMING PUBLICATION

The Wagner Rudin Center for Transportation Policy and Management is completing work on a project sponsored by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) and the University Transportation Research Center, Region 2. The final product will be a guidebook for practitioners titled, "Strengthening Interjurisdictional Coordination on Transportation and Related Land Use." This publication is intended to facilitate better integration of land use and transportation planning.

The project is financed through NYMTC's September 11th Memorial Program for Regional Transportation Planning, a living memorial to three NYMTC staffers — Ignatius Adanga, Charles Lesperance and See-Wong Shum — who were tragically killed during the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001.

The upcoming guidebook is drawn from research on the jurisdictional barriers that have had an impact on greater integration of land use and transportation planning in a variety of recent planning studies. This publication builds on findings from a representative sample of case studies. Reviewed as part of the research, were NYMTC's pilot sustainable development studies, which tested new approaches to more integrated planning, and other more mainstream study efforts.

The research highlighted in the upcoming guidebook yielded a number of "lessons learned" regarding coordination between, and among, jurisdictions and levels of government that are relevant to integrated land use and transportation planning. It provides training matrices, including on key success factors for interjurisdictional coordination. Once published, the guidebook will serve both as a primer for practitioners seeking to facilitate more integrated planning as well as a curriculum for workshops on this, and related topics.

TAKE MY AUTOMOBILE PLEASE... WHY AMERICANS ARE DRIVING LESS AND THE IMPACT ON TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

BY SUZANNE SEEGMULLER

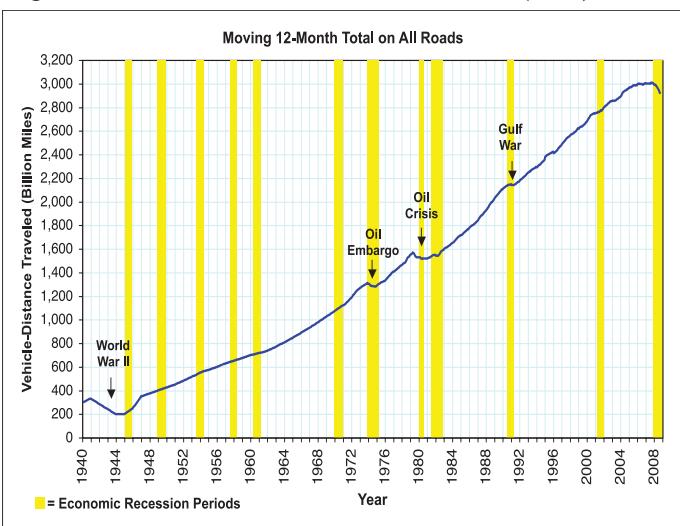
Over the past several years the United States has experienced a never-before-seen flattening and subsequent drop in overall vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on its highways. The likely factors, among others, which contribute to this recent phenomenon include:

- An increase in the cost of driving
- A shift in the age of the population
- A shift in trip purpose (and necessity)

A reduction in VMT means less federal gas tax (and toll) revenue to fund repairs and expansions of the highway system.

Figure 1 presents the annual VMT (a 12-month moving total, or the total of the month shown plus the previous eleven months) for the years 1940 through 2008.

Figure 1: U.S. Annual Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)



Source: Federal Highway Administration

There have been temporary reductions in VMT during periods of turmoil, such as oil crises, times of war, and economic recessions. Despite these temporary "dips", VMT generally grew rapidly over the years. However, in 2006 and 2007, VMT did not increase above 2005 levels, and in 2008 there was a noticeable decline in VMT of three percent.

Compared to 1960, there are currently 70% more people living in the United States, 140% more licensed drivers and 320% more vehicle miles driven on U.S. roadways. Over this half century, the dramatic increase in VMT has generally been attributed to the ease of use and availability of cars versus other travel modes; to the longer drives necessitated by the relocation of residences and businesses away from city centers; and to an increase in the number of women in the workforce. Little change has been seen in these factors over the past ten-to-fifteen years, yet VMT has continued growing through the first half of the 2000s.

The recent flattening of the long-term VMT trend may be attributable to other factors, such as the record increase in the price of gas; the growing availability and ubiquitous usage of high-speed Internet service; and the aging of the population. These factors in combination are reducing travel by automobile.

Gas Prices

The jump in gas prices in recent years is often regarded as the logical cause of the reduction in VMT growth. Numerous studies have been conducted to determine the effect of gas prices on road travel; however, none of these studies are recent enough to analyze

the jump in pump price from \$1.25 to \$4.25 per gallon of regular gasoline from 2002 through mid-2008. While the nominal price of gas remained relatively stable throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the real price (i.e., the price in today's dollars) actually decreased over that period; the 2007 real price of gas was similar to that of 1980-1981.

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(Continued on page 12)