



Smart Growth America

Better Choices for Our

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Memorandum

November 23, 2008

To: President-elect Obama Transportation Transition Team
From: Smart Growth America
Re: Transportation Opportunities to Advance the Administration's Agenda for Change

Smart Growth America (SGA) appreciates the opportunity to provide input to the Transportation Transition Team. The economic, environmental, health, energy and other challenges facing the nation are serious and intertwined. We can no longer afford a piecemeal approach to these issues. Our 1950s-based transportation program amply demonstrates this. Economic returns on transportation investments are dropping, critical infrastructure is neglected, and monetary, health and environmental costs are rising. The system is both broke and broken. President-elect Obama was given a clear mandate for change.

SGA is co-chair of Transportation for America-- a broad and growing coalition of national, state and local groups across the country, committed to creating a new national transportation program that will take America into the 21st Century by building a modernized infrastructure that prepares the U.S. for the new energy economy, provides more jobs and access to opportunity for all Americans, and addresses the current system's impacts on our environment, health, energy security, and global warming. Our members' interests are diverse, ranging from real estate and housing to the environment and public health to urban planning, equitable development and support for all transportation modes. But we all believe that, to get America moving, we must:

- Immediately make transportation investments to jumpstart the economy, favoring investments that secure the existing system and help transition to a clean, efficient, energy-independent future-- creating millions of green jobs in the process.
- Ensure households of all incomes can avoid the high cost of gas and metro areas can compete on a global stage by building the second half of the transportation system—the regional public transportation, the local sidewalks and bikepaths, and national passenger and freight rail systems to complement the system built in the first 50 years of the nation's transportation program.
- Reduce demands on our transportation system, cut travel costs, and provide access to opportunity by coordinating land use and transportation investment to make it easier to find an affordable home with access to jobs and ensure that residents of small towns and older Americans are not left stranded as car dependence becomes less viable.
- Build a clean transportation system that will protect our climate and environment.
- Improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists and promote health by supporting active lifestyles and reducing poor air quality.

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is a nationwide coalition promoting a better way to grow; one that protects farmland and open space, revitalizes neighborhoods, keeps housing affordable, and provides more transportation choices.



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Legislative Priorities

We seek new transportation legislation that will align the program's mission, policies, funding and programmatic structures with the goals articulated above. Redefining the program's basic mission is particularly important. When the federal transportation program was established, the mission was clear: build the national interstate system to connect the nation for economic and national defense purposes. SGA and T4 America believe that to create transportation system for the 21st century will require similar clarity of purpose. In the new transportation bill, the federal transportation program needs a clearly articulated set of goals, performance measures to track progress toward meeting these goals, and accountability and consequences for the federal, state and regional implementers based on progress towards meeting performance measures.

The First 100 Days

Stimulus. President-elect Obama has said he wants to address climate change and reduce our oil-dependence. Any economic stimulus package should acknowledge that, with respect to these goals, all transportation investments are not created equally. Investments in repairing and maintaining existing roads and bridges tend to be more "ready to go," don't induce driving, address critical safety concerns, and importantly reduce long term maintenance costs. Investments in transit, bicycling and walking facilities help households reduce their transportation costs, send less money abroad, help to revitalize existing communities, and move the country in the direction of energy independence. In addition, the funding in the stimulus is not from the Trust Fund so the split between roads and transit/bike/walk funding should be at least half for transit/bike/walk projects.

Legislative Timing. Transformation of our current transportation program to one that meets the needs of the 21st century will take time. SGA urges the new Administration to signal its intention to Congress that the next bill will not be business as usual but a substantial rethinking to create a federal program that helps achieve the nation's goals for efficient, competitive transportation, equitable access to opportunity, greenhouse gas reduction, and healthy, safe transportation. Creating this new system will take time. The Administration should work with Congress to ensure that the first bill significantly advances this agenda and that premature bills do not set the wrong tone for the discussion of the new program.

Executive Orders.

The Administration can use early Administrative actions to indicate direction for future policy. SGA suggests the following as actions that would have substantial benefits of their own while preparing the way for more substantial changes.

- A. Require land use alternatives in NEPA analyses
- B. Require greenhouse gas evaluations in NEPA analyses
- C. Require federal agencies to be responsible for their employees' VMT

Personnel. Leadership at DOT will be key to transforming the federal program into a program that can deliver the transportation system for a clean energy economy and economically competitive future. Leadership positions in DOT should be occupied by individuals with proven records of leadership—leaders who have developed innovative programs and investments that create the transportation outcomes we need while also achieving the other health, environmental and economic goals that are intertwined with transportation.

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