



Policy Actions for a 21st Century Transportation System

The following specific policy actions can ensure that our transportation investments deliver the best results for the environment and the economy. Some are legislative, some are executive. All can start now.

I. Get More Bang for the Buck by Investing in Existing Infrastructure

America's roadways and transit infrastructure are falling apart. Potholes and broken-down buses cause delays, reduce how long vehicles last, and risk public safety. A focus on getting more value from existing infrastructure will improve transportation, put Americans to work now, and save money in the long run. It also can reduce health-threatening air pollution and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Policymakers should:

- Rebuild the transportation system into a **state of good repair** and get Americans working now.
- Yield **better performance** from existing infrastructure by using proven computer technologies and pricing strategies to control traffic flow on existing roadways.
- **Increase energy efficiency** and reduce our dependence on foreign oil by providing incentives for vehicles and fleets that demonstrate verifiable and durable reductions of GHG emissions.

II. Reinvent Transit to Better Serve America's Communities

High fuel prices have prompted many Americans to turn to transit — ridership numbers have increased tremendously all across the country — not just urban centers. Yet the transit system hasn't received the necessary financial support to keep pace with the growing service demand. Policymakers should:

- Increase support for transit in cities of all sizes and in all regions of the country. Emphasize innovative but proven systems, such as bus-rapid-transit, that can deliver service quickly using the country's existing road infrastructure.
- Support, and provide incentives for, transit-oriented development that give people more options to live within easy reach of transit lines.
- Prioritize projects that yield complete streets and safe routes to school, including sidewalks, bike lanes, transit, and smart traffic management infrastructure.

III. Make Ports and Freight Carriers More Dependable and Less Polluting

The globalization of the economy has led to exponential growth in freight movement to and from the United States. Communities containing major seaports suffer from both traffic congestion and high levels of pollution from diesel trucks, locomotives, port equipment, and ships. Ports provide good jobs, but we need to ensure they also are clean jobs, that don't poison surrounding communities. Policymakers should adopt policies that:

- Help ports build "green" infrastructure, from better rail connections to improved electric power supplies for ships in port.
- Provide incentives to help truckers shift to efficient and clean trucks.

- Support “innovation zones” at major port cities to develop clean ship, truck and rail technology for freight handling.
- Expand rail-freight networks to ease the connection between ports and existing freight lines.
- Open the door to innovations, such as expanded coastal shipping, that help reduce truck congestion on freight highways.
- Support investments in technology and operating efficiency that reduce pollution from vehicles along corridors of strategic significance.

IV. Develop New Revenues and Environmental Performance-Based Financing

Fuel taxes no longer generate enough revenue to keep pace with 21st Century transportation needs. Other revenue sources need to be developed. Additionally, those revenues need to be collected and spent to take environmental costs and benefits into account. Sending the right market signals will ensure that the environmental costs of more polluting transportation choices aren't borne by society as a whole, but by the user who makes the choice. Policymakers should:

- **Allow a transition to national road user fees** to augment traditional fuel taxes. These user fees could include **fees for vehicle miles traveled (VMT)**, local-option congestion pricing, and other similar approaches. These innovations raise important issues of privacy and equity, which federal law must address prior to implementation.
- **Consider allocating a portion of greenhouse gas allowance auction revenues** to transit and freight innovations that will cut motor vehicle GHG emissions by reducing per capita vehicle miles traveled and smart traffic management
- **Eliminate barriers to market-based reforms.** Congress should support cities and states that seek to experiment with innovations such as congestion pricing, container fees, parking pricing and pay-as-you-drive (PAYD) insurance. Congress should remove regulatory barriers to these innovations and other similar practices, and end the federal prohibitions on toll charges on existing interstate highways.
- **Employ container fees.** Congress should consider national port-based container fees to help support investment in low-polluting, high-efficiency infrastructure.
- **Guide application of public-private partnerships (PPPs).** PPPs carry the risk of lowered environmental standards, lack of public transparency, and loss of local control. Federal policy should create clear rules and guidance for PPPs, so that if they are to be used, they clearly deliver GHG reductions and other environmental benefits, and don't unduly put public funds and infrastructure at risk.
- **Target enhanced revenues.** New moneys should be use for: (1) planning for reductions in VMT and GHG emissions, (2) rewarding innovative best practices, (3) recognizing demonstrated performance, (4) rewarding plans for timely performance, and (5) supporting frontloaded investments in early action for long-term reductions in GHGs.

Taking these actions together will give America a 21st century transportation system. We can have a transportation system that meets our needs and matches the time in which we live.

For more information, see our website at www.edf.org/transportation.