



Surface Transportation Policy Partnership

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Transfer

Surface Transportation Policy Project's Electronic Update

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Bush Highway Request Dominates Senate TEA-21 Hearing



The Bush Administration's FY'03 Budget and its expected effects on national highway investment dominated the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee's second hearing on TEA-21 renewal, held February 11 by the Subcommittee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Nuclear Safety.

Witnesses concentrated on the revenue-adjusted spending level for the next fiscal year of \$23 billion, which is 16% below the baseline established in TEA-21, and 27% below this year's spending levels. Administration representatives explained why and how spending was adjusted downward while others discussed the potential dislocation to state programs and job losses if the Bush request stands.

In his opening statement, Subcommittee Chair Harry Reid (D-NV) told Administration representatives that "the President's budget raises some important short and long-term concerns." Reid then said, "I will get right to the point – the President's budget cannot be sustained. A 27 percent cut in highway funding is a move in the wrong direction given our nation's transportation needs."

Reid further explained that the adjustment would result in a spending baseline that "would spell disaster for our transportation system. In fact, my focus is on doing just the opposite and finding a way to increase funding for all of the components of our surface transportation system – highways, transit, and rail."

Indicating their strong opposition to the spending request, state highway and industry officials used the hearing, as did several Committee members, to call for further reforms related to "environmental streamlining" when TEA-21 is renewed.

[Click here](#) to view statements by Senators and witnesses at the hearing

In Brief...

The Surface Transportation Policy Project has launched a new website, tea3.org. The site will keep you posted on the hearing schedule, policy issues, and other developments in the TEA-21 reauthorization process. The current news item is an analysis of the Bush budget.

For more info, visit: Tea3.

Calendar

[League of American Bicyclists Bike Summit](#)

Washington, DC
March 6-8, 2002

[National Conference on Aging & Mobility](#)

March 25-27, 2002

[Transportation and University Communities Conference](#)

Amherst, MA
June 15-18, 2002

[Senate EPW Transportation Schedule](#)

Feb. 19: 03 budget & the Highway Trust Fund

Late Mar. "Mobility, Congestion, and Intermodalism"

[House Transportation Committee Schedule](#)

Mar. 6: Subcommittee hearing on Amtrak status

Apr. 11: Subcommittee hearing on passenger rail

[Millennial Housing Commission Report](#)
Due to the US Senate on or by March 1

Quote of the Week

Committees Seek Highway Spending Adjustment



Congressional transportation leaders in the House and Senate have been rallying support for legislation (H.R. 3694/S. 1917) to adjust the proposed spending level for highway programs for the new fiscal year, which begins October 1.

As Congress adjourned for the President's Day recess, a majority (227 Members) of the House has already cosponsored H.R. 3694, only seven days after the bill's introduction. The Senate companion bill, S. 1917, was also introduced February 7 and is supported by every Member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, the panel that authorizes federal highway spending under TEA-21.

While the pending legislation seeks to restore highway spending (i.e. this year's obligation limit) to TEA-21's prescribed level of \$27.6 billion, it is still well below the current spending level of \$31.8 billion. The spending adjustment is particularly important in that FY'03 is the final year of TEA-21, influencing assumptions about the budget baseline (or starting point) that will guide overall spending in next year's legislation renewing TEA-21.

"There's never been an urban center in America with the magnitude of Northern Virginia that has ever road-built their way out of a traffic jam. God knows Los Angeles tried."

- VA Sen. Richard L. Saslaw
(D-Springfield) on whether it was time the state changes its way of developing and building roads.

Virginia Governor Orders Audit, Cuts in State DOT

At a press conference on February 12, Virginia Governor



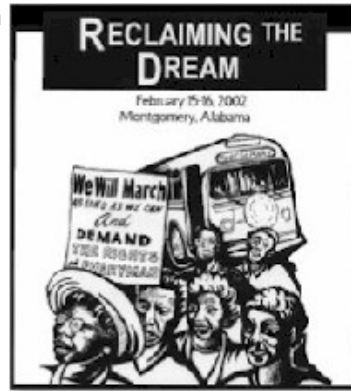
Mark Warner (D) ordered an audit of the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and announced road and transit spending decreases of \$368 million a year for the next five years. The announcement came amid renewed allegations of mismanagement and budgetary shortfalls at VDOT, in what the governor has described as a *transportation crisis*. "Now we are faced with assertions that professional staff repeatedly raised warnings about impending cash shortfalls," said Governor Warner, "and that these warnings were ignored by policy makers."

For a Washington Post article on Governor Warner's announcement, [click here](#)

To read Governor Warner's press release, [click here](#)

Rally and Grassroots Hearing for Transportation Equity

On February 15-16, transportation and civil rights advocates held a summit, rally and grassroots hearing in Montgomery, Alabama to demonstrate the need to return equity to transportation investments. The Montgomery Transportation Coalition organized the events in partnership with the Surface Transportation Policy Project and the Center for Community Change.



Speakers at the hearing gave testimony on their experiences with transit in Montgomery, Atlanta, Baltimore, and Jackson, MS. A common theme throughout the hearing was that transit riders often face lengthy commutes, shabby equipment, and lack of service on nights and weekends. Panelists included staff from Rep. John Conyers' (D-MI) Washington office, Alabama state legislator Thad McClammy, Mississippi state legislator Eric Flemming, Graham Sisson, Alabama State ADA Coordinator, and a district representative for Rep. Earl Hilliard (D-AL).

Alabama's federal transportation funding soared by 60 percent after 1997, but the portion of federal flexible funds going to transit, biking or walking dropped from \$1.7 million in 1996 to \$0 in 1999. The state used less than five percent of its total federal transportation budget on transit in 1999. Of the \$1.25 billion in state funds spent on transportation in 2000, none supported transit.

The hearing took place immediately following a march and rally on the Alabama capitol steps. In revisiting the birthplace of the 1955 Bus Boycott and the civil rights movement, this event directed attention to the issue of transportation as a means of economic freedom and social justice. Montgomery's transit system served about 7,600 daily riders at its peak in 1988, but fixed route service was shut down in 1998 after deep budget cuts and a steep decline in ridership. Local advocates are currently struggling to re-establish service. "Transportation planning should also involve social and economic impacts of how we spend money," said Dr. Robert Bullard, Director of the Environmental Justice Center at Clark Atlanta University and keynote speaker at the rally.

Photos and transcripts will be available soon at transact.org.

Safe Routes to School Congressional Hearing



On February 5, health and transportation officials and advocates from across the country took part in a Congressional Forum to discuss their efforts to create



Safe Routes to School. Rep. Jim Oberstar of Minnesota, ranking Democrat on the House Transportation and

Infrastructure Committee, convened and moderated the forum in the Library of Congress. In his opening statement, Rep. Oberstar lamented the health of an "entire generation of children who are mobility challenged." Dr. Jeff Runge, Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), emphasized the need to allow people of all ages to move about safely and freely, to enable commerce and to promote social interaction and health. He cautioned, however, against encouraging children to walk or bicycle without providing a safe street environment. Two top officials of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. Bill Dietz and Christine Branche, said safe routes to school is important in fighting physical inactivity and the obesity epidemic in children.

A major issue for Safe Routes to Schools programs is the funding of engineering changes - sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic signals - typically the most costly of the "four E's" of pedestrian and bicyclist safety. STPP's Barbara McCann and James Corless discussed state-level efforts to use federal safety money for Safe Routes to School engineering projects. While programs in California and Washington have experienced demand far in excess of funding, proposals for similar programs in other states have been opposed by state Departments of Transportation and typically killed in committee.

STPP took the opportunity at the forum to release an updated Summary of Safe Routes to School Programs. The document is now available on [STPP's website](#).

Transfer is written and edited by John Goldener of the Surface Transportation Policy Project. Readers are invited to reprint newsletter items; proper citation is appreciated. If you are not currently subscribed, please send us a note via e-mail to: transfer@transact.org. Be sure to include your full mailing address and name of your organization, phone and fax numbers. For comments and suggestions about Transfer's content, contact John Goldener at jgoldener@transact.org.

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